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VATICAN TO STEP UP CAMPAIGN AGAINST POPULATION CONTROL

"If any Christian ecumenists or reverent agnostics should still doubt the existence of Vatican political intrigues, the recently leaked directive of the Secretary of State for the Holy See should clarify once again the abiding policy of Catholic statecraft", said David Tribe, president of the National Secular Society in a Press statement last weekend. He was commenting on a letter which has been sent by Cardinal Villot to Papal representatives all over the world in which plans for a diplomatic drive by the Vatican against birth control are outlined. It is clear that the Catholic leaders in Rome are irritated by the indifference of representatives of Catholic countries to previous directives and pleadings on this question. Instead, delegates have generally taken an independent line on birth control in the underdeveloped countries, and now the Vatican is to launch a counter-offensive, instructing their representatives to ensure that governments of Catholic countries give their delegates to the United Nations firm instructions to oppose birth control programmes. It is also suggested that the UN delegates should make contact with representatives of the Holy See.

Threadbare Arguments

Cardinal Villot's letter was sent in November but it is only now that passages are being leaked. They reveal the Vatican's concern over the determination and growing success with which the UN and specialised groups are promoting artificial birth control in the Third World. He is reported to have deplored the tenacious efforts of the birth control campaigners to promote contraception, and accuses them of violating liberty through moral pressure and material incentives.

The threadbare arguments in favour of switching investment in population control to economic development are given an airing. And the unreliable, and for many people unworkable, "rhythm method" is once again recommended as an effective form of family planning. The magic combination of "rhythm" and economic progress should enable the world to cope with a population increase of 161,000,000 between 1965 and 1985. (The learned cardinal lives in Vatican City which has a population of just under 500, mostly celibate, so he is unlikely to be troubled by the problems arising from population growth.)

United Nations agencies which are responsible for many of the population control programmes are to be chief targets. The Vatican's aim is to influence UN decisions by establishing stronger links between the bishops and governments in Catholic countries. So far there has been little contact between the national hierarchies and local representatives of international organisations.

"A Crude Exercise in Ecclesiastical Power Politics"

Mr Tribe's statement continues: "This decree not only reasserts a preference for the so-called 'safe period' as a means of contraception, but declares that economic policies are really more important than population control of any sort. It is as if Thomas Malthus had never written his *Essay on the Principles of Population* in 1798.

"Only the blind or wilfully cynical could pretend that the world's resources can cope with the ever-growing population, or that it is cheaper to exploit the limited reserves we have than to introduce effective contraception. Until the world's population is stabilised even the richest countries cannot adequately tackle rehousing, traffic congestion, school and hospital shortages and support for the disabled and aged, while countries in the Third World will face utter disaster. Moreover, it is wellnigh certain that urban chaos and the aggression that leads to violent crime, riots, revolutions and war will increase. This is the future that the Pope and his henchmen are wickedly bequeathing to those who will outlive them.

"What makes this latest Vatican exercise so nauseating is its cant about personal freedom and government intervention. No organisation in the course of history has cared less for the individual and more for its own power and prestige. One suspects that the Secretary of State also believes that—an obvious deduction—his demands will be more effective among the Catholic community and in Catholic countries than non-Catholic. In this way the relative proportion of Catholics will increase with their usual demands on non-Catholics for welfare benefits and financial support of Catholic education, institutions and other forms of indoctrination and influence. This is a crude exercise in ecclesiastical power politics that people today are too timid or genteel to comment on."

Division in Britain

It is widely believed that Roman Catholic leaders in the United Kingdom will be reluctant to revive the dispute about contraception. The Pope's encyclical on birth control, in which he dashed the hopes of those who thought the pill would be acceptable, and his more recent, outright condemnation of birth control, have caused much division even in Catholic circles. The statement on moral issues of the day, issued by the bishops on 31 December, did not refer to contraception although they must have known the contents of Cardinal Villot's letter.

THE RIDDLE OF HINDU FUNERALS

G. N. DEODHEKAR

The London *Evening Standard* recently published a report entitled *Riddle of Hindu "Burial" in Thames*. People aboard a motor cruiser had seen a group of Indians dropping what looked like plastic bags and scattering flowers on the water, and realised the group were going through some kind of ceremony. Police confirmed that charred bones had been found, and it transpired that they had been advised by an Indian family who wished to scatter ashes in the river after an official cremation.

In the minds of militant pre-twentieth century Christian missionaries, followers of other religions were virtually devil-worshippers by definition. With the rise of independent nations in Asia this outlook has radically changed. But, to the average Western Christian (or agnostic), any non-Christian religious ceremony still conjures up a picture of weirdness, and even of Voodoo and Black Magic. However, there is nothing like truth to further understanding between European and Indian, native and immigrant.

