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BRAINWASHING IN SCHOOLS

THE report of the special committee of the British Council of Churches is a modest step in the right direction, insofar as it desires to reduce religious brainwashing in schools.

As the 1944 Education Act does not specify what form 'religious instruction' is to take except that it is to be according to Agreed Syllabuses worked out by committees where member churches of the Council have veto rights, indoctrination could be ended tomorrow if they would permit objective teaching of all the world's religions and the case for atheism. It is not however encouraging to find that 51 per cent of RI teachers are quoted (I have not yet had an opportunity of studying the relevant survey and its validity) as regarding the aim of RI to be the arousal of 'personal Christian dedication'. And the suspicion must exist that the committee's hope to replace 'brainwashing' with 'effective' instruction may be connected with recognition that in secondary schools the hard sell could set up consumer resistance and a soft sell might be more efficacious.

It is especially difficult to see how, with the best will in the world, much can be done to make an act of 'worship' objective. Certainly a roster of worshipful gods in the pantheon could be introduced, but this would mean only that different religionists were withdrawn every day. The secular humanist would be no better off, for things like ethical and positivist churches that 'worshipped humanity' have long since disappeared, and the legal definition of 'worship' is held to imply some type of theism. Is this what is meant by the committee's reference to non-Christian 'spiritual values', or does it mean secular moral and cultural aspirations? The former is more likely when one considers the mention of 'those who are not aware of a personal God'—a question-begging phrase of monumental smugness.

But all this is hardly surprising. What could be expected if one political party were invited to vet the civics syllabus? So long as the 1944 Act re-

mains in force and the Christian churches have legislative recognition that no other ideological bodies enjoy, there will be no justice and every opportunity must be provided for exercising the conscience clause and opting out of the whole slanted imposition. There will also continue to be a shortage of trained RI specialists, for who but a devout Christian or pious humbug would want to operate within the present system?

DAVID TRIBE,
President, National Secular Society.

SUNDAY ENTERTAINMENTS BILL

**A message from John Parker,
MP for Dagenham**

I introduced a Sunday Entertainments Bill to the House of Commons in 1953 but it failed to reach the Statute Book because the Lord's Day Observance Society effectively organised an opposition campaign; they issued pre-stamped postcards at the doors of churches for parishioners to send their Member of Parliament asking them to vote against the Bill.

This is always the problem when freedom is at stake—an organised minority can raise a cry while the voice of freedom-loving citizens is unheard.

The new Sunday Entertainments Bill has been filibustered for two Fridays and can well be talked out again when it comes up on May 24 if we cannot obtain sufficient support to force a closure.

It is therefore vitally important for every reader of the "Freethinker" to send immediately a short letter or postcard to his or her MP asking for help to put the measure through.

THE PHILOSOPHIAN CHURCH

READERS may recall a front page notice in the FREETHINKER (February 23) headed *Reverend Secularists* in which news was given of the forming of atheist churches, and of ordained ministers of these churches, in the USA. In particular it mentioned that our own frequent contributor, Willard E. Edwards, was now the Reverend Dr Edwards, who described his mission as being "to do all we can to mentally emancipate people from orthodoxy, superstition and belief in supernaturalism" and to "bug hell" out of the phony [ministers] (faith healers, damnation prophets, etc.)".

Shortly after this announcement, another regular contributor, J. J. Thompson (previously A. J. Thompson) wrote to your Editor with similar news; that he was opening a similar church in London. Later, he contributed a short article and a letter regarding the venue and date of the first 'service'. Both are reproduced below.

News such as this will, of course, be received with mixed feelings (Dr Edwards has just informed me: "Very few of my friends encourage the idea, including my wife!"), nevertheless, freethinkers who wish to reserve their judgement may be glad of an opportunity to visit the 'church' and see for themselves the real nature of this new movement.

The Church with More than Religion

What makes the difference between right and wrong? This important question underlies all human relationships, yet surprisingly few, if asked, can give a satisfactory answer.

Religion has been based on the idea that morality depends on the will of an unseen spiritual being. Whether or not this is true, it must surely be true also that morality is likewise based on natural reasons—on the nature of man, of conduct and of society. Throughout human history, many ethical theories have been added to the world's moral

(Continued on next page)

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

National Secular Society. Details of membership and inquiries regarding bequests and secular funeral services may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, London, SE1. Telephone 01-407 2717. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the NSS.

Humanist Letter Network (International) and Humanist Postal Book Service (secondhand books bought and sold). For information or catalogue send 6d stamp to Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mound)—Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN and MCRAE.

Manchester Branch NSS, Platt Fields, Sunday afternoon, 3 p.m.: Car Park, Victoria Street, Sunday evenings, 8 p.m.

Merseyside Branch NSS (Pierhead)—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.: Sundays, 3 p.m. and 7.30 p.m.

