
articles for the Hearst newspapers ("Going to the Cinema," "Should Philosophers Smoke Cigars?," "Who May Wear Lipstick?"). The marriage broke up in the early 1930s. He then married Peter Spence, a woman 30 years younger than he. She left him in 1949. Finally, in 1952 he married Edith Finch and experienced 17 years of quiet bliss: an interesting but not edifying record. Moorehead only occasionally raises an eyebrow at the discrepancy between Russell's mastery of logic and his weak grasp of the realities of other people's lives.

The post-1945 Russell is the one Americans remember. This Russell fought for the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, wrote to John Foster Dulles and Nikita Khrushchev to demand nuclear disarmament, lectured John Kennedy on Cuba, and led a last, bitter campaign against the Vietnam War. Moorehead is pained by the way Russell was taken over by Ralph Schoenman during this final crusade. Schoenman was a left-wing graduate student at the London School of Economics who came to see Russell in 1960; he stayed to tea, then to manage Russell's affairs for the next eight years. He destroyed innumerable old friendships, wasted large amounts of money, hampered every good cause with which he was involved, and made Russell look ridiculous. Moorehead shares the universal relief that almost the last thing Russell did was break with Schoenman and write a memorandum explaining why. Can we decently say that a rip-roaring atheist like Russell redeemed himself? We can certainly rejoice that he died as clear-headed as he had lived.

BLASPHEMY: Verbal Offense Against the Sacred, From Moses to Salman Rushdie. By Leonard W. Levy. Knopf. 688 pp. \$35

The question of blasphemy—what it is, what harm it does, whether it can even be a crime in a secular or pluralistic society—calls forth strong yet foggy views from across the political spectrum. Unlike obscenity, it doesn't belong to that category of things you know when you see; the many authorities, religious and otherwise, who have tried to construe it as such have only added to the confusion. As Levy shows in his history

of blasphemy trials, political persecutions, and other related oddities, the charge—no matter who brings it—tends to blur with astonishing speed into related offenses and semioffenses such as heresy, impiety, sacrilege, apostasy, idolatry, and, as the early Catholic Church described the Arian heresy, "pestilential error."

Levy's story wends its way from the original, strict Judaic definition of blasphemy as "reviling God by name" (which, the Name being unknown and unpronounceable, presented insuperable difficulties of prosecution) through the uncontrollable political bloating of the concept in early Christianity up through the age of religious wars and the later struggles to distinguish between blasphemy and obscenity in English common law. The excitement mounts with the great 19th-century blasphemy trials that advanced freedom of the press in England, including those that made a martyr of the printer Richard Carlile, jailed for distributing Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason*. These trials in turn led to such legal landmarks as the Trinity Act of 1813, which decriminalized questioning the doctrine of the Trinity.

Levy's own views about the boundaries of blasphemy are obvious from the book's dust jacket, which shows the notorious "Piss Christ" photograph by Andrés Serrano in giant closeup. Levy thus implicitly rejects the view, an important one in the recent art wars, that the context in which such an image is shown or the use to which it is put has no effect on whether it is offensive. Exactly how the author, a professor emeritus of history at Claremont Graduate School, arrives at his conclusion that the charge of blasphemy is meaningless in a secular society remains murky. But there's so much material here that the argument can be treated as secondary, especially since it's clear that, on this subject at least, people are more interested in ammunition than in new ideas.

Contemporary Affairs

THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS FREE SPEECH AND IT'S A GOOD THING, TOO. By Stanley Fish. Oxford Univ. Press. 332 pp. \$25

While the current impulse in the so-called