A Family Affair

What does happen at Hindu funerals in India, and how is it going to be adapted to conditions in Britain? In talking about Hindu practice the first thing to remember is that because of the vastness of the country, and the fortunate absence of centralised authority for the priests, there is no real uniformity. Tradition and custom dominate, but custom is liable to change slowly as new knowledge and situations demand. One example of this lack of uniformity is that Hindus do not invariably cremate their dead; a very young child might be buried,

When a person is dying as many as possible of his relatives and friends gather around him; this is possible in India because most people die in their homes rather than in hospitals. A doctor, when available, announces there is no hope of life. There is no attempt to control emotional feelings arising from the hurt inflicted by death.

Undertakers are unknown; it is the family and community who prepare for the funeral. Coffins are not used. A simple bamboo stretcher and a white shroud suffices even for the wealthy. Women and children do not take part in the procession, which is on foot. The eldest male child may go if he is 15 or 16 and thought to be brave enough to face the ordeal.

Because of the tropical conditions, cremation takes place within three or four hours of death, and in some parts of India this procedure is followed even if it is midnight. The funeral ground is the shore of the sea or a lake, or the bank of a stream. There is very little religious ceremony. A priest recites some Mantras, although a priest is often not available in country areas. The funeral pyre is always lit by the eldest of the sons present who must accept the reality of his parent's death and shoulder the responsibilities of life.

Funerals in Britain

Hindus could easily adapt themselves to British conditions, as there is no dogma about funeral pyres having to be in the open, and crematoria in this country are acceptable to them. Since they know that the moment of

death has become uncertain, and new techniques are used to revive a person even after his heart has stopped beating, Hindus will accept modification of their custom of early cremation. However a delay of four or five days, which is normal in Britain, may be a severe strain for many of them. Undertakers, coffins and cars for funeral processions are already used, although one hopes that unequal as their society is, they will preserve something of the simplicity and equality of their death. There would be no difficulty in arranging for the eldest son to press a switch in the crematorium chapel as an act of committal.

"Where the Water Wills"

Christians firmly believe in resurrection and want to know where their departed lie—hence family graves, tombstones, inscriptions, and visits to the grave. Hindus believe that when the soul has departed the mortal remains must not be morbidly dwelt on. So they are consigned to water; to be taken "where the water wills".

Although the ashes have been consigned to the waters, it is believed that the "soul" cannot immediately detach itself from earthly ties. On the twelfth day after death the family, including women and children, go to the funeral ground and put portions of rice called Pindas on leaves in the name of the departed. This ritual is of great antiquity, and its non-performance would cause great distress to Hindus, even if belief in its efficacy is being shaken by advances in science.

After a time crows will assemble, but being a cautious bird the crow will hesitate before pecking at a Pinda. It is then thought that the departed soul still has earthly ties, and is trying to communicate with the living by coming between the crow and the rice. The older members of the family discuss what might be the unfulfilled wishes of the departed, and a promise to carry out these wishes is made. Eventually, one of the crows eats the rice and the soul is believed to be free.

The scarcity of crows in some parts of Britain must convince the most orthodox Hindus that there cannot be any special sensitivity to that bird. However, the custom of offering Pindas is likely to persist like the throwing of confetti at weddings even when the need for fertility has disappeared.

MEMORIAL EDITION

WHY I AM NOT
A CHRISTIAN

BERTRAND RUSSELL

Preface DAVID TRIBE

Introduction Professor ANTONY FLEW

PRICE 3/- (plus 6d postage)

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

103 Borough High Street, London, SE1

ATHEISTIC MATERIALISM

MADALYN MURRAY

The indestructible foundation of the whole edifice of atheism is its philosophy—materialism, or naturalism as it is also known. That philosophy regards the world as it actually is, views it in the light of the data provided by progressive science and social experience. Atheistic materialism is the logical outcome of scientific knowledge gained over the centuries.

Our history has been marked by a ceaseless struggle against ignorance and superstition. In ancient Greece the works of the materialist philosopher Democritus, who first taught the atomic theory of matter, were destroyed. Anaxagoras was banished from Athens for being an atheist. The materialist philosopher Epicurus, revered by the ancients for having liberated man from fear of gods and for asserting the validity of science, was for 2,000 years anathematised and falsely depicted as an enemy of morality and a disseminator of vice. The Alexandria library, housing 700,000 scientific and literary works, was burned by Christian monks in 391. Pope Gregory I (590-604) destroyed many valuable works by ancient authors. In every society there have been forces that have stood to lose by the dissemination of progressive scientific views.