Nottingham Branch NSS (Old Market Square), every Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

Dulwich Humanist Group, 141 Rosendale Road, London, S.E.21, Friday, May 24, 7.45 p.m.: G. N. DEODHEKAR, "The Work of the National Secular Society".

Herts County Teachers' Association, Offley Place, Great Offley, Hitchin, Sunday, May 19, 2.15 p.m.: Conference, "A Christian Basis for Education?" NSS speaker: DAVID COLLIS.

Redbridge Humanist Society, Wanstead House, corner The Green and Redbridge Lane West, Wanstead, Sunday, May 27, 7.45 p.m.: R. W. HALL (Chief Welfare Officer) or deputy, "Welfare in Redbridge".

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, May 19, 11 a.m.: Dr JOHN LEWIS, "The Naked Ape".

The Trade Union, Labour, Co-operative Democratic History Society. Exhibition "The People's History", Central Library, Bancroft Road, London, E1. Open daily 9 a.m.—8 p.m., May 13—26 inclusive.

THE PHILOSOPHIAN CHURCH

(Continued from front page)

philosophy. Recent development in ethical theory, which shows that moral behaviour is in every case related to the survival of society, now makes possible clear insight into all of human behaviour and motives, in their moral aspects, on a purely natural and national basis.

Morality is indispensably necessary to society, for without it society could not exist; and there must be, therefore, this principle of right and wrong. Newer ethical thought suggests that a false principle of morality must inevitably lead to error and misunderstanding in human relationships,

while the true principle can afford recognition of the fundamental reason why an act is good or evil. Many of our most grievous social problems—war, racialism, prejudice, intolerance—are shown by the newer ethics to be indeed due to failure to recognise that the true principle of morality consists in aptness to preserve a society in which the members can interact with one another to mutual advantage, and that this principle is more capable of direct application to problems of human relationships than is a purely supernatural principle.

The new Philosophian Church, formed to demonstrate how the Church can be better adapted to the needs of modern society, upholds morality for the survival of society, thus for natural as well as for supernatural ethical principle. The new Church considers, tolerantly and impartially, all the world's ethical doctrines, both natural and supernatural. This Church meets a very pressing need of the modern world, for it provides a logical set of standards to live by for all people, including those to whom the supernatural standards are no longer adequate.

Our Church does not require faith; instead of adherence to a creed, intellectual freedom prevails. All are welcome, regardless of belief. The title "Church Without Religion" that has been attached to the new Church is not quite appropriate if the larger concept of religion includes all beliefs and practices, however divergent, natural as well as supernatural, which are directed towards the moral uplift or perfection of humanity.

To the Editor, FREETHINKER. Dear Mr Hyde.

I am now pleased to announce that the new Philosophian Church will hold its first service in the Rosslyn Chapel, Rosslyn Hill and Willoughby Road, Hampstead, on Sunday, May 26, at 3.30 p.m. I shall be very grateful if you will be so kind as to publish this information in the FREETHINKER.

(Rev.) J. J. THOMPSON, Minister.

INTERNATIONAL HUMANISM

FOLLOWING Harold Blackham's retirement from editorship of the International Humanist and Ethical Union's quarterly journal *International Humanism*, responsibility for the publication is now shared between two Editors, one Managing Editor and five Associate Editors. The Managing Editor (Stephanie von Buchau) and the co-Editors (Dr Paul Kurtz and Tolbert H. McCarroll) are all prominent members of American Humanist movements.

The five Associate Editors represent as many different nations and are individually responsible for material contributed from their own countries. Nations so far represented, and the Associate Editors responsible, are: Germany (Dr Wilhelm Bonness), Great Britain (Karl Hyde, editor of the FREETHINKER), Italy (Franco Ottolenghi), Netherlands (Th. W. Polet), and the United States (Dr Matthew les Spetter).

British writers who may care to contribute to *International Humanism* should address their material to KARL HYDE, *International Humanism*, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London, W8. (NOT to the FREETHINKER.)

Like the FREETHINKER, *International Humanism* is constantly in need of suitable material for publication, but, unlike the FREETHINKER, the length of the journal (22 pages) makes it a suitable medium for articles of up to 3,000 words. It is important that British contributors should endeavour to compose articles representative of a single nation in an international forum; a British picture for a world readership.

RELIGIOUS POWER AND WAR

Joe Naseby

IN the *New Statesman* a Proinsias Mac Aonghusa wrote, April 19, 1968: "Karl Marx and Frederick Engels wrote at some length about Ireland and a good deal of *Capital* deals with Irish affairs. At no time do they appear to have suspected that an independent Ireland would rapidly identify itself with the interests of its former masters and that an Irish Foreign Office would become one of the most right-wing in Europe".

By its "former masters" Proinsias Mac Aonghusa meant, of course, the priests or hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church, presided over for more than 400 years by an Italian dictator, the Pope. When Southern Ireland became "free" it simply exchanged government from Westminster for domination from Rome; a point which wouldn't be contended by anyone—especially the Eire Roman priesthood.

