

# The Freethinker

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## ORGAN TRANSPLANTS: HUMAN DONORS OR EXTENSION OF ANIMAL SUFFERING?

The organ transplant research programme at Dulwich Hospital, London, in which pigs are being used, has been described by the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection as "a gross abuse of animal life and waste of health care resources". Chris Fisher, the Union's chairman, declared: "Once again we can see how animal experiments divert attention from our real health needs to the detriment of both people and animals".

In a press statement, the BUAV claimed that experimental animals "will undoubtedly suffer greatly both physically and mentally, despite the fact that anaesthetics will be used.

"Even if the experiments prove successful there can be no guarantee that the results will apply to humans. Previous transplant research has shown that the early recipients are little more than human guinea pigs. The real tests, by necessity, will involve humans.

"Apart from the moral considerations and the highly speculative nature of the research, it also represents a diversion from our real health priorities. It is already established that the major killers at the centre of this research, such as heart disease, are largely preventable. Yet less than 0.4 per cent of the nation's health budget is spent on prevention of any kind.

"Two-thirds of those who have heart attacks die within the first hour; the only hope for these people is prevention. Factors such as diet, smoking, drinking and stress are all major contributors to ill-health, yet funds are tragically misdirected from effective programmes of prevention which would benefit many more people. Treatment based on transplantation is approaching the problem from the wrong end".

Pointing out that the NHS is already seriously under-funded, the BUAV asserts that even if the new

technique is successfully developed it will require massive extra funds, or other areas of care and surgery will have to be reduced.

Joyce D'Silva, Educational Director of Compassion in World Farming, said that although sympathetic to the sufferings of kidney patients, CIWF is opposed to the use of pig organs for transplants. Pigs in factory farms are already living in conditions that are often abhorrent and CIWF can see no reason for extending this suffering.

"Pigs are highly intelligent, inquisitive animals who, in natural conditions live in family groups and spend much of their time using their highly sensitive snouts to root in the soil. They also love to cool themselves by wallowing in wet mud or puddles.

"But those pigs used for transplants will have to be reared in sterile, laboratory-type conditions. This will almost certainly entail a high degree of confinement and in all likelihood the use of slatted floors to keep the animals away from their own excreta".

Joyce D'Silva asserts that "a good publicity drive would almost certainly provide the required number of human organs".

Barbara Smoker, President of the National Secular Society, does not object fundamentally to the use of animal organs for human beings, either on grounds of squeamishness from the human viewpoint or of belief in the equality of different species.

"I maintain that we are right to give our own species precedence over all others", she said, "though not to the extent of causing considerable harm to other animals for the sake of a comparatively minor benefit to ourselves.

"The benefit of saving human lives or of substantially improving a patient's quality of life would certainly be sufficient to justify the use of animal

(continued on back page)

# The Freethinker

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Guest Columnist  
KARL HEATH

# NEWS

## PALE CHRISTIANITY AND PALE HUMANISM

Recently I have read a Bishop's sermon and a Humanist manifesto, each purporting to address the human condition. Both were prolix in word and meagre in substance. The sermon, "Why Pray?", was preached at Leeds University by Dr David Jenkins, Bishop of Durham. The Manifesto, entitled "The Twenty-First Century and Beyond", was written by Paul Kurtz, co-chairman of this year's International Humanist and Ethical Union Conference in the United States. On balance, I found a little more warmth and humanity in the sermon than in the manifesto.

The Bishop sent me this sermon in reply to my article, "The Myth of the Universal God: a Study in Geocentric Parochialism" (*The Freethinker*, June 1988) in which I had asked how he could reconcile a human tribal god with modern cosmology. Bishop Jenkins replies by defining God as "the More", "the infinitely worthwhile possibility of all possibilities" and "The God of Mystery". This reply cries out for the application of "Occam's Razor", against the multiplication of entities without necessity, or, in Occam's words: "It is vain to do with more what can be done with fewer". The Universe is one inexplicable mystery, and it is vain to postulate a second, greater, and unexaminable mystery to account for it.

In reply to Bishop Jenkins I suggested that his mysticism made God insubstantial, thin and attenuated to the point where one may legitimately ask: "Why pray to Him (It); still less worship or praise Him (It)?"

I made three other points. First, if prayer is just psychological communion, why linguistic prayer? How can the endlessly repeated Lord's Prayer be distinguished from the Buddhist mantra, "Om, Mani Padme, Hum"?

Secondly, how far has Bishop Jenkins moved from traditional Christianity, which is the most personal and anthropomorphic of all religions — a religion where God first makes a man like Himself, and then lectures him at great length (Old Testament) and then turns Himself into a man, still talking at great length (New Testament).

Thirdly, the views of Bishop Jenkins, together with those of Don Cupitt and the late John Robinson, are really as dogmatic as the traditional view. The only difference is that their dogma is diffuse rather than precise.

Now to Paul Kurtz. As a life-long atheist, who, for some peculiar reason, carries around with him his

# AND NOTES

father's membership card of the National Secular Society, dated 1910, I have read many Humanist manifestos. Paul Kurtz's latest proclamation is as wearisome as many preceding it. It is worthy, earnest, rather pompous and, in religious terms, pious. It expresses good thoughts about the human condition, a kind of ideological charity providing spiritual self-esteem for comfortable, middle-class Humanists, making them feel better. It acknowledges the state of the world, but seems not to recognise the depth of deprivation of half humanity. Nowhere does the Manifesto attempt to account for this condition, or propose remedies other than vague aspirations for a world community.

In my article, "The Golden Age" (*The Free-thinker*, September 1987), I attempted an analysis of what went wrong in human history. I expected some Humanists to challenge my diagnosis, but no-one replied. Where does Humanism go from here? More manifestos?

## YOUR TERRORISTS OR OURS?

Mrs Thatcher is voluble, but selective, in denouncing terrorism. She defended the Americans for shooting down the Iranian civil airliner, killing nearly three hundred passengers and crew members. She has never condemned the Contra's attacking Nicaragua, although she has not followed her friend, Reagan, by calling them "Freedom Fighters". She has refused to answer Parliamentary questions about her personal dealings with David Walker, a former SAS man who runs KMS, a mercenary organisation alleged in a "World in Action" programme to have been involved with Colonel North, linked to MI6 and engaged in sabotage in Managua.

Throughout history the worst terrorism has been that of the State. While Mrs Thatcher impertinently calls upon the African National Congress to renounce violence, Michael Dukakis has condemned the South African Government as a "terrorist State". If he wins the presidential election, Mrs Thatcher will find herself in squalid isolation, her only "special relationship" being no longer with Washington but with Pretoria. She should read American history. The Declaration of Independence asserts that when a Government "evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is (the people's) right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government". And Abraham Lincoln, speaking in the House of Representatives in 1848, declared: "Any people anywhere, being inclined and having the power, have the right to rise up and shake off the existing Government".

## ANNIVERSARY IGNORED

In the pre-television past, every issue of *Radio Times* carried the front-page banner headline, "Nation Shall Speak Peace Unto Nation". Saturday, 6 August, was the anniversary of a monstrous horror in human history — the atom-bombing of Hiroshima in 1945 (followed a few days later of Nagasaki).

But how did BBC Radio mark the occasion? Radio Moscow, in its English language news, made it the main news item. The Americans, in a macabre commemoration, wheeled out "Enola Gay", the aircraft which carried the atom bomb, restored for public display.

BBC Radio totally ignored the anniversary, at least in its 8 am, 1 pm and 6 pm news bulletins on Radio Four. Perhaps, not totally: there was a small gossipy item in the "Today" programme about the qualities needed for a non-stop run from Hiroshima to Nagasaki.

## ANNIVERSARY OF SHAME

1988 — four centuries from the Armada and three centuries from "The Glorious Revolution".

September 1988 — fifty years from one of the most shameful episodes in British history, the Munich agreement which surrendered Czechoslovakia to Hitler.