The Inquisition, a papal invention for suppressing all opposition to the Catholic Church, savagely persecuted all progressive thinkers. Giordano Bruno, Lucilio Vanini and Galileo come readily to mind.

Voltaire was imprisoned in the Bastille, and Diderot was sent to prison. In the USA we are familiar with the story of Thomas Paine, of the Salem witch trials, of Ingersoll and Einstein. The struggle is unceasing, as important today as during any other period of history.

Theological Blind Alleys

We need, therefore, to see what we fight and why? We need not direct our main assault against the Bible or the Koran. We need not argue endlessly about the historicity of Jesus. We should look past trinities, angels and other theological blind alleys. We must look to materialistic philosophy which alone enables men to understand reality and to know how to deal with it. It is true that today men and women are no longer burned at the stake, but there are many other ways of exerting pressure. Our scientists and progressive philosophers are dismissed from universities and other employment. Outspoken scientific and philosophical works are much less likely to be published than rather senseless junk. Character assassination is common. Reactionary religious propaganda is unceasingly drummed into unthinking minds through the captive media of mass communication. As always our opponents today are formidable. But our strength lies in the positive approach of uncovering and publicising the laws of nature and human behaviour, and in applying these laws in the interest of human welfare.

We need to know upon what we base ourselves. Atheism is based upon material philosophy, which holds that nothing exist but natural phenomena. The atheist must slice through all obfuscations to bedrock: to the basic idea that those who regard nature as primary and thought as a property (or function) of matter belong to the camp of materialism, and that those who maintain that spirit or idea or mind existed before nature or created nature or

uphold nature belong to the camp of idealism. All conventional religions are based on idealism. Many varieties of idealism exist, but the premise stated above is fundamental.

Human Dignity

Let us examine what the idealist camp features. The Church teaches a contempt for earthly life and that to reach some imagined "heaven" is the main goal of life. And, significantly, the Church teaches that this goal can be achieved only as the reward for obedience and meekness. The Church threatens the wrath of God and the torment of hell for those who dare to oppose its teaching. But materialism liberates us, teaches us not to hope for happiness beyond the grave but to prize life on earth and strive always to improve it. Materialism restores to man his dignity and his intellectual integrity. Man is not a worm condemned to crawl in the dust, but a human being capable of mastering the forms of nature and making them serve him. Materialism compels faith in the human intellect, in the power of knowledge, in man's ability to fathom the secrets of nature and to create a social system based upon reason and justice. It is a philosophy in every essence optimistic, life-asserting, and radiant. It considers the struggle for progress as a moral obligation, and impossible without noble ideals that inspire men to struggle and bold creative work. The materialist's faith is in man, and his ability to transform the world by his own efforts.

Modern materialism—or naturalism—is linked with the everyday experience of people. It believes in experiment as the basis of knowledge, and neglects no sphere of reality. It advances itself as an ideological weapon for use in progress. It is in social life that man develops his mind and emotions, will and conscience, and puts meaning and purpose into life. He does not closet himself in solitary prayer and dream of death as a door opening unto eternal bliss. A materialist lives a full social life and is inspired by progressive ideals; he is concerned with the problems and joys of life, not death. He is deeply involved with shaping his life as a useful member of society and contributing what he can to its progress.

The idealist sees science and man as subordinate to religion, to "idea", and sees knowledge a subordinate to faith. The ultimate object of the idealist is to furnish evidence of the existence of "God". He lays great stress on moral questions, but the morality he preaches is one of meek submission, of passive acceptance and thus, of justification of social evils. This morality substitutes prayer and appeals for divine assistance for struggle and protest against social injustice.

The entire idealist philosophy is contrived, with deliberateness, to bolster the status quo.

THE COST OF CHURCH SCHOOLS

By DAVID TRIBE

Foreword: MARGARET KNIGHT

4s (plus 6d postage)

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY
103 Borough High Street, London, SE1

FREETHINKER

editor: WILLIAM McILROY

103 Borough High Street,
London, SE1

Telephone: 01-407 1251 (editorial)
01-407 0029 (business)

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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 St., London, SE1. Telephone 01-407 2717. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the NSS.

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

EVENTS

Humanist Holidays. Easter Holiday at the Belgravia Hotel, Bournemouth. Details from Mrs. M. Mephram, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey. Telephone: 642-8796.

Leicester Secular Society, Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester, Sunday, 14 February, 6.30 p.m. Alderman Marston, Mrs. J. M. Setchfield, Mrs L. R. Marriott, A. E. Padmore: "Any Questions?"