Marx knew little about Roman Catholicism (which, in his day, was politically and financially weak, both in the United States and in Europe) and his ignorance, bequeathed to his followers of all shades of red, *has been a boon to Rome and a calamity to almost everyone else ever since*. Politics is about power, and it seems Marx didn't realise that there is no organisation in the world more interested in power and more desperate for it, nor more ruthless and lying to acquire it, than the Black International, the *Church of Rome*.

The evidence that Fascism of every brand was Roman Catholic is overwhelming. The following were all born Roman Catholics and "educated" Roman Catholics: Pilsudski, Mussolini (decorated by the Pope), Hitler (Concordat with the Vatican), Himmler (whose uncle was a Jesuit priest), Goebbels, von Papen (Hitler's Deputy-Chancellor), Frank (Hitler's Attorney-General), Heydrich, Salazar, Franco, Father Tiso of Slovakia, Degrelle (in Belgium), Seyss-Inquart (appointed Governor of occupied Holland by Hitler), Pavelik (who masterminded the massacre of over 250,000 Greek Catholic Serbians and Jews), Father Coughlin (the U.S. Fascist leader), Petain (who introduced anti-Semitic legislation to Vichy France, blessed by the Pope).

Perhaps the biggest of all lies circulated by the Vatican fellow-travellers and fifth-columnists is that "religious wars are a thing of the past". The Ethiopians were Coptic Christians and the Italian Fascist invasion of Ethiopia was religious as well as imperialist as the Italian press said at the time. To plant "Christ's standard" in Ethiopia's capital was one of the declared aims of the Mussolini Fascists. The Spanish civil war was 100 per cent religious; it had nothing to do with "Capitalism"; it was waged to put the Roman Church back in power in Spain.

When Hitler was at the height of his power, he had virtually recreated the Holy Roman Empire; the alliance of Teuton and Pope. Had he won the war, Europe would have been ruled by Roman Catholic dictators. This the rank-and-file Socialists in Britain do not appreciate, and their leaders—who do realise it—are not telling them. Though there is nothing more reactionary than Roman

Catholicism, while there is room at the top of the British Communist Party for anti-capitalists, *there is none for anti-Vaticanites*, and readers can draw their own conclusions from that.

The Biafran civil war is religious as well as tribal. The Federal Government is accused almost daily of maltreating Christians, which its officials have denied. It seems Biafra's main arms-supplier is Roman Catholic Portugal. Nyerere, the Roman Catholic who has "recognised" Biafra! Currently, the natives of Angola are being massacred by the Portuguese. What has prompted Nyerere to "recognise" rebels who are being armed by a Fascist dictatorship which is slaughtering black people in Africa? Is this another example of Black Internationalism? Is the link Roman Catholicism?

The Arab-Israeli war is religious as well as nationalist. The Vietnam war is a Roman Catholic crusade, as was pointed out in Dr Larson's recent article in the *FREETHINKER*. It was Spellman who chose Diem, and Diem, like Thieu and Ky, was Roman Catholic. Spain paid the price for being the Pope's military tool. Phillip II almost bankrupted Spain by his ruinous expenditure on the Great Armada. Similarly, President Johnson has now brought the US into economic trouble with his Vietnam crusade. The US has overspent, and the "defence"-mongers, the arms-makers, have benefitted.

President Johnson has told us he prayed in a nunnery; he makes a habit of attending RC services; he brought the Pope to New York; he recently visited the Pope and was presented with a Madonna picture; and he has a Roman Catholic daughter. It fits.

It was the late Cardinal Spellman who said that America must settle for nothing less than "total victory". That was the original Roman Catholic policy. But it has changed, the Pope is now praying for peace, and Roman Catholic doves are fluttering all over the States, led by Robert Kennedy and by McCarthy who has suddenly blossomed forth as a radical. US Catholic Action has had to loop-the-loop because millions of Americans have been hearing the truth, that the Vietnam war is a "Holy" Roman Crusade. For a variety of reasons it is growing in unpopularity also, and "total victory" has not been as easy to achieve as was expected *because there has been no "non-intervention" farce in Vietnam*.

It is not "Capitalism" therefore which is causing wars as Marx predicted. Behind the wars of Christendom in our time, of the Western nations, there is the Vatican, the Black International, Catholic Action. The statement that religious wars are a thing of the past is false and is the most dangerous of lies. Because if we do not know who or what is causing wars, how can we stop them? War is mankind's major disease. It is the one which threatens the very existence of the human race. Like every other disease, it can never be cured by ignorance or a false diagnosis. *Take note you politicians and clergymen, particularly you who pose as saviours or saviour-inspired guides of the people.*

SECTARIANISM AMONG NON-BELIEVERS

E. C. Vanderlaan (USA)

Reproduced from the February 1968 issue of the American freethought journal "Progressive World" with acknowledgements to the Editor.