Neville Chamberlain had returned from Godesberg, apparently shaken by Hitler's demands. Sandbags were placed around public buildings and some gasmasks were issued. Some of us were fooled into believing that at last we would stand up to Hitler and end the shameful appeasement of Fascism. Chamberlain addressed a tense House of Commons. While he was speaking he was handed a piece of paper, not the one he was to wave a day or so later on returning from Munich. From it he read that Herr Hitler had invited him, together with Signor Mussolini and Monsieur Daladier, to meet in Munich. We know that this was fraudulent theatricality, because Chamberlain had already received Hitler's message before arriving at the Commons. The House, including most Labour MPs, rose and cheered. Only Winston Churchill and a few others, including Left-wing Labour Members, remained seated.

The Soviet Union has never attacked us, although British troops invaded Russia during the War of Intervention (1918-22). As our World War II ally, she suffered many times greater than the combined losses of Britain and the United States, and destroyed the might of Hitler's army. Burgess, Maclean, Philby and Blunt are called traitors because they spied for the Soviet Union. But what of the Tory Ministers who appeased the real enemy? What of the Tory MPs who belonged to the Anglo-German

Fellowship and "The Link", organised by Dr Goebbels? What of the Cliveden Set, including the editor of *The Times*, who wine and dined Ribbentrop? What of Rothermere and the *Daily Mail* boosting Mosley's British Union of Fascists? If Hitler had conquered Britain, these Quisling traitors would have come crawling from under the stones and, as in every other occupied country in Europe, they would have surfaced from the Right wing in politics.

When Mrs Thatcher claims Churchill as a hero, she forgets that in 1938 her party repudiated him.

## ANTHRAX ISLAND

You are driving down the coast road in Wester Ross, Scotland, towards the extraordinary tropical gardens at Inverewe, seemingly far too North for its tropical plants, but washed by the Gulf Stream. You reach a beautiful little bay and there, half a mile from the shore, you see a small peaceful green island. For nearly half a century you would have landed on it at your peril, peril of an agonising death with your lungs destroyed.

This is Gruinard Island, declared safe for human beings only this year. In 1942 it was commandeered by the Ministry of Supply for testing anthrax bombs. Fifteen field tests were carried out, one from a Wellington bomber, the others from a gantry. Sheep were tethered downwind to receive the spores released by the bombs. One recalls other tethered animals on Pacific atolls, some passively awaiting nuclear annihilation, others placed at greater distances so that their radiation burns could be examined during their short but excruciating survival.

To quote the words of King James I in another context, one wonders whether it be not "presumption and high contempt" to call ourselves Humanists.

## FULL-BLOODED RELIGION

In contrast to Dr Runcie's languid homilies, I recall the most powerful religious experience of my life. Forty years ago we were living in Spanish Town, the old capital of Jamaica. We had just parted company with Barbara Wootton who had inaugurated the first course of lectures which I was to give for the new University of the West Indies. Our next visitor was Tom Driberg, writing articles on the West Indies for *Reynolds' News*, that sadly-missed Sunday newspaper. He wanted to attend a gathering of "Pocomania", the rude term ("Little Madness") which middle-class Jamaicans used for a religious movement which its devotees called "Revival Zion". In neighbouring Haiti a fusion of Roman Catholicism with African religion and witchcraft, recalled from slave times, had produced voodoo. In Jamaica a Baptist revival movement which swept the island in 1862 produced

a different fusion — Revival Zion.

With Driberg, we attended a revival meeting of Zion 60 in Spanish Town. (There was also Zion 61; the rival groups accused each other of "evil practices".) Imagine about four hundred people packed into a dark backyard, leaving a circle in the middle lit by a single naphtha flare. In this circle stood a rectangular table (the Altar) covered with a white cloth and bearing vases of flowers and unlit candles. The priest, or "shepherd", wearing a peaked turban, was accompanied by six priestesses, also turbanned, the youngest about eleven years old. Suspended from waist sashes were pairs of scissors for cutting apart evil spirits. At first, all was fairly normal, with the crowd singing Moody and Sankey hymns. But after the candles were lit, the atmosphere changed. The "jumping" began with priestesses dancing anticlockwise around the altar table. "Dancing" is perhaps not the right word for this violent and energetic movement known as "trumping", trampling evil spirits, arms and legs hurled up and down like pistons in some fast racing machine. This was accompanied by "sounding", an unbelievably loud and rhythmic snorting caused by violent inhalation and exhalation. The effect was eerie and hypnotic. Two young black girls stood behind me, the one trying to restrain the other, in whose eyes only the whites showed. At last she broke through to join the dancers, whereat a voice at the back of the crowd called "Don't have her, Sah, — she pregnant".

The "sounding" produces hyper-ventilation and sometimes a trance state. After some time, the eleven-year old priestess was lying on the ground in convulsions. We left after four hours, but the same priestesses still circled the table as energetically as before, despite the humid heat.

The Anglican Church still echoes primitive religion when it declares that "the spirit moves". Zion 60 set out to demonstrate this in practice, a powerful emotional release for impoverished people.

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**Tycoon Rupert Murdoch is going into the evangelical publishing business. The owner of the morally uplifting newspaper, the Sun, has paid £33 million for Zondervan, an American company. Zondervan owns the British firm, Marshall Pickering, whose list includes Mission Praise.**

### CHANGE OF ADDRESS

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# Don't Send Rude Letters!

TED GOODMAN

On 29 September the Malicious Communications Act 1988 comes into force. It criminalises the sending or delivering of letters "or other articles" with intent to cause "anxiety". Here is yet another restriction on freedom of expression and a further step towards the establishment of an authoritarian nanny State.

Section 11 of the Post Office Act already criminalises the sending of postal packets enclosing "any explosive, dangerous, noxious or deleterious substance, any filth, any sharp instrument not properly protected, any noxious living creature, any creature, article or thing whatsoever which is likely to injure either other postal packets in the course of conveyance or a person engaged in the business of the Post Office"; and also "any indecent or obscene print, painting, photograph, lithograph, engraving, cinematograph film, book, card or written communication, or any indecent or obscene article whether similar to the above or not"; and any packet which has "on the cover thereof, any words, marks or designs which are grossly offensive or of an indecent character".

In addition, the Theft Act 1968 prohibits demanding money with menaces, and the Offences Against the Person Act 1861 prohibits threats of violence.

There are thus already more than enough restrictions on what can be sent. Not enough, however, for Andrew Stewart, Conservative Member of Parliament for Sherwood, a mining constituency. During the 1984 miners' strike he received abusive letters from some of them and decided to use his experience as an excuse for trying further to restrict what can lawfully be sent or delivered.

Mr Stewart's opportunity came in 1987 when he was successful in the ballot for Private Members' Bills. He thereupon introduced his Malicious Communications Bill. In the true Thatcherite spirit of Orwellian thought-control, the Government gave the Bill time and support, thus ensuring its success. Reservations expressed to Mr Stewart by the Campaign Against Censorship were ignored.

The illegal act is sending or delivering to another person a letter "or other article" which is indecent, or grossly offensive, or threatening, or believed by the sender to be false. The illegal intent is that the purpose of the sender (or one of his purposes) is to cause distress or anxiety to the recipient, or to any other person to whom the sender intends that the letter's or article's contents be communicated. It is a defence if the sender proves that he or she was making what was believed to be a proper threat to reinforce a reasonable evidence of his or her subjective belief — a difficult task.

The offence will be triable by magistrates, not a

jury, and a conviction will result in a fine of up to £1,000. Private prosecutions are possible, so even if the Crown Prosecutor does not do so, Grundyists can take legal action against the senders of letters or publications which "distress" them!

In the piecemeal and illogical tradition of English legislation, the Malicious Communications Act does not even mention Section 11 of the Post Office Act, although it deals with the same subject. The two statutes overlap and contain differently defined prohibitions, thus adding to the growing chaos of uncodified English criminal law. (The Malicious Communications Act does not extend to Scotland.)

Andrew Stewart described his measure as "a long awaited and necessary Bill to reinforce law and order in this country". Freethinkers, by contrast, will regard it as an uncalled for and unnecessary additional legal restriction on the written word.

