

FREE THINKER

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POPULATION EXPLOSION: CATHOLIC PRIEST FACES THE FACTS

"The population explosion of the second half of the twentieth century gives rise to one of the most serious and crucial problems of our day", writes Father Arthur McCormack in *Population Explosion—a Christian Concern* which was published last week. Father McCormack, who has written the pamphlet for the Justice and Peace Commission for England and Wales, frankly recognises the slowness with which his Church has faced the reality of the situation. He does not present his readers with a rehash of official policy, and admits that the Church is in a difficult position. The world is in a situation in which family planning seems absolutely necessary. But, with one exception the Roman Catholic Church bans methods of birth control. Father McCormack deals with a wide range of issues including urbanisation, environment, development and peace. Copies of the pamphlet are being distributed to bishops attending the Synod in Rome.

The Choice Before Us

Margaret McLroy writes: For once a Catholic expert has produced something really good, drawing together in a single pamphlet a mass of facts and balanced reasoning, and setting the population explosion firmly in its place as the major—but certainly not the only—obstacle to harmonious world development. When one contrasts this with the appalling naïvity (to be charitable) of Catholic propaganda a decade or so ago, one feels mankind really is progressing. (I recall one American publication which said there was no need to worry about over-population; just let every family give a son or daughter to the Church to live a life of holy virginity.)

Father McCormack started studying population from the official Catholic point of view, believing that better methods of production and fairer distribution were all that was needed. However he had to change his mind, and now he writes, "after an agonising appraisal lasting several years . . . I was forced by the facts to realise that the population explosion could not be coped with by positive measures alone and that the negative means of population restriction were needed and urgently so . . . Mathematically speaking, there is no choice: either the birth rate must be reduced or the death rate will rise". The figures, which Father McCormack analyses very clearly, are overwhelming, and he concludes: "Humanly speaking, the choice is between a voluntary dignified restriction of fertility, which respects fully human developments, or the harsh means of famine, wars and futile bloody revolutions: or 'Orwellian' measures for compulsory control of fertility, which are already being advocated by some as a policy of despair".

Fortunately, he says, there has been a "Green Revolution", which has meant that the fears of a world famine just round the corner have receded, but actual starvation is just one of the dangers. The population explosion is taking from the underdeveloped countries every hope of an improved standard of living. Even countries such as Kenya which are devoting large funds to education can barely keep pace with the increasing number of children

of school age. Worst of all, the countryside cannot supply work for additional people, so that the numbers of the destitute poor of cities such as Calcutta and Rio-de-Janiero are constantly being swollen by newcomers from outside. Father McCormack shows that if world population continues to increase rapidly, a large part of the increase is likely to be living in unspeakable conditions in city slums, with no possibility of decent life open to them.

He considers that the right to avoid an undesirable pregnancy is a most important human right, often denied to women "by an ironical twist, on grounds of religion or humaneness". He castigates lack of "concern for the countless women who are subject to the physical and mental tortures of abortions due to an inability to exercise their human right to regulate their fertility in the face of mounting population increase".

Unholy Alliance

He is diplomatic when speaking of the harm done by the Roman Catholic Church's traditional opposition to family planning, but his opinion nevertheless comes through clearly. He notes that recent research has made the rhythm method more reliable, and hopes that it may be made more so, but he recognises that it is not suitable for use by poverty-stricken millions. He does not say that the Pope's condemnation of "artificial" contraception is wrong in principle, but he considers Catholic women should not be blamed if circumstances force them into it. He also argues that non-Catholics in Catholic countries should be permitted to follow their own consciences.

Particularly deplorable he finds the attitude of those Communist governments and revolutionaries who have tried to insist that the population explosion is a capitalist myth, forming an unholy alliance with the most reactionary Catholic elements. The USSR has a shameful record in opposing moves to extend family planning internationally. (The USSR, Bulgaria and Brazil were the only countries to oppose the calling of a World Population Conference

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EDUCATION SUNDAY

MICHAEL LLOYD-JONES

Each year the Church of England sets aside one Sunday as Education Sunday. This day, sponsored by the National Society for Promoting Religious Education, is the day "on which the Society, through the Church, calls for the support of all Christians". Education Sunday this year was on 24 October. As the National Society is so anxious that the public should be made aware of its efforts in education, this is a good time to examine that work and the system of Church schools.