SUPPOSE that for the first time you come upon the following pair of propositions: (1) The God-idea, that is the notion that the universe was intentionally created and is intentionally directed by a Supreme Being, presents so many difficulties that it appears to be not true. (2) This abandonment of traditional religious belief, so far from being a cause of despair, is in fact a source of hope and confidence; for it means that every advance in justice and mercy that the world has seen, was made by men; and therefore, though we cannot predict inevitable progress, there is in men the possibility of betterment—that same race of men who have made advances in the past.

Suppose, further, that you find this pair of ideas illuminating and inspiring. You then say: This ought not to be confined to books and university lectures. Is there not some form of organisation for the promotion of this enlightenment? Yes; only it exists not in "some form", but, unfortunately, in numerous forms, numerous groups with essentially the same message, who seem unable to unite. Let us survey these separate groups.

The Ethical Societies

As far back as 1876 Felix Adler, a young man who had studied to be a rabbi but could not satisfy his examiners of his orthodoxy, founded in New York the **Society for Ethical Culture** with the motto "Ethics is the core of religion". Any additional beliefs were left to the judgment of members. Four or five other such societies were soon founded in major cities. The New York society soon established a highly regarded day school, and also pioneered in several forms of social service, some of which were later taken over by the city.

Dr Adler was temperamentally adverse to propaganda. "Those who belong with us will come to us." There was therefore for some years no further expansion. But in later years an active programme of promotion has been carried on.

Dr Adler himself, while not believing in God in the usual sense, seems to have believed in a Moral Order in the universe. Nowadays, however, the Ethical movement seems to be essentially humanistic, as described in the first paragraph of this article.

Almost from the first, associates of Dr Adler spread the movement to England, forming an Ethical Union. For some time now the British Ethical Societies have used the word "humanism" as a matter of course. More of this below.

The American Humanist Association

This began modestly in 1927 as a group of theological students and university professors. In 1933 they gathered a dozen or so signers to a document called *A Humanist Manifesto*, which occasioned some comment at the time. Twenty years later an inquiry showed that many of the signers no longer liked the document, some because it presented humanism in the form of a redefinition of religion, at least two because they now found humanism inadequate, and others for other reasons. The original intention of revising it was abandoned, and the Manifesto was left as a "dated document". The opening paragraph

of the present article may be taken as the general present position of the AHA.

The most conspicuous feature of the AHA today is the publication of its handsome, high-quality bi-monthly *The Humanist*, which strives to present both scholarly and popular articles. A couple of years ago the Board of Directors decided that the time had now come to lay stress on the philosophical position and devote more attention to pioneering in social betterment. This sounded to some as if the Association meant to soft-pedal its non-theistic position; but a careful reading of the magazine shows that this is not so. The negative part of the message is still there, though it is not blazoned in any offensively aggressive manner.

Some years ago began the movement for organising local chapter of the AHA. Success varies. Some chapters flourish, others appear and disappear. The present national administration is zealous for elaborating the organisational machinery. An evidence of this is the recent transfer of national headquarters from a college town in Ohio to San Francisco.

Scarcely had the AHA got well under way when many asked the obvious question: Why don't you coalesce with the Ethical Societies? You stand for so nearly the same thing. An attractive idea, but hard to accomplish. Traditions and habits stand in the way. More of this below.

The IHEU

Soon after 1945 came word of the formation in the Netherlands of a **Humanist League**, which soon became very successful, both in publicising its principles and in several forms of social service. So successful indeed that a few years ago its leaders were complaining that in that tiny country they had *only* 12,000 members. This lively body caught the attention of the Americans, the British and others, and in 1954 was held in Amsterdam the first quadrennial Congress of the **International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU)**. Subsequent Congresses were held in London, Oslo and Paris, and the next such meeting is to be in the United States. The original promoters were the American Humanist Association, the American Ethical Union, the British Ethical Union, and the Dutch Humanist League. At later Congresses there have been representatives from as far apart as Nigeria, Denmark and Japan. The list of participant groups is too long to give here. The IHEU has obtained consultative status with the United Nations.

To return for a moment to the AHA and AEU, if these two bodies could co-operate so enthusiastically abroad, why not at home? Yes, continuing efforts are being made to co-operate in some projects, but co-operation is a long way from union. Strange (or not strange?) that people who have no quarrel get bound to traditions and customs. . . . In a letter to a little newspaper printed by the American Ethical Union appeared a letter saying in effect: "Union with the AHA in the IHEU may be all right, but a national merging would be destructive, for the AHA is rationalistic and irreligious". On the other hand, no doubt some members of the AHA find distasteful the continual insistence that "Ethics is the core of religion" (historically considered, a doubtful statement). Strange how hard it is for relatives to get along together.