## AIDS Warning: Church Told Not to Interfere

One of Italy's leading Roman Catholics, Mgr Giorgio Giannina, made a point of emphasising the Pope's ban on contraceptives, even as a protection against AIDS, when he addressed a conference of young married couples last month. The conference was arranged to mark the 20th anniversary of Pope Paul VI's encyclical, *Humanae vitae*. Mgr Giannini said that the encyclical "outlines the necessary directives for responsible parenthood in the grace of God".

An anti-AIDS advertisement, transmitted by the Italian television network on the direct orders of the Health Ministry, has been condemned by the Roman Catholic Church. *L'Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican daily newspaper, described it as "perverse and a persuasive invitation to make compromises" because it does not advocate sexual abstinence.

Even the Christian Democrats, the most pro-Church of Italy's male political parties, is not giving wholehearted support to the Vatican on this issue. And Elena Maricucci, a Health Ministry official, bluntly told the Vatican that "like any other foreign State, it cannot interfere in Italian governmental choices".

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**Tension between Buddhists and Muslims in the city of Prome, northern Burma, led to violence in which one man was killed and seven others injured. The Burmese News Agency reported that fighting started in a tea shop where they had been "misunderstandings between one religion and another".**

# Jesus and the Censor

DAVID GODIN

Christian fundamentalists do not normally show much interest in cinematic art. But throughout its history the industry has been the target of their attempts to ban films — usually without seeing them — which they regard as “offensive”. David Godin recalls some of the battles against religious prudes and self-appointed censors.

Generally, religious-themed films present few problems for today’s film censor. They are so often achingly reverent that they could offend only secularists. They also happen to be box-office poison most of the time. With the pious out in full cry denouncing Martin Scorsese’s latest movie, *The Last Temptation of Christ*, it seemed appropriate to look back at previous occasions when the religionists and/or the censor took exception to films with a religious narrative. Prior to 1951 (appropriately perhaps the year the “X” certificate was first introduced), any on-screen representation of Christ was taboo and dozens of films had been rejected by the censor on those grounds alone. It was not, I’m sad to say, a policy adopted as the result of heavy lobbying by secularists, but more that essentially British distaste at the thought of *From the Manger to the Cross* playing in a double bill with *Walking Down Broadway*, and a desire to avoid all “controversy” in a medium which the censor, the industry and the government saw simply as entertainment for the masses. So long as Jesus himself wasn’t played by an actor who might in turn be (horror of horrors) nominated for an Oscar, any amount of sugary nonsense like *The Song of Bernadette*, or *The Bells of St Mary’s*, etc., was routinely passed.

In the post-war era, however, a new consciousness had arisen which just occasionally sought to express itself through film. It was also less onerous to actually declare one’s atheism. In 1948, Roberto Rossellini made a remarkable film called *The Miracle*. Despite being denounced by the Vatican as “an abominable profanation”, it did poor business in Italy, grossing less than £20,000 at the domestic box-office. Significantly, it didn’t reach the USA until 1950 unleashing a hurricane of invective from the devout. Cardinal Spellman (the answer to every showman’s prayer when the box-office began to flag) said it was “vile and harmful, a despicable affront to every Christian”, whilst the Legion of Decency claimed it was “a sacrilegious and blasphemous mockery of Christian religious truth”. Although passed by the New York censorship board, it was hauled into court and found guilty of sacrilege. In the strange way wonders are performed, however, it was to prove a long-term blessing for libertarians since when it finally appealed to the Supreme Court,

they made the historic judgement that film was a valid medium through which to convey ideas and thus protected by the First and Fourteenth Amendments the ban was lifted.

Why was 1950 a significant date for the pious to start baying for blood? Well that was the year Ingrid Bergman abandoned her husband and daughter to join the man she had fallen hopelessly in love with. She was not “forgiven” by Hollywood for this “indiscretion” until she won an Oscar in 1956. After all, this “adulteress” had previously played a nun in *The Bells of St Mary’s* and *The Maid herself*, in *Joan of Arc*! Oh, and the man she was so besotted by was Roberto Rossellini. Although rejected by the censor, *The Miracle* was given a special certificate by the London County Council, although even that was granted with the irrational proviso that the Academy Cinema could not advertise it with posters done in their familiar and much-loved “wood-cut” house-style!

The next skirmish was over a film called *The Red Inn*. A black and satirical French comedy, it had played in France without a murmur, but our censor rejected it on the grounds that it might give offence to Roman Catholics. The London County Council Film Viewing Sub-committee took an opposite view however, and passed the film to be shown in London. Then followed a carefully stage-managed campaign by a Catholic councillor and her lobby which demanded the decision be reviewed by full council, who, to their shame, reversed the original decision, and the film remained banned for five years. Although eventually passed in a cut version, and shown on TV in the same version some years ago, it was only the comparatively recent TV screening that finally allowed us to see the full, uncut version. It was worth waiting 35 years to see what French schoolchildren were long since allowed to watch!

Although banned in France originally, our censor stood firm when the anti-clerical *La Religieuse* came along, based on the Diderot story, and most of Bunnell’s sacrileges were passed, most probably on the grounds that they would only play art cinemas and thus only be seen by the irredeemable anyway.

In more recent times the French *Hail Mary* caused some protest as did *The Life of Brian*, but to his credit the censor passed both of these uncut.

But, when you distribute films in the reactionary climate prevailing in Britain, where there is little middle ground between a movie being a huge hit or a total flop, one wonders if a sort of combination of piety and monetarism unites to prevent certain films from even coming into theatrical distribution. We were never given a chance to see *The Passover Plot*

(a screen adaptation of Hugh J. Schonfield's book), or *The Council of Love* (based on the play that was done for blasphemy when it played at the Criterion Theatre in London just after the Lord Chamberlain had been relieved of his powers of censorship); or *The Spirit* (a West German film that caused a stir over there which satirised the powers of the Holy Ghost). On TV recently, some sort of American nun was describing *Last Temptation* as "the most satanic and blasphemous film ever", and one couldn't help but wonder what she would have made of *L'Age D'or* which depicted Christ as Ultimate Sadist, creating a world beset by cruelty and pain solely for His insatiable blood-lust; or *Bible!*, an American production which depicted Adam and Eve, David and Bathsheba, and Samson and Delilah in all their original explicitness; or *Him*, another US production that postulated Christ as homosexual?

What puzzles me is why believers need to protect their faith by sanctions or punishments. Many of the issues which I hold dear to my own heart (atheism, animal rights, freedom, etc) are daily held up to ridicule and abuse in our society, but this doesn't dampen my conviction one jot. Are they of such little faith that they need special protection? And even granting their belief, do they honestly think mere shadows projected on a screen could be deemed one hundredth as blasphemous as a primate's suffering with man-injected syphilis, or the proposed "living slabs" that genetic butchers promise will stock supermarket freezers in a few years time?

The pious have never been keen thinkers, but past masters at transmogrifying their vices into virtues. And they've never been slow in hounding or crucifying those who try to show them the error of their ways.

## Working With the Godly

TERRY LIDDLE

Oscar Wilde was right when he said "work is the curse of the drinking classes". But when one has to work alongside prosletysing propagandists who subject others to GBH of the ear-holes with their religious rantings, the work experience becomes even more difficult. As a secular humanist, how, I wonder, can we combat the efforts of religious enthusiasts to use the work place — which is where most of us have to spend much of our waking lives — as a forum to expound their particular views.

My own experience is that one Monday morning (a time when I'm never at my best) I was trying with no little difficulty to explain the more intricate parts of a job to a colleague. Suddenly, he whips out a Bible and asks me if I know the name of God. Jokingly I reply "Karl Marx". Grumpily he replies "So you're one of them!" I think that by "them" he means gays and tell him I'm hetero — but anyway that is nobody's business but my own. However, it turns out that the "them" he has in mind are atheists, and he treats me to a convoluted tale of an atheist musician who, until he found the true faith — that of the Jehovah's witnesses — was a wife-beater. I replied that there is no relationship at all between unbelief and marital violence. The demands of our job put an end to this exchange, leaving me a little perplexed and my colleague seemingly unruffled.

Since then the debate has continued. I have tried to explain the origins and development of Judaism and Christianity to my colleague, but all to no avail. For him the Bible has the answer to everything, from the mess in the department where we work to natural disasters. To his way of thinking, every event fits in with alleged biblical prophecy, although

try as I might, I can find nothing in scripture about lost Girocheques or the failure of London buses to run on time. Humanity, he tells me, cannot govern itself, and therefore we have to look for supernatural answers.