At the close of the eighteenth century a Quaker, Joseph Lancaster, began to give free elementary schooling to working class children. Lancaster received financial backing from the brewery owner Samuel Whitbread who, in 1807, introduced a parliamentary bill for establishing elementary schools paid for out of local rates and free from clerical control. This bill was stoutly opposed by Christians like Davies Giddy who warned: "Giving education to the labouring classes of the poor . . . would enable them to read seditious pamphlets, vicious books and publications against Christianity". The bill was amended in the Commons but when it reached the Lords it was thrown out altogether on a motion of the Lord Chancellor and the Archbishop of Canterbury.

But the Church soon realised that popular education was going to become a fact and that if the Church were to gain any advantage from this, it dare not leave the field to Lancaster and the freethinker Robert Owen, who had established his famous school at New Lanark. So in 1811, a Scottish clergyman named Andrew Bell founded the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church.

Over the next few years the National Society consolidated its opposition to a national system of State education, and it was not until 1833 that the Government felt disposed to spending any money on education. But in that year it gave £20,000 to be divided between the National Society and the Lancastrian Society. The thinking behind this gesture can be glimpsed in a letter which in 1840 was sent to a Welsh mine-owner from the Education Committee of the Privy Council, which had just been set up to supervise the allocation of the government grant: "My lords conceive that the same motives which induce merchants and manufacturers to devote a portion of their annual profits to the insurance of the capital they employ in trade ought to be sufficient (even without any reference to moral considerations of much greater dignity and importance) to deter sagacious men from leaving their wealth exposed to the danger of popular tumults and secret violence, when a comparatively small annual expenditure, judiciously employed in introducing the elements of civilisation and religion, would render society harmonious and secure".

The State of Schools

That this view was shared by the National Society can be seen in this extract from its annual report of 1843, commenting on the Chartist strike of the previous year: "Wherever means of Church instruction were best provided, there the efforts of the disaffected were least successful. In whatever districts Church principles predominated, no outbreak took place, however grievous the privations of the people, except in cases where the rightly disposed inhabitants were overpowered by agitators from a distance"

One of the first acts of the Privy Council Committee was to recommend that grants should be dependant on inspection of the schools. The National Society opposed this, and demanded the right to inspect its own schools. The fears of the Society were understandable, and indeed justified when a Royal Commission appointed to "inquire into the present state of education in England" reported in 1861: "The schools were generally in a deplorable state". There followed an intensification of the campaign for State-organised secular education. By 1870 the Government was obliged to introduce an education bill which empowered local school boards to run schools where those managed by the voluntary societies had been found to be deficient.

The denominational schools were given five months' grace in which to make up their deficiencies or risk being taken over by the local boards. Parliamentary grants were made available to the societies for this purpose, and during the period of grace 3,342 applications were made for grants; the average in the years before 1870 had been about 150.

The 1870 Education Act included a conscience clause by which local boards were permitted to run their schools as secular institutions. Most local boards chose to provide religious instruction in their schools, but a Commission in 1888 found a few boards who had decided to provide secular schools—for example, Birmingham, Padstow and St Neots.

The Church resented any interference with its hold on education and opposed attempts to extend State control. But by the beginning of the present century there was a widespread demand for secondary education and the 1902 Education Act allowed the local boards to make provision for this. But the price of Church support for this measure was that money from the rates had to be made available to Church schools. This Act of 1902 has provided the core of the "partnership between Church and State" which, modified by the 1944 Act, and made more financially generous to the Church by subsequent measures, has persisted to the present day.

Ratepayers Foot the Bill

In 1967 the National Society (in co-operation with the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge) appointed a commission, headed by the Bishop of Durham, to look into "religious education in schools". The report was published in 1970 under the title *The Fourth R* (an expression that, I believe, may have been first used about religion at a Rationalist Press Association conference in 1945). The lengthy Durham Report made a number of recommendations about religious education, but it was its conclusions on the role of Church schools to which the National Society wished to draw the attention of the public on Education Sunday. *The Fourth R* recommended that: "It is our view that the Church should continue to accept its commitment to voluntary aided schools, but—because of the financial burden—should plan to do so on a proportionately reduced scale".