Back to Britain

Soon after the formation of the IHEU, The British Ethical Union and the Rationalist Press Association (publishers since 1899) co-operated to form the **British Humanist Association** for co-operative promotion of certain causes. The RPA changed the name of its magazine to *Humanist* (a sparkling monthly well worth subscribing to). Then arose the ominous question of continued tax exemption, for the new BHA was sponsoring various causes with a political tinge that rendered it hardly classifiable as a "charity". What to do? The RPA thought best to withdraw and continue solely as a publishing agency. This left the BHA practically identical with the BEU. In fact, the BEU thereupon changed its name to the British Humanist Association, and took up the burden of being no longer tax-exempt. A hard choice. But the RPA continues to publish the *Humanist* as practically the organ of the BHA.

The BHA lists about a hundred local groups, including student groups in apparently every university. There is a little uneasiness on the question of politics. Says one correspondent in the magazine: "Unless we get directly into politics, we are futile". Says another: "If the BHA get tied up with party politics, I quit". Baroness Barbara Wootton withdraws because a recent Declaration of Principles by the BHA sounds like a political tract for the Liberal Party. It all sounds sadly familiar, doesn't it?

The Fellowship of Religious Humanists

In the United States again, we hear of the above title. It is not a secession from, or a rival of the AHA. It is affiliated with both the AHA and the Unitarian Universalist churches. It came about, the promoter explained to me, because some AHA members had grown tired of hearing debate about whether humanism is or is not a religion. They proceed on the assumption that it is a religion. They have begun to publish a small quarterly to which I have not cared to subscribe.

Now any group of congenial people are at liberty to associate if they wish. But the debate in which they have chosen a side seems, like so many futile debates, to arise solely through a mis-statement of the question. Any semanticist could straighten it out. The proper question here is not: Is humanism a religion? but rather: How far may the meaning of the word religion be stretched before utter confusion arises? For myself, I do not see the reason for the existence of this group, but if they want to be a group within two groups, I hope they find it enjoyable.

The Uninvited

When the IHEU was formed (isn't this alphabet game fun?) we were informed that it had been decided *not to invite* the "merely iconoclastic" bodies. The word iconoclast (idol-smasher) dates from the sixteenth century Reformation period, when some wild Protestants invaded Catholic churches and smashed the hated images. These uninvited ones were evidently those many little rationalist and atheist groups who lay all their emphases (or are thought to lay all their emphasis) on the first of the two propositions in our opening paragraph.

When the Dutch Humanist League was formed, many thought this new organisation would coalesce with the hundred-year-old Dutch Freethinkers Society. This did not occur. In England the **National Secular Society** (founded in 1866) goes on its way, apparently on good terms with the BHA. Its advertisements appear in the London *Humanist*. By the way, the uninvited still have their own international body, the International Union of Free-

thinkers. As I recall, before the formation of the IHEU, the AHA thought of adhering to the International Freethinkers (but they then thought of another plan).*

In this country, about twenty years ago, a number of rationalist and atheistic groups grew alarmed at new signs of religious aggression, and resolved to form a unified body, the **United Secularists of America**. They gave up their own little publications to create a single magazine, which bore the name of *Progressive World* (to my taste an unfortunate name, since it might represent almost anything). Hugh Robert Orr, who had come to notice with his little cards called *Little Lessons in Lunacy*, became the editor of the new publication, which you are reading at this moment. For some time Orr could not make the magazine exactly what he wanted, since in this co-operative undertaking he was not altogether free to reject articles he considered inferior. Everybody wanted to have his say. But over the years Orr laboured to raise the quality of *PW*, and it bears his stamp to this day.

The United Secularists also has problems about policy. From time to time readers urge us plaintively to broaden our scope, to deal with something more than religious orthodoxy. Well, we still do belabour other follies of our time; but the attempt to adopt a position on all problems of the day could tear our movement apart. There is something to be said for sticking to our last. After all, there is no shortage of other causes in which one may personally work.

Since we are complaining of sectarianism, we ought to take a peep at a skeleton in our own closet—just a peep, no need to stare at it. The United Secularists was hardly launched, twenty years ago, when there were quarrels, not on questions of principle but on matters of personalities—and funds. Few, I hope, still remember what it was all about. But those who felt they had a grievance branched off and began to publish their own magazine, *The American Rationalist*. When last I saw a copy, it was published in St Louis, and seemed an attractive publication.

A word much in fashion these days among Christians is *Ecumenism*, or the *Ecumenical Movement*. Vatican II was an Ecumenical (world-wide) Council of the Catholic Church. The word Ecumenism now is heard among many varieties of Christians. It expresses a rather pathetic longing for fellowship, if not union, among those who are deeply divided. Indeed it would seem that Christianity cannot become one until its various types cease to be what they are. It is easy to be sarcastic about this growing mutual politeness which covers mutual dislike. But while trying to be generous toward these people who are so foreign to us, could we not at least think of an ecumenical movement among bodies of the generally humanistic type, whom nothing serious divides?

[*This should be "the World Union of Freethinkers".—Ed.]