My colleague is not an ignorant man. To do his job he needs a fistful of "O" Levels and much common sense. I surmise he has had the best in educational opportunities that the West Indies can offer its middle class. Of Asian origin and a somewhat lax Muslim, his experiences in Britain led him to embrace the Jehovah's Witness creed. He is still a trade unionist, and was a socialist before joining the Witnesses. But the Labour movement was unable to provide the assurance of the answers he was obviously looking for.

West Indians are often deeply religious. The traumatic experience of slavery pushed them towards religion, and this their owners saw as a safe outlet for frustration and resentment. Even when they reject their parents' Christianity, the response of West Indian youth is often to embrace some noisy sect with easy answers. My colleague fits into this category, and the humanist movement does not touch him or the West Indian community at all. Some humanists refer disparagingly to "Bible-bashing", preferring rather formless efforts to postulate "stances for living". For many people, struggling to survive in an increasingly harsh environment, this means nothing at all. "That old-time religion", with its present certainties and future promises, offers hope, however spurious.

It is this simplistic fundamentalism, which is winning recruits hand over fist, which we have to attack.

# In Search of the Old East End

JOHN PETHER

The East End of London in 1888 — the year of the matchgirls' strike, a centenary which has passed by without remark, and of the Jack the Ripper murders, an anniversary which hardly merits celebration. But the Ripper centenary will be prey to the customary cant and commerce. John Pether looks not at the mystery over the identity of the Ripper, but at the meanness of the streets he prowled.

Whitechapel station on a Monday evening in the rain. Twenty or so people have gathered for a guided tour round "Jack the Ripper's London". Almost all are tourists, with Americans and Australians predominating; all are half-attracted and half-repelled by the legend of the Ripper, a sex murderer who killed and disembowelled at least five women in Whitechapel in a period of little more than three months in the autumn of 1888.

First stop, a urine-soaked alley, just to establish the ambience. From there to derelict warehouses and half-demolished tenements, past Sally Army hostels, through the shadows of Spitalfields Market — no prostitutes yet in evidence — and along Brick Lane with its Bengali cafes and sweet shops, the smell of spices competing with the odour of rotting rubbish.

Every so often the guide stops to recite the details of another of the Ripper's murders or to rehearse one of the more bizarre theories about his identity. It's all done with a flourish and by the time the walk ends, and the tour leader unveils his "definitive" account of who Jack the Ripper really was, his audience is quite convinced it knows all there is to know.

What they have seen, though, was not the Ripper's London at all. Certainly the weavers' houses in Spitalfields would have been standing a hundred years ago, but many of the decaying blocks of flats and industrial buildings had still to be built. The years after the Whitechapel murders saw dramatic changes in the East End. Just north of the Ripper's patch, in Shoreditch, the notorious slums so tellingly described in Arthur Morrison's novel *A Child of the Jago* were razed in the 1890s, to be replaced by barrack-style dwellings. It was the same throughout the East End. The worst of the slums were demolished and in their stead came housing which, though little grander to live in, was certainly on a grander scale.

Therein lies the significance of Jack the Ripper. He directed the spotlight of publicity on living conditions in the East End. The key problems of overcrowding and underemployment, compounded by the congregation of Jewish immigrants, were made evident. It was only a few years earlier, with the first stirrings of the slum novelists and the upsurge in philanthropic endeavour, that the East End forced itself to the attention of informed Victorians. Jack

the Ripper acted as an unwitting catalyst to the cleansing out of this dense mass of lumpen London.

The murders added urgency to the slum clearance programme. Jerry White, in his history of one of the model dwellings built in Spitalfields at around this time (*Rothschild Buildings*, Routledge & Kegan Paul), asserts that "within six years Jack the Ripper had done more to destroy the Flower and Dean Street rookery than fifty years of road building, slum clearance and unabated pressure from the police, Poor Law Guardians, Vestries and sanitary officer".

William Fishman, in his new book about the East End (*East End 1888*, Duckworth) lists other changes brought about one way or another by the killings: the Metropolitan Police was given a thorough shake-up; street lighting was improved; and renewed attention was given to the welfare of children living in common lodging-houses. He cites the verdict of one exasperated local socialist, who lamented that "in our age of contradictions and absurdities, a fiend murderer may become a more effective reformer than all the honest propagandists in the world".

Perhaps hindsight provided that socialist with some consolation, for however important the Ripper murders were in shaping the development of the East End another event of at least equal influence was the strike a few weeks earlier at the Bryant and May match factory in Bow. A group of middle-class socialists had turned their attention to the working conditions of the matchgirls there. Annie Besant wrote an article entitled "White Slavery in London" in her weekly journal and distributed it at the factory gates. It revealed that the company was paying a dividend of almost forty per cent while its women workers were getting about seven shillings for a sixty-hour week.

In July, and without any bidding from their well-to-do allies, the matchgirls came out on strike. A boycott of Bryant and May matches was organised, and Charles Bradlaugh raised the issue in Parliament. It was a bitter dispute but short-lived, and the women achieved substantial improvements in their working conditions.

The lesson was not lost on other groups of unskilled and unorganised workers in the East End. The gasworkers almost immediately secured a change from twelve-hour shifts to an eight-hour working day just by threatening to strike. In the following year, the focus of the conflict moved to the Docks, which provided a precarious livelihood for thousands of Eastenders. The success of the 1889 Dock Strike prompted an upsurge in trade unionism among the unskilled, what became known as "new unionism", not only in London but throughout the country.

The Docks are now in the throes of change. One



by one, over the last twenty years, they have closed down. The whole area is being redeveloped, and a new type of Eastender — a “yuppy” in common parlance — is emerging. The Docklands Light Railway gingerly threads its way through tough council estates on the one side, and luxury converted warehouses on the other. It skirts past Canary Wharf and all the other high-tech office developments at the north end of the Isle of Dogs to drop off local residents at The Mudchute a few hundred yards away, an area which lives up to its name.

Elsewhere, too, the City is encroaching. The Spitalfields wholesale fruit market will soon be on the move, to be replaced by an altogether more splendid development. Opposite the market is a pub until

recently called the “Jack the Ripper”. Inside tourists on the Ripper walk rub shoulders with local construction workers, who are the main clientele. But in a couple of years, the barman confides, the pub will probably be done up to meet the brewery’s idea of a City drinking hole.

The development of the market site is the key to the future of Spitalfields and Whitechapel. There will inevitably be overspill, and the Bengali community — attracted to the area by the cheap private housing and the thriving rag trade — may well be forced out. In twenty years time, the tour guides will be searching in vain for the reeking passageways, the tottering tenements, with which to give a sense of the old East End.

## Evangelism in China

ERIC REINDERS

Although the salaries paid to foreign English teachers in the People’s Republic of China are not high, any financial deficiency is compensated for by the opportunity to study and experience life in that country. There is an added incentive for those Christian fundamentalists, mostly Americans, who have come to China; teaching English is a guise under which they endeavour to evangelise the unbaptised and unsaved. Eric Reinders recently spent a year in China and in his travels around the country he encountered many such missionaries working as individuals or in groups. They are well-funded and secretive about religious affiliations. This article is published by arrangement with the Humanist in Canada Journal.

America, however, has put pressure on China to reverse what it sees as its continued suppression of Christianity. Encouraged by China’s more liberal policies, Christian missionary groups have focussed their attention once again on the one billion Chinese souls.

The missionaries are usually laymen, predominantly white American. Their religious orientation tends to be fundamentalist and zealously evangelical. For historical reasons, many of them are pro-Taiwan, and many were trained there. Chinese laws allow each person to own two Bibles, but there is widespread smuggling of large numbers of Bibles among Hong Kong or Taiwan-based evangelical groups operating in China. A conversation with one such evangelist — a student of Chinese in North-East China — revealed his literal belief in the imminent Russian invasion of Israel, a rule of the Antichrist, and the Second Coming. He was reluctant to actually say that the theory of evolution was wrong, but he affirmed his belief in creationism. His group, called Youth with a Mission, was receiving generous funds from American donors.