At present, Church of England schools are of two kinds—controlled and aided. The difference between these categories is that in the former all the costs are met out of

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FRANCIS PLACE, THE MODERATE RADICAL

EDWARD ROYLE

Francis Place, the radical tailor from Charing Cross and back-room boy of the early working-class reform movement, was born on 3 November 200 years ago. His father was a bailiff to the Marshalsea court and looked after a debtors' prison near Drury Lane. The family was not well-off but adequately provided for, and young Francis enjoyed some sort of elementary education until he was 14. He was then apprenticed to a leather-breeches maker, and for a time indulged in the careless drinking habits of artisan life, but at the age of 19 he became sober and resolute. By dint of his own efforts he raised himself from poverty to ease; in 1816 his business as a tailor made a profit of £3,000, and the following year, at the early age of 45, he felt able to retire and devote himself wholly to politics and other reform causes.

His first experience as an organiser had come in 1793 when he had arranged methods of strike relief for his union, the Breechers-Makers Benefit Society, during a dispute with the masters over higher pay. The strike was inevitably broken, and Place was refused employment for a time, but the following year he succeeded in negotiating a rise without a strike. Industrial matters always remained of concern to him. In 1799-1800, Combination Acts had been passed against unions, and Place devoted years to the agitation for their repeal. Success, largely due to his efforts, came in 1824, a date often and rightly held to mark the beginning of modern trade union history. Politics also absorbed much of Place's time. He joined the London Corresponding Society, the first really working-men's association, in 1794, and rapidly became one of its leading members. Fame on a larger scale came in 1807 when he was an organiser of the Westminster Committee which secured the election of a Radical, Sir Francis Burdett, to represent Westminster in Parliament. The high-point of Place's political career, though, came in 1831 during the crisis over the passing of the first Parliamentary Reform Act, when he organised the National Political Union and led the pressure put upon Lord Grey by the reformers to ensure that the Whigs did not flinch from the task of reforming Parliament. He is probably best known in this context for the slogan which he devised at the heart of the crisis when the Duke of Wellington tried to form a reactionary Tory ministry—"To Stop the Duke go for Gold"

Advocate of Birth Control

Ten years later, when the Chartist crisis was at its height, Place played a less central part. He was now much older and not in good health, but he had always mistrusted extremists. As early as 1797 he had resigned from the London Corresponding Society on this account, and in the 1840s many Chartist leaders were using the language of violence. The very name of the Charter frightened moderate men, and Place appreciated that far from the working-classes being able to force reform on the establishment, middle-class help was essential if reform were to succeed at all. To the very end he continued to advocate a middle-class alliance in the reform effort.

This has caused Place to be greatly misunderstood. It is true that he had succeeded within the existing system by sobriety and hard work, and that therefore he sometimes failed to appreciate its most radical faults, but, beneath his moderate policies, he remained a true radical in spirit and

always had the welfare of working men at heart. Influenced by Jeremy Bentham, James Mill and the Philosophical Radicals, he was a strong adherent of orthodox political economy, arguing against such Socialist theories as the labour theory of value, and he defended the hated new Poor Law of 1834 and the economic theories of Thomas Malthus. This brought him in many ways to the same policies which Charles Bradlaugh was later to advocate. He too was sympathetic towards the deterministic views of the political economists, and he too became a staunch advocate of birth control as a means to improving the lot of working men. Indeed, Place's only published book is on the population question. Place also believed in the powers of reason and of education: he was friendly with William Godwin and Robert Owen for a time, and can be thought of as a disciple of Bentham, all of whom pioneered various radical ideas on education, and he was closely associated with George Birkbeck and the spread of mechanics' institutes throughout the country. A free Press was also one of his chief demands, and in the 1830s and late 1840s he spent a great deal of effort in the struggle to abolish the Taxes on Knowledge. And so one could go on, adding reform after reform to the list of causes to which Francis Place made an important contribution.

Our Debt to Place

He died on New Year's Day, 1854, but by this time he was already forgotten by some of his later contemporaries, and had been labelled "middle class" by others who saw him only as a retired capitalist employer who was out of sympathy with many of the demands of working men. Some later writers have perpetuated this impression, but the Fabians, who found in his gradualism and moderation a policy close to their own, rescued him somewhat. Graham Wallas' *Life*, published in 1898, remains the best full account of this remarkable man. Radicals of today, of whatever their particular views, owe a great deal to Place's pioneering work. As the *Spectator* said of him in 1854, "Few men have done more of the world's work with so little external sign". Such men are the salt of the earth.