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THE FREETHINKER BOUND VOLUME 1967

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OBSCENE AND INDECENT

Jean Straker

THE Arts Council of Great Britain, of which Lord Goodman is the Chairman, is intending to arrange a symposium on the Obscene Publications Acts. These are the Acts under which prosecutions are taken against publishers, booksellers, photographers and, sometimes, painters. They are not the only Acts, however, by which censorship is applied in the arts. It is to be hoped that the Council will be persuaded to broaden its terms of reference for the symposium by taking in those other Acts on the Statute Book which it is suggested should be repealed in the draft Freedom of Communications Bill which is being initially sponsored by Freedom of Vision, Cosmo and the Student Humanist Federation.

The purpose of this Bill is remove from the scope of the Criminal Law of England all common law and statutory offences relating to the publication of matter described as "indecent" or "obscene".

The Acts, or sections of Acts which are applicable are:

- (1) Vagrancy Act, 1824, s4; and 1838, c38, s2.
- (2) Theatres Act, 1843, s15.
- (3) Customs Consolidation Act, 1876, s42.
- (4) Post Office Act, 1953, s11 (1) (b).
- (5) Obscene Publications Act, 1959.
- (6) Obscene Publications Act, 1964.

In doing this the Bill will implement certain provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted and proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 10, 1948. The relevant articles are:

ARTICLE 19:

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

ARTICLE 27:

- (1) Everyone has the right freely to participate in the

cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

- (2) Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

Cases in the courts during the last few years have shown that existing statutory and common law restraints on publication are archaic, unworkable and uncertain, and have the effect of persecuting and punishing the open and responsible publisher, while leaving untouched a mass of low-grade trash which is sold "underground" for high prices because of the legal risk in publication.

Freedom to publish anything will mean that all such matter will find an open competitive commercial value, and will divert to normal commercial channels such revenue as may accrue from publication; furthermore it will provide artists and writers of talent to compete in an area of constant human and psychological interest without fear of prosecution in a way which will help to broaden education and expand understanding of many problems which at present involve mental confusion.

The draft Bill also provides that persons from whom any articles are seized under any common law process, or under any of the Acts listed and which are still held in official custody at the passing of the Act shall be entitled to claim for the return of any such articles at any time within six months of the passing of the Act, and upon such claims being established the detaining authorities shall return such articles to the persons from whom they took them.

It is also proposed that after the expiry of six months from the date of the passing of the Act, any articles still remaining in official custody shall be offered to the British Museum or other public or university library at the discretion of the Home Secretary.

It was church and chapel morning, noon and night. As time dragged on, the illogical and contradictory nature of the Almighty, of the doctrine and dogma, became a source of horror to me and, during the long hours of kneeling and praying, my mind began to pull everything I had been taught to pieces. Drilled in stories of saints and their self-inflicted tortures it became apparent that many of them were mentally unstable people: paranoics with a strong suicidal urge to martyrdom. In taking Communion—if we are to believe the truth of the eucharist—we were swallowing the body of God: cannibalism.

My escape came with the ending of the training course.

The local clergy itch for me to pay them the compliment of hypocrisy. They would be a source of amusement for me (with their pot-bellies, parish dinners and propriety manners) but I see the sad wastage of their own lives in the propagation of half-baked dogma, and in their ignorance, the danger and destructiveness inherent in their vocation. The enslavement of minds and the consequent betrayal of the young is a serious business—and it is their business.

AN EDUCATION

Kathleen Bal

IT was something to be a 'convent girl'. The local RC grammar school used to be entitled 'Finishing School for the Daughters of Gentlemen' and never quite lived it down. I was expected to feel honoured by my admittance to that seminary of indoctrination. Yet from the age of seven years I was inclined to be sceptical and soon learned to dislike the daily hour's brainwashing. It followed as a matter of course that the convent could not make a true Christian of me.

I completed my education, such as it was, at a teacher's training college run by the Sisters of Mercy. It was an experience I should not like to repeat. We were treated like religious novices instead of serious students, but much less well fed than the novices. In fact we were over-worked, over-tired and hungry. The nuns were kill-joys who were jealous of our youth and the possibility of our future happiness in the outside world.

UNREASON'S GREAT ALLY

F. H. Snow

IT takes a stout heart to be sanguine of reason's triumph over superstition, I thought, after viewing and hearing Hughie Green's DOUBLE YOUR MONEY show, in which persons answered questions on the Bible. The inducement was not merely cash, but a free visit, for the successful finalist, to the country once called Palestine. Asked their reasons for wishing to go there, and for their great interest in the Bible, the competitors replied, particularly in the second instance, in a manner savouring of the mentality usually credited to rustics. The Bible was God's Holy Word, it was the Living Truth, it was a glorious book, it made life joyful, the Holy Spirit shone in its pages—the question evoked not a single reasoned answer. If, I reflected, this type of mind persists amongst religionists, despite the scientific tenor of the times, and is to be abetted by our principal educative and informative services, what prospect was there of intelligent thought about their god and the book they regard as divinely-inspired, breaking upon the emotionally believing?