Superficially, the Confucian-Communist morality evident in China has much in common with American fundamentalism. Whatever the economic system, the Chinese are family-oriented. Thirty-eight years of Marxist rule have blurred distinctions between public and private, but the family was and is the basic unit of society. An individual’s loyalties are to family, and except during the Cultural Revolution, the Party has not expected otherwise. A strong family consciousness is congruent with the American fundamentalist emphasis on the sanctity of the family, and carries with it a rejection of such “unnatural” (or “un-Chinese”) phenomena such as homosexuality and premarital sex.

China is experiencing a social and economic boom,

(continued on page 140)

Something approaching a mutual obsession between China and the Christian Right dates back at least to Chiang Kai-shek’s attempts to enlist American aid against the Japanese and against the Communists. He led America to believe in a vision of China thirsting for American democracy and Christianity. The American Christian Right saw the Nationalists as their best hope to convert China, and American leaders saw Christianity as a possible bulwark against the Reds. Perhaps they were right: the Communists actively suppressed the foreign religion, and later, during the catastrophic Cultural Revolution (1967-76) all religion was suppressed. Their efforts were very effective. The Chinese are probably almost as superstitious as they have ever been, but they do not now appear “religious” in great numbers.

The new leadership under Deng Xiaoping is no less Marxist than its predecessors, but is far more pragmatic. Beijing knows that the Four Modernisations (Agriculture, Industry, Science and Technology, and Defence) need Western help to succeed. Japan is obviously a major trading partner and a source of investment and expertise. Furthermore, the Japanese are able to keep business and religion separate.

# BOOK

J. M. ROBERTSON (1856-1933): LIBERAL, RATIONALIST, AND SCHOLAR. An Assessment by Several Hands. Edited by G. A. Wells. Pemberton, £8 (paper) and £15 (hard cover)

Did John Mackinnon Robertson exist or was he a myth?

Historicists assert that he was born at Brodick in 1856 and cremated at Golders Green in 1933. Between those dates he was a prominent freethought lecturer and writer and a Liberal politician, rising to become Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade in 1911. He was seen at many Parliamentary, Rationalist and other dinners, and photographed on a number of occasions.

The mythicist theory is more complex, but rests chiefly on the following planks. Gladstone had described John Stuart Mill as "the Saint of Rationalism", but the freethought movement felt it needed a saint who was active organisationally. So it invented a character who was placed in the top leadership of the National Secular Society, the Rationalist Press Association and South Place Ethical Society. "John" is a popular New Testament name, particularly associated with the disciple whom Jesus loved. "Robertson" is a diminutive of the Hebrew *Rabbi*, meaning a master or teacher. "Mackinnon" is more difficult, but probably derives from *Maccabees* — Jewish freedom-fighters in the second century BC. "Brodick" is a corruption of Bethlehem and "Golders Green" of Golgotha. Summation of the numbers in his putative year of birth yields 20, or  $2 \times 2 \times 5$ . His putative year of death ends in 33, when he was in his 77th year. These are all magical numbers, denoting masculinity, completion and perfection. Alleged sightings of Robertson are attributable to hallucination or fraud, while the photographs are said to be those of the Renaissance Jesus with his locks cropped.

The authors of the above volume do not refer to this controversy but clearly subscribe to the historicist view. There is, however, some disagreement among them over his essential teaching, the extent of its originality and reasons why he was not more influential in his lifetime and the succeeding generation. These reasons boil down to two antitheses: he was too successful as a polemicist, in that his targets are now discredited and forgotten; he was too unsuccessful, in that his hobbyhorses were lost causes like Free Trade, the Liberal Party and republicanism. Tributes are paid to his immense scholarship in all freethought histories and biographies of the period, but he remains a shadowy figure.

The timely assessment by Jim Herrick, Ian MacKillop, Stanislaw Andreski, David Berman, Chris

# FREETHINKER

R. Tame and G. A. Wells arose from papers delivered by three of the foregoing and Martin Page at a conference organised by the Adam Smith Club in 1984. Page's paper was incorporated in *Britain's Unknown Genius: An Introduction to the Life-Work of John Mackinnon Robertson* (1984), which I have not read.

My own recollection of Robertson's work is of an immense amount of interesting, if often controversial, material imbedded in over 100 monographs (some of them huge tomes) of humourless, impene- trable prose. Stimulated by this volume into reread- ing what I have available — a major aim of the assessment — I now take a rather more charitable view. His writing is never careless, as that of Brad- laugh, Besant and other journalists sometimes is. Nor is it overly parenthetical, conditional and sprinkled with foreign tags in the academic manner, though it does have a dry donnish wit. In a sense he writes too well, too succinctly. His paragraphs are too homogenised, like a highbrow *Reader's Digest*. Instead of saying "Blank offered few arguments, and they were flimsy", he is apt to say "Blank's paucity of arguments matched their flimsiness". This has slightly increased the cybernetic content per word, but at the cost of mounting demands on a reader's concentration. It is likely, however, that his neglect results more from the matter than the manner of his writing. Seduced by popular jour- nalism, cinema and television, even freethinkers seem to prefer the racy revelations of a McCabe or a Foote, or the purple passages of an Ingersoll or a Lamont.

Other perceptions of Robertson were confirmed rather than dispelled by this volume. I really feel he must take some of the blame for Rationalism's twentieth-century label of "arid" and its exponents' image of being "cantankerous". He positively flour- ished not merely in a minority but in a minority (preferably one) of a minority.

When most politicians of his generation were theists, he was an atheist. When most Liberal politi- cians found socialism uncongenial, he proclaimed it the "highest ideal". When they supported Lloyd George, he joined a radical opposition. But these radicals were mostly pacifists and anti-conscription- ists, while he supported the First World War and conscription. When they later joined the Labour Party and advocated state intervention, he stayed loyal to the Liberals and *laissez-faire*. At this time most economists turned to Protection (Fair Trade), but he clung to Free Trade. While almost all Shakes- pearian scholars were integrationists — whether Stratfordians, Oxfordians, Baconians or Marlovians —

# REVIEW

he was a disintegrationist, ie, believed Shakespeare incorporated large chunks of other dramatists' work in his plays. When most freethinkers believed that Jesus of Nazareth was a historical figure, he was a mythicist.

Contemporary views about him concur. Robertson is called a "relentless controversialist" (S. K. Ratcliffe), "too uncompromising" (*News Chronicle*), "caring for nothing except truth" (Graham Wallas), one who considered that "everybody who disagrees with him is either an ignoramus or a fool" (Balfour) and who "did not mellow with age" (E. Maddison). Yet Herrick has diligently gathered a wealth of detail showing him as genial with his family and close friends and having a number of "human" foibles. At 16 he wanted to study Spanish, enter the copper trade and make his fortune. Later he thought of gaining wealth by writing novels and plays. Later again (1912) he said, "If I wish to be remembered at all . . . it is as a Freethinker". Fortunately for the movement his last wish was granted. It was probably fortunate for himself, for I cannot see him as a successful businessman or fiction-writer; or, for that matter, as a politician. His political demise is less surprising than his life as a public figure. Bradlaugh was certainly right to choose Foote — against the wishes of Besant and his daughter Hypatia — as his successor in the NSS presidency. But Robertson was not entirely an "iron-clad rationalist" (F. R. Leavis) in an ivory tower. After meals he read thrillers for relaxation; and whenever he didn't know where the rent was coming from, he had a good dinner and bottle of wine in a restaurant.

My own previous acquaintance with him as a writer was through his incidental journalism, his contribution to Hypatia's biography of Bradlaugh, *A History of Freethought in the Nineteenth Century* and books on Christology and Shakespeare (all dipped into rather than perused). From accounts in the Pemberton assessment it seems to me that his most original and consistent contribution was in ethics; and I am grateful to Wells for bringing this out so lucidly. I agree with Andreski (contradicted by Berman) that "the bulk of the *History of Freethought* contains no sociological explanations or interpretations", and wrote *100 Years of Freethought* as something of a counterbalance. Apparently Robertson did scatter sociology throughout his biographical and miscellaneous writings, but its value still remains a mystery to me. Likewise his contributions to economics and politics. I agree with Conrad Kaczkowski (contradicted by Tame) that his political philosophy is a "curious combination of the old and the new liberalism". His attitude to

economic determinism and socialism seems completely eclectic and muddle-headed, but there is some doubt whether the muddle is Robertson's, his assessors' or mine.