THE COST OF CHURCH SCHOOLS

By DAVID TRIBE

Foreword: MARGARET KNIGHT

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editor: WILLIAM McILROY

103 Borough High Street,
London, SE1

Telephone: 01-407 1251

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

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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 5p stamp to Kit Mout, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

EVENTS

Ashurstwood Abbey Secular Humanism Centre (founded by Jean Straker), between East Grinstead and Forest Row, Sussex. Telephone Forest Row 2589. Meeting every Sunday, 3 p.m.

Belfast Humanist Group. War Memorial Building, Waring Street, Belfast, Wednesday, 27 October, 8 p.m. Discussion on what humanists can do in the present troubles.

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group, Imperial Centre Hotel, First Avenue, Hove, Sunday, 7 November, 5.30 p.m. Richard Clements: "Robert Owen, 1771-1858".

Freethought History and Bibliography Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Saturday, 6 November, 5 p.m. A Meeting of members and friends.

Humanist Holidays. Details of future activities from Marjorie Mepham, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey, Telephone: 01-642 8796.

Leicester Secular Society, Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate, Leicester, Sunday, 31 October, 6.30 p.m. Edmund Taylor: "The Spread of Ideas".

Merseyside Humanist Group, Ethel Wormald College, Mount Pleasant, Liverpool, Wednesday, 10 November, 7.30 p.m. R. Bloxidge: "Homosexuals, Society and the Campaign for Homosexual Equality".

North Staffordshire Humanist Group, Cartwright House, Broad Street, Hanley, Friday, 29 October, 7.45 p.m. Bryan Milner: "Education for Uncertainty".

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, 31 October, 11 a.m. A memorial meeting for Lord Sorensen. Monday, 1 November, 7.30 p.m., The Conway Memorial Lecture. Laurens Van Der Post: "Man and the Shadow". Admission 10p.

Worthing Humanist Group, Burlington Hotel, Marine Parade, The Pier (West), Sunday 31 October, 5.30 p.m. James Hemming: "What Alternative Society?"

NEWS

BARBARA SMOKER SUGGESTS A REVOLUTION

On 22 October, at the second of the current series of public meetings in London sponsored jointly by the National Secular Society and the *Freethinker*, Barbara Smoker spoke on *Is Democracy Possible—or Desirable?* Michael Lloyd-Jones was in the chair.

The speaker began by admitting the need for some sort of "law" as soon as a population exceeds one person: "A solitary inhabitant of a desert island needs no law, but Man Friday's arrival necessitates a reciprocal renunciation of cannibalism if the two inhabitants are to sleep easy. Every moral code, however, relies for its stability on a perpetuation of existing inequalities in society, with a gradual modification of the inequity in response to agitation by the more aware members of the under-privileged classes and the more humanitarian of the privileged—usually in the teeth of the power élite. Parliamentary democracy (in theory, representative democracy) evolved in order to substitute open debate for intrigue, bloody revolution, and *coups d'état*. But it has never been completely successful, and one effect of universal suffrage has been to reduce the average standard of political awareness in the electorate, thus enabling the legislators to pass such anti-democratic laws as the Official Secrets Acts and to make all the important decisions in private. To some extent, parliamentary democracy is more tyrannous than the more obvious tyrannies: monarchs are vulnerable to assassination and oligarchies to revolutions, but parliament goes on, it seems, for ever".

Miss Smoker went on to consider a number of classic definitions of "Democracy", many of which assume its desirability to be beyond argument, as though it were on a par with beauty and happiness. Bernard Shaw, however, saw it the way it is: "Democracy substitutes election by incompetent many for appointment by the corrupt few".

"How marvellous it would have been", she said, "if we could have had Shaw himself to give this talk! But why not? I've brought him along". And, delving into her capacious bag, she brought out a book and read part of the Preface to *The Apple Cart*. Then she said it had occurred to her that Plato might add a bit of class to the meeting—so another book came out of the bag, and she read a few lines from *The Republic* on how democracy dissolves into despotism. Our speaker (now in the role of chairman) said that she thought Plato had a point there, though she could not agree with the conclusions he drew about the permissive society, nor his implied support for Lady Birdwood and Mrs Mary Whitehouse. She called on Bernard Shaw to take the floor again—and produced a copy of *On the Rocks*, to read part of the speech on democracy that GBS had put into the mouth of old Mr Hipney. He remembered the days before universal suffrage, when democracy was "a dream and a vision, a hope and faith and a promise", but lived on to see it dragged down to earth: "The moment they gave the working men votes they found they'd stand anything".