Save for a gentleman who wished to revisit active-service scenes, the contestants averred devout motives for entering the competition. To see the places hallowed by the ministry and crucifixion of their beloved Jesus, was their professed object. Being only human, the cash reward for correctly answering questions on the Good Book, some of which were simple, such as "Whose wife was turned into a pillar of salt?" and "Which disciple betrayed Jesus?", must have provided a mundane satisfaction, especially if it ran to sixteen or thirty-two pounds, as the result of successful question-answering. Even so, I credited the competitors as being devoutly wishful to obtain passage to what they called the Holy Land.

It was very natural for those good folks to use that term for the region given over to the modern descendants of the people who killed their Christ. He had made it holy by being born there, and suffering and dying there for sinning humanity. And the marvellous book that records his doings was written there. And all the Churches and heaps of people called it the Holy Land. And had not Hughie Green given the name the ITV hallmark? His repeated use of it implied that it was a right and laudable title for the country of the Jews, and his reverent attitude suggested concurrence with his clients that Christ was divine, that the Bible was God's sacred gift to man, and the study of it a highly worthy pursuit. In fact, the only thing he lacked to complete a parsonic aspect was a clerical collar. With his approving remarks on the competitors' pious observations on the Good Book and their Blessed Saviour, and the reasons they advanced for wishing to visit the Middle East, he certainly gave the impression that he was in agreement with the very unintelligently expressed views of his simple clients.

Whether that impression was correct or not, what right had Green to use his role of entertainer in the interests of religion? Was he pandering to what he believed to be the sentiments of his vast viewing audience? Whatever the degree of his sincerity, his metier, as a professional artiste, was to express neither approval nor disapproval of political or religious belief. He knew, however, that there would be no 'hauling over the coals' for him because of his reverent pose, his congratulatory comments on the devout motivations of the competitors and his eulogy of the Bible as the greatest book on earth. He knew, too, that the authoritative thumbs would be turned down if his remarks revealed

a trace of scepticism, and that pens and 'phones would be quickly in action against him.

The bald fact is that Hugies gave moral support to faith in the reality of the god who is not detectable by any of the human senses, is never indicated by any act, compassionate or otherwise—who is, in brief, a perfect blank. And in this he had the backing of the television authority he serves. While religious unintelligence is fostered by the broadcasting bodies, in this and other ways, such as the screening of the stupid rites of Roman Catholicism, the prospect of a humanist society is as dim as that of an unhypocritical Christianity, after twenty centuries of evangelism. The type of mentality, in the field of religion, which the controllers of our mighty machinery of telecommunication are conniving to perpetuate, is not only an insult to our national brain capacity, but a grave obstacle to the development of the critical thought essential to the creation of a realistic and humanitarian Britain. That was the conviction forced on me by the televised parade of Hughie Green's faith addicts.

I thought of that other nation across the Atlantic—the most powerful in the world and the most religious western democracy, swarming with supernaturalists, and bolstering up the emotional, naïve and primitively credulous faith that makes men lift eyes and voices in adulation and supplication of an utterly inert and evidenceless Being. With the whole of its fifty-one states aligned for the propagation of religion, backed by almost unlimited wealth, the land of L. B. Johnson is a hothouse for mystical morons, and atheism a thin weed in its proliferous soil.

How much healthier is British secularism, and how can it hope to successfully combat the arrogant unintellectuality—nurtured, as it is, by our broadcasting services—of an alarmingly large proportion of our population? The people of 'this sceptred isle' are ensured long and close familiarity with the religion of kings and bumpkins. Organised secularism will have need of a great re-thinking.

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SYMBOLISM: a reply to Mr Lowry

"THE Bible has committed itself on questions of science, has been investigated, and has been found mistaken." It is a view Mr Lowry shares with many others that, because of this irreversible refutation of its cosmogony, "one might expect the Churches to do the decent thing . . . and disband", that the whole of Christianity is discredited by the discovery that the earth circles the sun.

Because of the unfortunate panic measures taken against Galileo, and the strenuous opposition encountered by most of the sciences during their growth, it is not surprising that a great number of people should, with Mr Lowry, think of Christianity as "staking its integrity on the geocentric theory . . ."

However, Mr Lowry is over-simplifying when he says that only two solutions are "advanced to meet the crisis". He contrasts the fundamentalist school with what might be termed the 'mythicist' school, and quite rightly points out the untenability of protesting that "the Bible is always right, and that scientists who oppose it are either foolish or wicked or both". It is futile, for example, in the light of modern geology, physics, etc., to insist that the world was created in 4004 BC. To do so would mean closing one's eyes to whole fields of scientific data. (The credulousness of the fundamentalist school is neatly summed up by William Neil: "If the Bible said that the whale swallowed Jonah then Hallelujah!—it did. If the Bible said that Jonah swallowed the whale that would be equally true.")