London Young Humanists, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London, W8, Sunday, 21 February, 7.30 p.m. Five speakers from the Women's Liberation Workshop, Notting Hill.

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, 14 February, 11 a.m. Lord Sorensen: "Humanism and Christian Humanism". Tuesday, 16 February, 7 p.m. Christopher Macy: "The Process of Self-realisation".

Rationalist Press Association and Glasgow Humanist, Glassford Hotel, 90 Glassford Street, Glasgow, Friday, 26 February, 7.30 p.m. for 8 p.m., Dinner. Speaker: Christopher Macy: "Humanism in the Seventies". Tickets 25/- from Mrs Slade, 21 Kearns Avenue, Glasgow, W5 (telephone: 041-944 1017) until 21 February.

BROCK CHISHOLM DIES

Major-General G. Brock Chisholm, one of Canada's leading medical authorities and a prominent freethinker, has died at the age of 74. He was Director-General of the Canadian Army Medical Services during the 1939-45 war; Deputy Minister of Health, 1945-46; and Director-General of the World Health Organisation, 1948-53.

In a centenary message to the National Secular Society in 1966, Brock Chisholm wrote: "Obviously the work is not finished, but real progress is being made and more and more people are recognising that thinking is more important than blind belief and the submission to the accident of birth that has been imposed on all our ancestors. More of us dare to think independently of that accident than ever before".

NEWS

GUILLOTINE FOR PRIVACY BILL

The Government's operation of the "guillotine" prevented discussion of the Control of Personal Information Bill which was presented by Leslie Huckfield, MP (Lab., Nuneaton). This was a pity, for Mr Huckfield made some disturbing revelations at a Press conference in the House of Commons. He warned that, far from the age of Aquarius, we could soon be living in the age of Aquariums—a goldfish bowl society. Our accepted norms of privacy and confidentiality could be replaced by a situation in which everybody else knew all about us. At the present time we have some control over the degree of anonymity or publicity with which we choose to live our daily lives, but all this is now in jeopardy.

Mr Huckfield continued: "Action is urgent. Computer-men have fobbed me off, telling me that this is rather a problem for our children's children. But because databanks already operate and more are being set up, we cannot afford to wait for the industry. We cannot even afford to await the report of the Younger Committee. This Bill attempts to control things before they get out of hand—rather than to provide remedies for the damage afterwards. By concentrating and isolating the problem raised by the databank, it avoids some of the more complicated legal, constitutional and ethical problems in the definition of privacy and confidentiality.

"Information is power. British Debt Services Ltd., with credit information on eight million people (and they only report bad things), is going to become a public company whose shares will be as freely open for sale as the personal information it keeps. The company has also bought the electoral registers of the entire country—to check "stability". The United Association for the Protection of Trade and National Credit Register each claim 12 million people on file. Tracing Services Ltd., claim dossiers on four million. Their operations may not be on computer yet, but they soon will be."

Leslie Huckfield then outlined some databank developments in the public sector. At the end of 1969, Civil Service departments had spent £31 million on computers, and proposals are afoot in the Department of Health and Social Security for both social security records and patient-medical records at hospitals and doctors' surgeries. There is to be a national multi-access police computer, which will have 800 terminals throughout England, Scotland and Wales. There is a Ministry of Transport vehicle licensing computer at Swansea, and one for the Universities Grants Committee for all staff and students and one at the Universities Central Council for Admission.

Mr Huckfield said: "It is because of this formidable list of existing and potential databank capacity that this Bill needs to be comprehensive. But at the same time, it is flexible. The Tribunal itself can determine the social utility of each proposal and the limits that ought to be placed on it. The Bill goes further than the current Proxmire legislation in the UNA or Kenneth Baker, MP's recent proposals, by providing an Inspectorate to see that the law is enforced and by demanding a thorough scrutiny of publicly operated databanks. Most important, is the public right of verification and correction.

AND NOTES

"I want this Bill to be a vehicle for discussion and a vehicle for pressure. We must act now, if we want to live our lives the way we wish. As John Stuart Mill wrote: 'There is a limit to the legitimate interference of collective opinion with individual independence; and to find that limit, and maintain it against encroachment, is as indispensable to a good condition of human affairs as protection against political despotism'."

The Control of Personal Information Bill was prepared under the auspices of the National Council for Civil Liberties, and drafted by Joe Jacob, a member of the NCCL executive committee.