Generally, however, his problem as a thinker is not muddle-headedness but single-mindedness. Herrick rightly calls Free Trade "a particular *idée fixe* of Robertson". In Christology and Bardology he formulated theories at an early stage and spent the rest of his life interpreting the evidence to match them. Of course the theories may have been right; but they seemed to grow from two rooted, and problematical, convictions. These were, respectively, that anything inconsistent with logic or conducive to faith in religious writings can be explained away as forged interpolations, and that anything "below standard" in the work of a creative writer must be by another hand. These are rationalist obsessions *par excellence*. (With the Editor's indulgence I shall deal more fully with the mythicist theory at another time.) Nevertheless, each of a score or so of his books might have served anyone else very well as a doctoral thesis, and he was understandably bitter at his lack of academic recognition.

Whatever views are taken of his "positive" contributions to a variety of disciplines and his pioneering use of "Humanism", his annihilation of theological nonsense is a model of ruthless urbanity. Such nonsense is perennially reborn in different guises, and Berman rightly criticises Andreski for declaring that "Robertson's attacks on the traditional religions now appear as a flogging of an almost dead horse". Yet, like J. M. Wheeler, he will perhaps be best remembered as someone who resurrected dozens of dead and previously forgotten freethinkers. He could very well have become forgotten himself without the exertions of the present authors.

DAVID TRIBE

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**Dr Fenech Adami, Roman Catholic Prime Minister of Malta, has refused permission for the island to be used for filming David Yallop's book, *In God's Name*. The author of the international best-seller implied that Pope John Paul I was murdered.**

## THE FREETHINKER

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and the mentality (if not the theology) of the Protestant ethic here is encouraged by the Government. Such an emphasis on good hard work and material reward is in harmony with the ideals presented by evangelical groups. To support these ideals, evangelical groups encourage in their members a code of clean living and friendliness in which sports and outward morality are central. There is also an emphasis on displays of "love", which in practice take the form of a great deal of hugging and the giving of gifts. The Chinese who were educated after 1976 are sometimes surprisingly naive about real conditions in the West; it is commonly believed that almost everyone in the West owns a car, for example. Evangelical groups scrupulously avoid shattering their illusions. More subtle illusions held by young Chinese about the idyllic life with democratic elections and free speech are difficult for the Chinese to put in perspective. Such images are reinforced by well-funded evangelical groups, who keep any anti-Communist sentiments private. Propagandist Voice of America radio broadcasts and rosy English-language textbooks further confirm to the young Chinese the benefits of Western ways, and by association, Christianity.

Such influences are hardly welcomed among the old guard in Beijing, but however Marxist the leaders are, they do not wish to rock the investment boat by appearing to discriminate against Christians in China; nor are they entirely certain how to deal with what they call "bourgeois liberalism", seen as an outside influence rather than as a result of greater freedom and affluence within Chinese society.

Conflicts in political theory are the most obvious causes of the current crackdown on "bourgeois liberalism", a term never clearly explained but taken to mean "Western influences". The old guard in Beijing seems unwilling to voice opposition to evangelical groups for political reasons, but the spread of ideas about Western-style democracy is associated with the presence of foreigners in Chinese universities, and is seen as a causal factor in the student unrest of December 1986.

It is also important to note the residual, deep-seated distrust of foreigners among many Chinese at all social levels. Such distrust is centuries old, but was strongest during the recent Cultural Revolution. Many more Chinese, while accepting the presence of the foreigners, are rock-solid hard-liners in a pure Maoist tradition. These Chinese form a bedrock of pro-Party sentiment, and the strength of their commitment allows, for example, widespread reading of mail to and from foreigners to go unquestioned. A constant suspicion that outsiders may be spying for Taiwan arises when members of evangelical groups express pro-Taiwan feelings in private. As an example, in one Institute a map of the world was

put up on a classroom wall; printed in America, it showed China in one colour and Taiwan in another, which caused a heated public argument between one evangelist teacher and a middle-aged Chinese colleague.

Faced with the fact that some Westerners are trying to convert China, many Chinese privately express amused indifference. Their attitude seems to be that the evangelists will ultimately fail, because the Chinese people will not be fooled by this unscientific — and foreign — religion. Certainly some Chinese "convert" in order to get inside information on evangelicals' activities, or even simply to learn more English. Both sides employ tricks of various kinds. At times, evangelicals leave cases of Bibles with converted Chinese to avoid room searches, and use their influence to have vacant teaching positions filled by members of their own religious communities. The position of teacher allows them a great deal of influence on young Chinese; no opportunity is lost to bring Jesus into the classroom. For example, a lecture on "Holidays in Canada" consisted of a lengthy re-telling of the Christmas and Easter stories.

It is possible that the Chinese will have the last laugh; the Public Security Bureau appears to know all the foreigners' secrets. Scrutiny is low-key but efficient, especially since the events of the winter of 1986-87. One Chinese teacher commented that since China cannot afford to pay internationally comparable salaries for English teachers, these undercover missionaries are "a bargain". As for their few converts, he said, they remain unchangeably Chinese. And that is all that matters.

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**Russell Miller, biographer of L. Ron Hubbard, founder of the Church of Scientology, has defeated an attempt to prevent the book's publication. A New York judge has ruled that it can be published despite infringing copyright. Miller asserts that L. Ron was "dishonest, pretentious, boastful, paranoid, cowardly, bizarre and insane".**

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**Two Canadian nuns have resigned from their Order, Notre Dame de Namur. Their dismissal had been demanded by the Vatican because they, with other religious, signed an advertisement in the New York Times declaring that there was more than one legitimate Catholic position on abortion. The head of the Rome-based Order said Sisters Barbara Ferraro and Patricia Hussey "have done what the situation and their own integrity demanded".**

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**Thousands of pilgrims have been turning up at the town of Lubbock, Texas, in the hope of seeing visions of Jesus and the Virgin Mary. Three parishioners of the St John Neumann Roman Catholic Church claimed they had received messages from Mary. An outdoor mass was interrupted three times by excited visionaries.**

# LETTERS

## THE RIGHT TO BE WRONG

I read Ted McFadyen's splendid article, "Politics and the Press" (August), about the lies, distortions and hate campaigns of the tabloid press. Turning a couple of pages and I see those very same tabloids' headlines quoted in all their sensational glory, together with the highly lurid "revelations" of one Deborah Davis in Irene Fearn's article about the "Children of God".

I know nothing about this sect apart from a few silly but innocuous leaflets handed to me once or twice in the street, and I suspect that few people know much about them, unless they are members. However, I have always believed that freethinkers, as their name implies, were of the opinion that everyone over the age of majority has the right to think, and to act, as he or she pleases, provided that they hurt no-one and obey the law, and that even here the law should be liberal and allow as much freedom of thought, and action, as is reasonably possible. The idea that "young people" — and, according to the article, older ones too — need some special protection from their own actions is both paternalistic and insulting. Who will be the protectors?

Worse still are the words "mind-control techniques" and "trained mind-manipulators" flung casually around. This is a modern version of the language that was used against "witches" in a less enlightened age, and when your contributor asks for "legislation to protect victims", this echoes the authentic voice of the persecutor calling for the stake and the rope, with equal fanaticism and equal sincerity, to save frail humanity from the devices of the agents of Satan.

When young men and women leave home and abandon their studies, and when mature men desert their wives and families, this is regrettable and may be tragic; but freethinkers are on shaky ground if they join in the game of scapegoat-hunting. A family of practising Christians might well be equally shattered if one of its members became an atheist. Every adult has a right to make his or her own decisions, and mistakes, and this must include Irene Fearn's husband. To paraphrase Voltaire, one may strongly disagree with his decision, but should defend his right to make it.