But Mr Lowry's second school does not comprise only those who adhere to the position of the vicar he cites, who spoke of "symbolic stars falling symbolically from a symbolic heaven". Within this school, there are two distinct groups, and this, I would suggest, is the more important distinction in modern Christian thought: those who maintain that the myths are *nothing but myths*, and those who maintain that the myths *embody a specifically religious truth*.

The definition of a myth as a "life-explaining story" is well-known. But for a myth to retain a religious content, it must be something more than just that. Thus, for example, if an ardent moderniser were to explain the story of the eating of the apple as "a poetic representation of man's folly, and constant abuse of the world" *only*, his point concerning this general tendency of man might be valid. But then, Aesop's fables might be just as valid in *this sense*. The second group, however, while also rejecting Adam and Eve as historically unviable, will insist that the myth expresses, in parabolic form, *an actual event or events*, one or more human activities displeasing God and leading to an estrangement of man from God. Similarly the account of man being formed from dust and animated by God's breath may, in the hands of the extremist 'myth-explainer', become "a symbolic representation of man's inextricable involvement with the universe, or something equally innocuous, but the religious mythicist will insist on the element of religious truth in the myth, in this case, that God created men.

To the periodic claim that science has shattered any Bible-based religion, the religious mythicist would reply that, pace Mr Lowry, Christianity does *not* stake its integrity on the geocentric theory, or on any scientific theory either, the Bible was not intended to be a scientific textbook, and its myths are but elaborations round an essential kernel of truth, e.g. a protracted story of creation over

seven days, instead of a statement of plain fact: "God is the cause of the world".

The "plain fact" must, of course, still run the gauntlet of philosophical and scientific investigation. Merely declaring the Genesis narrative an embroidery around the basic fact of Divine Creation does not prove such creation. Nevertheless it is important not to blur the distinction between these two groups, and to realise that the choice is not limited to the two poles of Bible-punching fanaticism and reduction of the Bible to a casy, though elaborate, primer on human psychology. MICHAEL CREGAN.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Consistency

I KNOW what you* mean (HUMAN SOCIETY AND SECTIONALISM, May 3) but your argument is not very consistent. As it is the business of all men to keep the world turning, so it is for the Europeans to run Europe and for the British to back Britain. If the Scots don't run Scotland, who will? The foundation of a lasting and peaceful international society must include that which is positive and constructive in local patriotism. If I no longer care what happens in my antiquarian club, what right would I still have to voice a horror of strip-tease? As you said finally, aspects of patriotism will be in demand for years to come.

ERIC S. BARKER

*[As was mentioned in a note on May 10, the article in question was not mine but E. G. Macfarlane's.—Ed.]

For Mrs Helen Steele

- Q. Do Humanists derive their beliefs from common sense?
 A. If by "common sense" is meant the natural capacity of human beings for acquiring knowledge by rational methods, then Humanists *do* derive their beliefs from common sense. The unceasing acquisition of new knowledge throughout life is what makes Humanists "tick".
 Q. If not from common sense, then from what?
 A. There is no way of acquiring knowledge by methods that are intrinsically irrational. The elaborate techniques of modern science are the natural extension of knowledge acquired by the rational use of "common sense". There is nothing mystical or supernatural about scientific research. Hypotheses are accepted as verifiable, and when they have been sufficiently verified they come to be accepted as facts. An unverifiable hypothesis, such as "God", must be rejected by science.
 Q. What should now be my goal as a "good" Humanist?
 A. The goal of a "good" Humanist is to exclude everything that is irrational from thought, word or deed. We aim at living a "good life" in the light of pure reason. It may not always be possible but that is the goal to be aimed at. PETER CROMMELIN.

Confrontation

"I SUPPORT with much enthusiasm the ideas presented in CONFRONTATION (May 3) . . ."
 A. J. LOWRY.

"WITH reference to CONFRONTATION—do you mean that you will speak for the *believer* in the supernatural? If you do, I would strongly advise you against it. Why, this is exactly what I've been grumbling at churchmen about for years. Let them speak for themselves I say. I believe I could get you some [clergymen?] but I cannot be sure of it because they may feel it is a trap—which it is in a way. But it could be a fair trap if there is no censorship of what they really want to write and the space allowed is the same on both sides . . ."
 E. G. MACFARLANE.

"I LIKE your idea of the CONFRONTATION, but it sounds very chancy; we shall have to see it how it works. I think—in your hands—we can be sure it won't develop into a slanging match . . ."
 LILIAN MIDDLETON.

"I WAS much interested to read CONFRONTATION in this week's FREETHINKER. It sounds very vital and exciting, and I hope I may get a chance to join in the scrum! I fear it will make a lot of extra work for you, though. I do hope there is a generous response all round and that the experiment works successfully . . ."
 PHYLLIS GRAHAM.

"I HAVE read your article CONFRONTATION and fully approve and support you . . ."
 KENNETH C. ORR.