A COURAGEOUS SOUTH AFRICAN

A system which condemns people to an inferior position in society because of their colour or race is obviously evil, and its victims deserve all possible support and sympathy. It does not require a lively imagination to realise the plight of Jews in Hitler's Germany or the black citizens of America's Deep South. But at the present time, there is no country where people are subjected to oppression, injustice and discrimination on the same scale as in South Africa. And the fact that apartheid can dehumanise and warp is exponents was illustrated last week when the South Africa's racist rulers refused Bram Fischer, who was imprisoned for life, permission to attend the funeral of his 23-year-old son Paul, who died in hospital after a long illness.

Racialists are nearly always so completely devoid of human qualities and achievements that they are forced to take excessive pride in the colour of their skin. The fact that they do not "achieve" either their colour or race does not deter such braggarts. When Bram Fischer is compared to those who have hounded and imprisoned him, the Vorster pygmies are shown to be rather crummy specimens of white manhood.

Bram Fischer, now aged 63, is one of the most able and distinguished victims of apartheid. He is the son of a Judge President and grandson of a Prime Minister. His family have lived in South Africa for generations, and there is a long tradition of legal and public service. In 1931, Fischer was awarded a Rhodes Scholarship and came to Oxford where, for three years at New College, he read Jurisprudence and for a diploma in economics. On his return to South Africa he became a member of the Johannesburg Bar.

Throughout his career Fischer accepted briefs in cases of non-whites caught in the police net of pass laws and restrictions. He was always accessible and was often in his office at five o'clock in the morning. He and his wife (tragically killed in a car accident) entertained people of all races in their home, and adopted an African child and brought her up as their own. (In terms of current race laws such adoption is illegal.)

In the Treason Trial, which lasted over four years, Fischer was one of the defence team, and his name became known outside South Africa. Then came the Rivonia Trial, where Nelson Mandela, Walter Sissulu and others were charged with sabotage, and faced the death

sentence. It is widely believed that, although they were convicted, the fact that the death sentence was not imposed was largely due to an inspired defence led by Fischer.

In September 1964, Bram Fischer was arrested and charged with being a member of the (illegal) Communist Party of South Africa. Bail was set at £5,000. A few months later he disappeared from his home, and his Counsel read a letter to the Court announcing that he was going underground to continue the fight against apartheid. He repaid the £5,000 so that his guarantors did not suffer.

For ten months Fischer was hunted by the police, and when he next appeared in a courtroom, he was guarded by 45 armed policemen.

Bram Fischer sacrificed wealth, comfort and a privileged position in an already privileged white society. He was shattered by the death of his wife, and his son's death is yet another tragic blow. But he remains one of that indomitable group of white South Africans who refuse to support by silent acquiescence, a society that is basically evil.

FEWER PRIESTS

The Vatican is much concerned by the large number of defections from the priesthood, and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is preparing a directory to help priests in difficulties. The directory will be published after the next synod of bishops meets later this year to discuss clerical celibacy.

Apart from those leaving the priesthood—nearly 900 since 1968 according to official figures—the Holy See is worried about the crisis in vocations. There has been a marked drop in ordinations, from 4,647 in 1968 to 4,603 in 1970. In Europe there is now one priest to every 1,219 people (1968 figure: one to every 1,208); in America, one to every 4,415 (1968 figure: one to every 4,272); in Africa, one to every 11,290 (1968 figure: one to every 10,540).

BLASPHEMY PROSECUTION

Jack Gold and Eleanor Fazan, directors of *Council of Love* which was seen recently at London's Criterion Theatre, have been summoned to appear at Bow Street, Magistrates' Court on 18 February. They will face a charge of having "... directed a performance of ... *Council of Love* which performance was blasphemous in that it did violently and ribaldly vilify, ridicule and scoff at the Christian religion and did in like manner impugn its doctrines". We understand that the summons was issued by the Metropolitan Stipendiary Magistrate after information had been laid before him by Lady Birdwood.

The play was written about 70 years ago by Oscar Panizza who, as a result, was imprisoned for two years in Germany. It has been performed recently in France without any prosecution. John Bird adapted *Council of Love* for the English stage, and it ran for three months in the West End. Before it was presented, the management submitted the script to a legal advisor and were informed that it would not be liable for prosecution under statute, and was extremely unlikely to be prosecuted for blasphemy under the Common Law.

A group of militant Christians demonstrated in the auditorium during one of the performances.

BOOKS

THE JESUS OF THE EARLY CHRISTIANS

by G. A. Wells. Pemberton Books, 45s.