ELSIE KARBACZ

## "A GLORIOUS REVOLUTION"

History is never simple. Most people's perception of it is usually simplistic. That has been abundantly evident in what has been said in the course of remembering the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688. It is easy to select some aspect to make an irrelevant point. To ignore what the "revolution" meant at the time is stupid. There had been a civil war. The Restoration of the monarchy had not brought a settlement. Plots, conspiracies, intrigues, treachery brought political confusion and instability, and the frustration of government. Charles as well as James was deviously using and lending himself to Louis XIV of France, the traditional enemy. The Jacobite invasions a little later showed the danger of a new civil war of a different complexion. Catholicism was not simply an alternative form of Christianity; it was bound up with right-wing political revolution. The Convention, summoned by William of Orange on English advice, became the Convention Parliament which produced the settlement, which the restored monarch had not done, a restoration of Parliamentary government, open decisions openly arrived at, instead of the prevailing cloak-and-

dagger tactics. That was the "Glorious Revolution". If it was not an immediate transformation, that was made possible. Walpole's policies and administration brought stability, and deliberately raised the status of the House of Commons, by making conduct in the House and party management the means by which he and his successors gained political reputation and influence. The Exchequer was strictly controlled. Extension of the franchise and civil rights for all, democratic emancipation, followed stage by stage. Tony Benn's romanticism is ludicrously inappropriate.

H. J. BLACKHAM

## MISSING THE POINT

The Pope's brass band in Parliament (Tony Benn, Eric Heffer, David Alton, etc) have deliberately missed the point of King Billy's essential constitutionalism as opposed to the Stuarts' claim to divine right of kings. This was the culmination of a long struggle between Parliament and the Crown, even Cromwell, warts and all.

The protestations by these MPs against the "Glorious Revolution" celebrations (August) is in keeping with religion in particular and Catholicism in particular. It cuts across party boundaries, and exposes their common mania for a theocratic form of Government.

Tony Benn says the wrong people won in 1688 and he bemoans the loss of a Catholic king. He is an embarrassment to the Labour Party.

D. REDHEAD

## CHEERFUL CHRISTIANS

Your condemnation (News and Notes, August) of the Christians of the Western Isles as dour and po-faced" is much too sweeping. True, these epithets could, with justice, be applied to the Wee Frees and Free Presbyterians of Lewis, Harris and North Uist, but the Catholic Christians of Barra, Eriskay (the "Whisky Galore" island) and South Uist are, on the whole, happy and fun-loving, as you would soon discover were you to be a guest at one of their many ceilidhs or wedding celebrations.

JOHN L. BROOM

## WOMEN AND THE SYSTEM

If, as Mary Hayward says ("A Feminist Case Against Censorship", July), "The History of feminism is in part a history of women's fight against powerlessness, ignorance and being treated like children", and "the system as it stands was devised by men, for men", how can she then claim that "if a man grows up into a tyrant or a monster, somewhere there is a woman who must bear a share of the blame". Is she not being rather illogical?

Mothers on both sides were powerless to stop their sons from going to the carnage of Mons, Ypres and Paschendale in the idiotic Great War which was arranged by men. No doubt many of those mothers would have rather died themselves if men had given them the opportunity. Men will only change when they come to realise that they are missing meaningful love and happiness by acting the way they do.

E. F. CRESSWELL

## "MEN ONLY"

We must resist the temptation to dismiss the discussions in the Anglican Church on female ordination as surreal agonising in a fantasy world. Equally we must not simply see it as a weird manifestation of the normal progressive desire for sexual equality.

The fact is that, whatever the supporters of female

ordination may try to argue, the weight of biblical authority — as exemplified by the writings of Paul, the patron saint of conformity — and the deep-rooted traditions of centuries are, both, perfectly definite. "Men Only", were the phrase not already in use in other connections, is the clear message.

It follows that the movement for female ordination is an essentially progressive one. It accords with modern sentiment and does so in a way that can only either break traditional authority and bibliolatory (and so liberate the constructive elements within Christian thought) or break the Church altogether. I would much prefer the first but, failing that, I would settle for the second.

ERIC STOCKTON

### CHRISTIAN "SUCCESS"

What an honour to be featured in three editions so far this year indicates your recognition of how effective Conservative Family Campaign has become in promoting Christian values in society.

I do not intend to refute the many false statements about Conservative Family Campaign, or myself, in your various articles and letters — you only have sixteen pages each month — but there is one important statement which needs clarification. R. W. Aldridge (July) says he "recently unsuccessfully sued me for libel".

To the humanist it may appear unsuccessful. To the Christian, such as myself, it was entirely successful. The gentleman was constrained not to distribute defamatory material about me during the general election campaign which was the purpose of taking legal action. The two judges involved in the case both agreed in the words of one, "that the material distributed" by your humanist colleague "was patently defamatory". No costs or damages were awarded to your correspondent. I desired no other outcome. Therefore, as is customary in the overwhelming number of cases of this sort arising from general election campaigns, I dropped the injunction and case.

GRAHAM WEBSTER GARDINER  
Chairman, Conservative Family Campaign

## New Magazine

The Scottish Humanist Council has launched a new magazine. It will appear three times a year initially.

The first issue of *The Scottish Humanist* carries articles on a variety of subjects including religious education, humanist ceremonies, reviews and news reports. SHC member Eric Stockton will edit and print the magazine. "We hope it will have a wide appeal", he says. He welcomes articles that are relevant to its interests.

The magazine is free to members of humanist groups in Scotland. It is available to others at a cost of £1.50 for three issues. Literary and financial contributions may be sent to Eric Stockton, West Cottage, Sanday, Orkney, Scotland.

The poet Edward Lear disliked priests and the Church. A plaque has been unveiled in Westminster Abbey to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of his death.

## Michael Lines

Michael Lines, a former general secretary of the British Humanist Association, has died. The funeral took place at Hendon Crematorium, London.

*H. J. Blackham writes:* When he joined the Sutton Humanist Group in its earliest days, Michael had a responsible scientific job in the R & D department of Phillips, the Dutch electronics firm. A reorganisation resulted in unexpected closing-down and redundancy, and in two years he was unable to get a comparable job. It was then that he came into the BHA office as secretary. His active, well-informed mind and pleasing personality made him a strong addition in public relations and development, but the administrative work was not congenial, and after a year or so he sought other work. He was accepted at a College of Education for training for primary teaching, but eventually took an appointment as an Education Welfare Officer, in which he continued till forced to take early retirement last year on account of hearing failure. Cancer was inoperable and rapid, and he knew he had not long to live.

Michael was highly intelligent, and formed and held strong views and commitments. Among other things, he was vegetarian and pacifist; but also active in Friends of the Earth and in co-counselling. The chapel at the crematorium was full, with friends and associates in the causes which he and his wife served. The ceremony was conducted by John White in a form that invited general participation and was a spontaneous memorial meeting that combined representation of what Michael was with expression of warmth of feeling for him. He was indeed profoundly humanist.

A Michael Lines Appeal Fund, to contribute to a local appeal for an Induction Loop for the Hearing Disabled, meets his wish that money should not be spent on floral tributes.

Sutton Humanist Group is following up the highly successful exhibition it arranged earlier this year. The Group is distributing an attractive leaflet inviting to a public meeting those who can face the fact that this life is the only one of which we have certain knowledge; who want to see a better world for this and future generations; who are worried about bigotry and intolerance. The meeting will be held at the Civic Offices, St Nicholas Way, Sutton, on Saturday, 24 September, 2.15 pm. Please telephone 01-642 8796 for further information.

Newspaper reports are always required by The Freethinker. The source and date should be clearly marked and the clippings sent without delay to The Editor, The Freethinker, 117 Springvale Road, Walkley, Sheffield, S6 3NT.

## Freethinker Fund

Our thanks to all those readers whose generous support helps to keep *The Freethinker* solvent. The latest list of contributors to the Fund is given below.