John Allegro, of Dead Sea Scrolls fame, recently remarked that almost anything may now be said about Jesus—he may even be called a homosexual—and the Church will not greatly mind so long as you admit he existed. It would be profoundly damaging to Christianity if it could be shown that its man-god never lived. The Church would rather investigators keep to the arbitrary method first adopted by Reimarus and Strauss, and assume that when the obviously or demonstrably mythical parts of the New Testament are discounted, what remains is historical. That way at least something is saved from the wreck.

The current revival of interest in the historicity question is entirely due to Allegro. It was therefore disappointing when, after months of hinting about new evidence which orthodoxy would prefer not to be made public, he produced his sacred mushroom theory. Although he had made it generally known that earlier scholars had doubted the historicity of Jesus, his service in that direction may have been nullified by the fantastic nature of his theory, and the ease with which it was shot down by its critics. Laymen might well feel, with Sir James Frazer, that such doubts are unworthy of serious attention.

A new book on this subject is therefore timely. The *Jesus of the Early Christians*, by G. A. Wells, Professor of German at Birkbeck College, London, is a work of sober scholarship, following the lines already laid down by J. M. Robertson, P. L. Couchoud and others who shared their view that Jesus and his friends were imaginary characters. Of necessity much of the ground they covered has been retraced by Professor Wells, which is useful since their works are now difficult to obtain.

Christians origins can be accounted for with reasonable probability, Wells thinks, without recourse to a historical Jesus. Christianity emerged at a time when conditions were ripe for a fusion of Jewish Messianism, the pagan idea of a dying god, and the teachings of the Qumran Essenes revealed in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

In the first century BC the Jews, under the Roman yoke, were expecting a "messiah" to appear in the near future to liberate them. Their position was so hopeless that it was thought he would have to be more than a mere mortal. And so some Jews began to expect a supernatural figure who would descend from the skies, annihilate the world and judge mankind. Such a judge would be a pre-eminently moral figure, and it was expected that he would suffer, in view of the current belief that suffering indicated great virtue and conferred supernatural powers. The Jews were surrounded by pagans who worshipped a suffering, dying god, and it would be quite feasible for a new sect to emerge combining the suffering Jewish messiah with the pagan god.

The messiah was to come in the future, but the pagan god had died in the distant past. The two ideas could be combined only if it were supposed that the messiah had already suffered and died, and would come again in the near future to triumph. Such a synthesis would have been greatly facilitated by the teachings of the Qumran Essenes. A Jewish sect, they had had a priestly Teacher who had been persecuted, had died, and was to come again.

FREETHINKER

Professor Wells notes, as other scholars have done, that the earliest Christian writings, which include the Pauline epistles, know nothing of Jesus' history and are vague as to when he died. Paul's ignorance about Jesus, a contemporary, is one of the strongest arguments for non-historicity, since he would certainly have made use of the facts of Jesus' life if there were any.

Not until the second century do biographical details appear, the later the document the more the detail. Wells adduces much evidence that the gospels were composed during this period. As the second coming failed to occur, and the hope of it receded, interest would be transferred to the first coming, and what had been won for believers by the messiah's death. Biographical details would begin to be invented, with the Old Testament as a rich mine of source material. The early writers having insisted that Jesus was a god of the last days, this could come to mean that he had lived and died in the recent past. The most likely period would be during the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate, a notorious shedder of Jewish blood who was known to have executed several messianic claimants.

And so Professor Wells constructs his case, corroborating every point with evidence from contemporary or near-contemporary sources. One purpose of the work is to fill in the lacunae left by the earlier mythicist scholarship, particularly the question as to why a mythical saviour should have been converted into a quasi-historical one. The evidence provided by the Dead Sea Scrolls, not available to the earlier writers, has enabled this to be done. The author has made an excellent job of bringing the subject up to date.

R. J. CONDON

EVERYTHING YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT SEX BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK

by David Rueben. W. H. Allen, 40s.

It seems that one of man's most natural acts has proved one of the most difficult to explain. Even in today's enlightened atmosphere, questions regarding sex are often evaded. For example, a child may ask its parent, the parent tells the half-truth and fobs the other half off, by saying that the teacher will explain it more thoroughly at school. The teacher will explain the intricacies of sexual behaviour in a frog or rabbit, but more often than not will leave the essential question unanswered. It is then left to the child either to give up or to seek the counsel of the unqualified. This in itself could be dangerous, for old wives' tales still abound. Fear and dread of sex can implant themselves in the mind. Yet this need not be. It is the duty of those to whom such questions are asked to explain them as truthfully and as comprehensively as possible.

David Reuben manages to do just this. The book is written in a question and answer form. The questions are extracted from numerous case-histories that he has come across in practice. He answers all of them without evasion. At no times does he talk down to his reader. Latin-medico terminology is kept to an absolute minimum, and where this is used he explains its meaning so that all can understand.

REVIEWS

For the sensation-seekers and the illiterate, there is bad news. The book is not illustrated and there are no photographs, but let's face it, there are dozens of books, purported to be educational and crammed with illustrations, which seem to sell like hot cakes and in most cases their worth is to be doubted. It is more than likely that such books are produced with their primary object being to titillate and their secondary object being to educate. There can be no doubt that David Reuben has written this solely to educate and to answer, professionally and honestly, all those questions about sex that most of us would have liked to have asked of someone.

The book has been extremely successful in America where it was first published. It is a unique, lively and utterly candid guide to the facts of life which not only brings into the open the so-called "unmentionable" aspects of sex but explores, explains defines and clarifies the almost unlimited range of human sexual behaviour, heterosexual and homosexual.

He explains that sexual intercourse has two main purposes: first, mutual enjoyment by both partners—this, in itself, is important, as in the past it accepted that only the male should get anything out of it while for the woman, it was a case of a dutiful favour to which the man was entitled. To be really successful and indeed for the man to get the most out of it, it is essential that the woman enjoy it as much. By reading what the author has to say in response to the relevant questions, and by applying the knowledge gained, it is more than possible for this to be achieved.

Frigidity and impotence are explored in some detail and while the book does not purport to be an instant guide to sexual success, it effectively points to ways that these two common complaints can be and are cured. Given a little time and patience, there does not appear to be a reason why either of them should remain in existence. A concise explanation of how one's sexual organs work, how one's partner's work, a little relevant knowledge of psychology can, in most cases, set one off on the right path towards success. A sympathetic understanding of one's partner can also help a lot and with this in mind, sexual frustration from either side could easily become a thing of the past.

The second reason for sexual intercourse is for reproductive purposes. For the human race to continue to exist it is obviously necessary to reproduce and this, so far, can only be done by a man having sexual intercourse with a woman. However, if this was the primary reason, such intercourse would only happen on possibly four or five occasions in a man's life span. This is obviously not the case and it would be unnatural for a man to act in such a fashion; if he did, there would be something very wrong with him. Conversely, if intercourse occurred every time it took a couple's fancy without precautions the results would be catastrophic. The population explosion would become even more dangerous. So it is that precautions are or should be taken to prevent unwanted pregnancies. Consequently, the right conclusion is arrived at which is that the primary reason for sexual intercourse is for mutual enjoyment and the secondary reason, for reproduction.

Reuben devotes a fair amount of time to all the known contraceptives available, exploding old wives' tales and

myths on this subject, as he does with all the others. Every known contraceptive is listed and explained in detail and all its pros and cons are discussed.

Male and female homosexuality is explained as far as is humanly possible, as also are almost every form of sexual deviation. What makes people go off the conventional, normal rails and opt for what it generally accepted as abnormal sexual activity is explored and explained, rationally and unsensationally but, more important, truthfully.

The book has a very good index which enables it to be used as a reference work whenever the necessary questions arise from enquiring minds. I sincerely hope that the educational authorities will allow this excellent book to be a standard fifth or sixth-form textbook, as I feel sure that David Reuben can answer more ably and professionally the kind of questions likely to be put to schoolteachers by their pupils—at least in most cases.

There is something for all of us in this book. I doubt if there is a single reader who can truthfully say that he has not learned something from it and in turn benefitted directly or indirectly either himself or his partner.

The only regret is that someone did not have the courage to write and publish a similar book years ago. It could have helped a lot more people a lot sooner. However, it is never too late to learn. *What You Always Wanted to Know About Sex* is very well written and will undoubtedly enjoy the same success in this country as it has in America.

BOB BROEDER

MODERN ENGLAND

by R. K. Webb. Allen and Unwin, 45s.

To grow up with English as one's own language and amid English-speaking people and yet not be an Englishman is an advantage in judging British traditions. With this advantage, I have long read books on British history with keen detachment. Like the Corn Law poet, Ebenezer Elliott, I thought that what mattered in history was: "*Not kings and lords, but nations! Not thrones and crowns, but men!*"

But it was not easy to find English history books written otherwise than in a spirit of national glory, even when their tone is subdued. How far has this changed in the last generation? I suspect that examination of school books would show that change has been much slighter than it should have been if we want to eliminate national prejudices.