A. D. Gore, J. Madoc-Jones and A. M. Nicholls, £1 each; L. J. Dawson, J. M. Doughty, R. Hopkins, P. J. Kerr, D. R. and C. P. Love, P. D. Ward, G. Williams and R. G. Wood, £2 each; N. V. Cluett and J. B. Humphreys, £2.50 each; L. Dubrow, H. N. Feather and B. J. Van Der Sloot, £3 each; A. J. McQuaid, £4; D. A. Rickards, £4.40; A. M. Chapman, A. C. Charles, H. Edmunds, P. Forrest, K. Hudson, W. Irvine, G. Miller, M. Pinsker, P. Proctor, D. Whelan and S. M. Williams, £5 each; J. Watson, £7; G. H. Williams, £9; O. Thompson and A. E. Woodford, £10 each; E. L. Deacon, £14.40; Anonymous, £40.

Total for July: £186.80.

## Brighton Council's Pest Control Campaign

Brighton Borough Council may take tough action against the Church of Scientology, following complaints of harassment. The sect has an information centre in Duke Street, and local traders claim that its tactics are discouraging people from visiting the area.

Although there is no law to stop canvassers unless they are obstructing the highway, the Council is prepared to bring a bylaw if necessary to curb the Scientologists. It wants them to wear identity badges and to display the price of the services they offer.

Councillor Sweeting, chairman of the Highways and Transport Committee, commented: "What they are doing isn't illegal, but it's the degree and scale of it. What we want to ensure is that the scale of the operation is toned down so that it isn't a nuisance".

Although prepared to do so, the Council is not anxious to embark on the long process of passing a bylaw. It is also worried that such a law would restrict traders and market researchers.

Child abuse takes many forms. When a fundamentalist Christian couple in Marion, North Carolina, and their children aged ten, six and five, go on a family outing, they all take turns at preaching from their pick-up truck. Duffey Strode, the eldest, also preaches in the school classroom. But he overstepped the mark by denouncing his teachers as "fornicators" and "adulterers", and describing a nine-year-old girl as "a whore" because she wore make-up. After being expelled, the boy declared: "I'd rather get my reward up in Heaven than an education down here".

## EVENTS

**Brighton and Hove Humanist Group.** New Venture Theatre Club, Bedford Place (off Western Road), Brighton. Sunday, 2 October, 5.30 pm for 6 pm. Peter Heales: Positivism and Humanism.

**Edinburgh Humanist Group.** Programme for Forum meetings from the secretary, 59 Fox Covert Avenue, Edinburgh, EH12 6UH, telephone 031-334 8372.

**Gay and Lesbian Humanist Association.** Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Meetings on the second Friday of the month at 7.30 pm.

**Glasgow Humanist Society.** Information regarding meetings and other activities is obtainable from Mrs Marguerite Morrow, 32 Pollock Road, Glasgow, G61 2NJ, telephone 041-942 0129.

**Hasving and District Humanist Society.** Harold Wood Social Centre, Gubbins Lane and Squirrels Heath Road, Harold Wood. Tuesday, 4 October, 8 pm. Martin Horwood: The Influence of Humanism.

**Leeds and District Humanist Group.** Swarthmore Institute, Swarthmore Square, Leeds. Monday, 10 October, 7.30 pm. Kate Carey: Crime and Punishment.

**Lewisham Humanist Group.** Unitarian Meeting House, 41 Bromley Road, London SE6. Thursday, 29 September, 7.45 pm. Barbara Smoker: Schism — How Catholic is the Catholic Church?

**London Student Sceptics.** Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Meetings on alternate Mondays at 7.30 pm, commencing 17 October. Details: Mike Howgate, telephone 01-882 2606.

**Norwich Humanist Group.** Programme of meetings obtainable from Philip Howell, 41 Spixworth Road, Old Catton, Norwich, NR6 7NE, telephone Norwich 47843.

**Sutton Humanist Group.** Friends House, Cedar Road, Sutton. Wednesday, 12 October, 7.30 pm for 8 pm. David Ive: Official Secrecy and Freedom of Information.

**Warwickshire Humanist Group.** Friends Meeting House, Hill Street (off Corporation Street), Coventry. Monday, 19 September, 7.45 pm for 8 pm. Public Meeting.

**West Glamorgan Humanist Group.** Information regarding meetings and other activities is obtainable from Georgina Coupland, 117 Pennard Drive, Southgate, telephone 044 128 3631.

**Worthing Humanist Group.** Programme of meetings obtainable from Bob Thorpe, 19 Shirley Drive, Worthing, telephone 62846.

Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom

CONFERENCE: WHO OWNS THE MEDIA?

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1

Saturday, 24 September, 10 am - 5 pm

For details, telephone 01-437 2795

## Organ Transplants

organs for transplants if there were no better means of acquiring suitable organs. As it happens, however, the use of human organs for these purposes is not only more effective but need entail no human suffering at all.

"There would be no shortage of vital human organs available from the irreversibly brain-dead if only we had an opting-out, rather than opting-in, system of organ donation, whereas the use of animal organs (or, for that matter, of regenerative substances or foetal tissue or merely ova from animals), necessarily entails the lifelong confinement in unnatural, sterile laboratory conditions of pigs or primates or other animals high in the evolutionary scale. And the main reason for choosing animal rather than human donors seems to be to pander to religious superstition about human souls.

"At the present time, a parliamentary committee is reviewing the Peel Report (1972) on the use of aborted human remains for medical research, allied to the recent successful use of human foetal brain tissue in the treatment of Parkinson's Disease, and has already received predictable evidence from the 'pro-life' lobby, based on the superstitious hysteria that it has, as usual, been busily whipping up among ignorant sections of the public".

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**The Athene Trust is organising an international conference to investigate the options for humanity, animals and the environment in the light of recent advances in genetic engineering. It will be held at the British Academy of Film and Television Art (the Princess Anne Theatre), 195 Piccadilly, London, on Friday and Saturday, 7 and 8 October, 10 am - 6 pm. The conference programme/booking form is obtainable from The Athene Trust, 3A Charles Street, Petersfield, Hants, GU23 3EH.**

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## IHEU Slams Clause 28

At its international congress held last month at the State University of New York and Niagara Falls, Canada, the International Humanist and Ethical union demonstrated firm opposition to Clause 28 of the UK Local Government Act.

A resolution overwhelmingly accepted by the congress affirms that "all people should have the freedom to choose their own lifestyle", and that the right of individual self-determination and equality which forms the basis of democracy, "should be defended against all forms of prejudice and discrimination".

The resolution was proposed by the British Gay

and Lesbian Humanist Association (GALHA) and the Dutch Humanist League. Both are affiliated to the IHEU. It declares that Clause 28 is "a violation of human rights upheld by the UN Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the European Convention of Human Rights, all of which have been co-signed by the UK".

Commenting on the resolution, GALHA general Secretary George Broadhead said: "This unequivocal support for lesbian and gay rights from the Humanist movement worldwide follows that from UK organisations like the British Humanist Association which have already spoken out against this blatantly anti-gay legislation. The support is in sharp contrast to the resolution carried overwhelmingly at the Church of England General Synod this year which affirmed the biblical teaching on personal relationships and called on homosexuals to repent".

## Catholic Pressure Groups Active in Yorkshire

Health officials in Yorkshire have called a conference to discuss attempts by Roman Catholic anti-abortionists to take over health watchdog groups. A regional health authority spokesman said: "Community health council secretaries, among others, have raised the matter with us, and we are trying to find a solution".

All four vacancies for voluntary groups on Bradford CHC have been won by Catholic-sponsored candidates. They and three other members came from groups like the Union of Catholic Mothers, the Catholic Social Welfare Society, Natural Family Planning, the Society of St Vincent De Paul and Bradford Life Group.

The flood of Catholic candidates — which coincided with the campaign of support for the Alton Bill — has led to Leeds Council for Voluntary Service refusing to act as agent for the Yorkshire Regional Health Authority in CHC elections.

In an editorial on these developments, the *Yorkshire Evening Post* commented: "What we are seeing in Bradford . . . is Militant-style tactics adapted for religious purposes. The aim, so far as we can discern, seems to be tighter restrictions on abortions.

"Whether there is any decrease in the number of abortions in a large city like Bradford, or anywhere else, remains to be seen.

"What is certain . . . is that the presence of a large single-issue faction, religious or political, on any decision-making body does nothing for the overall health of local democracy".