However that may be, the first merit of Professor Webb's splendid volume is that it is written with the detachment as well as the appreciation that only a non-Englishman can bring to bear. The author holds a chair of history at Columbia University. His knowledge of England is deep and his affection for English people is apparent, but this does not blind him to the shortcomings of many of them. He is also gifted with the ability, uncommon in serious historians, though A. J. P. Taylor has it, to write plain

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English in a highly readable style. So he has produced what is a better book on England than you could readily find on the shelves of your public library.

Wisely, he has not taken for his province the conventional period of 1815 to 1914. By adding 50 years at each end he has put contemporary England in a fuller perspective. For the foundations of what we see around us were, of course, ill and firmly laid by the industrial revolution, a process that is still going on, and one hardly less important for mankind than the French or the Russian revolution. Of the industrial revolution, Eric Hobsbawm says that "it was probably the most important event in world history, at any rate since the invention of agriculture and cities". It caused the deep division of England into two classes—those who were careful in the choice of their parents and those who have nothing to sell but their labour. This division worries some politicians so much to this day that they rightly talk, in Disraeli's phrase, of two nations, meaning the middle class and the working class.

The reader who knows the nineteenth century will turn expectantly, as I did, to the twentieth and especially to the years since 1945. He will find that the author writes almost as well about the 1960's as he does about the 1860's. While aware of the force of tradition, he is appreciative of the changes that have occurred since 1945. Indeed, his central theme is change and continuity. This is nothing new as a theme but he makes it vivid and he handles it without pride or prejudice. He traces the whole transition from oligarchy to democracy, from the eighteenth century till the day before yesterday. "Heaven knows", he says, "oligarchy is not dead in England; it may, indeed, be the most useful key to understanding both the successes and failures of England today".

It is difficult to indicate the richness of this book, thanks not least to the skilful way it draws on the best specialist studies to which the reader is invited if he wants to pursue the topics, political and social though not economic, that interest him particularly.

The author declares that he had in mind two purposes: "That he who runs may read, and that he who studies shall not need a wheelbarrow". Professor Webb deserves high praise for achieving both purposes. Although the radical readers will hardly accept all his assumptions and judgments, he need not do so in order to enjoy in of the very best books on English history published in the last ten years.

JULIUS LEWIN

PURITY CAMPAIGN

A group of Catholic women in Liverpool have started a campaign to fight "obscenity and pornography", and were addressed at their opening meeting by Mrs Guinevere Tilney (wife of a local Conservative MP) who announced that she had started her own campaign against "the tidal wave of filth in Britain today". The pious ladies plan to inform their local councillors of the contents of some films and television programmes which offend them.

Mrs Tilney told the meeting it would almost appear that producers vied with each other to produce the ultimate in depravity.

At Westminster, 90 MPs led by Sir Gerald Nabarro (Con., Worcestershire South) have signed a motion on an Order Paper to ask whether the whole question of obscenity and pornography can be debated.

LETTERS

Outlook for Protestants in Ireland

I cannot agree with Nigel Sinnott's assertion that if Ulster Protestants were incorporated into Catholic Eire they would act as a radical bloc against the Catholic Church. This is mainly because of the fact that Ulster Protestantism is, by and large, politically super-conservative, socially reactionary, and denominationally bigoted and narrow-minded. Therefore, because of these characteristics, Protestants could not act as a radical group against a well entrenched Catholic Church in a united Ireland.

Instead, the million Northern Protestants would become the target of corroding and relentless Catholic pressure. The ultimate result of this would be that they would become politically paralysed, socially ostracised and religiously persecuted. A 100 per cent united Catholic republic cannot do otherwise, and the writ of the Catholic Church would be paramount. For instance, Catholic teaching would rule education, Catholic ethics the hospitals and health services, so opposition to birth control, abortion, divorce, etc., would be official. The Protestants as citizens would be compelled to submit to Catholic thought and practice. In view of this, most Protestants, in order to survive would have to emigrate or submit to Catholic practice.

This is not speculation. It has been borne out by recent history, and by the following dictum which puts the whole issue in a nutshell: "When we Catholics are in a minority we ask freedom in the name of *your* principles; when we Catholics are in a majority we deny you freedom in the name of *our* principles".

A united Ireland, therefore, will solve next to nothing, since it will have abolished one problem by the creation of another.

AVRO MANHATTAN.

Verse and Worse

What a pity the pleasant social evening at the Opera Tavern was marred for some of the audience by the unnecessary contribution from David Tribe, president of the National Secular Society.

Not many members would entertain their friends with readings of lavatory wall poetry, but if this is the president's choice I suggest he keeps it for his more intimate circle, and not use it at functions organised by the NSS to which non-members are invited.

W. MILLER (Birmingham).

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