Resuming the role of speaker, Barbara Smoker said that, even allowing for the gulf between representative democracy in theory and legislative democracy in practice,

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the very principle of deciding every issue on a mere counting of heads was questionable. "It is valid enough when the matter to be decided is something that affects everyone equally—but most issues are not like that. If we really had democracy in this country—through, say, proportional representation and a subsidiary system of specific referenda—this would enable the majority to oppress minorities. To make such a system just, the more that anyone was affected by the question under consideration the greater say he should have in the decision, but this would be extremely difficult to put into practice. All we can hope for is a gradual rise in the degree of enlightenment of the electorate, so that they will become not only politically educated and vigilant in defence of their own self-interest but also imaginative enough to identify with sectional interests other than their own.

"How is this to be achieved, since compulsory education for all from the age of five to 15 has failed so dismally? We must recognise that five years old is far too late to begin, for there is now a consensus among psychologists and sociologists that it is during the first three or four years of life that almost the whole potential of a person is determined. We must therefore demand a concentration of educational resources on play-groups and nursery-schools, where something might be done to remedy the damage wrought by the ignorance of parents (in every social stratum), by the lack of space and educational playthings (particularly in overcrowded urban homes), and by the social isolation of the nuclear family. We might even have television appeals to parents to take the time and trouble to talk to their babies and toddlers, for most parents simply do not realise how important it is. This would be the breakthrough for the greatest revolution in history".

The talk provoked a very lively hour of audience participation, with discussion ranging from the abolition of money to the restoration of capital punishment, and from categorisations of democracy to expositions of dialectical materialism.

The next meeting in the series will be on 5 November when the controversial author, Avro Manhattan, will be the speaker.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF SEGREGATION

"Educational segregation by religion is one of the root perpetrators of the Northern Ireland problem", a European teachers' conference was recently told in Dublin. Dr Edward Walsh, director of the Limerick Institute of Higher Education, said that if one were to set about creating strife in a community, it would be difficult to think of a more effective way than by arbitrarily segregating the children and injecting conflicting "truths" into both groups. Until the segregation barriers of the schools in both parts of Ireland were breached civil unrest would continue.

Dr Walsh continued: "The initiative is to a great extent with religious leaders, and it appears wise that any efforts which will be made to desegregate the schools, particularly in the north, should receive full support".

If such warnings had not been ignored in the past, Ireland would probably be largely free from sectarian bitterness and the appalling consequences. Unfortunately politicians

on both sides of the Border have all too often allowed religious leaders and institutions to take the initiative on issues which were not their concern. And if educationists like Dr Walsh really expect them to relinquish their hold on the schools, they are going to be disappointed. In fact segregation will continue in educational and other spheres of human activity, creating even more serious problems for future generations to solve.

Instead of entertaining pious hopes that the churches will stop meddling in secular affairs, men of Dr Walsh's status should be campaigning to completely break the Church's stranglehold on the schools of Ireland.

ROSARY CAMPAIGN

Father Patrick Peyton, an Irish-American priest who has been on a brief visit to London, is to launch a new campaign "for the restoration of the practice of the Family Rosary". It seems that since the advent of television "Our Lady" has been squeezed out of the family circle, and Father Peyton intends to reinstate her in an honoured position.

He is likely to find the ground in Britain rather more sterile than when he conducted a crusade 19 years ago. There have been dramatic changes since those halcyon days when conversion figures were increasing every month, the Roman Catholic Church was hailed by cold warriors of all denominations as our sure shield against godless communism, and there were even those Catholics who believed that England could be won for the Church by out-breeding its rivals and opponents.

Father Peyton is credited with having coined that popular, if untruthful, phrase: "The family that prays together, stays together". I doubt if those television parsons and others who have repeated the phrase *ad nauseam* have given it the slightest consideration. If they did, they would realise that in those parts of western Europe (Spain, Portugal, Italy, Ireland) and the United States (the negro and poor white areas of the Deep South) where such prayers are still widely practised, the quality of family life is extremely low. In such communities the family that prays together often lays together, and the large number of children born inside and outside marriage become an intolerable strain on home life. The outcome is usually separation for long periods and emigration.

YOUR 1972 POCKET DIARY

This year, for the first time, freethinkers, humanists, rationalists, secularists, or whatever, can have their own pocket diary, containing 16 pages of specialised information (mainly useful names and addresses, plus a few forward dates of 1972 events in the humanist movement), as well as the usual week-to-an-opening diary pages and all the usual features, including London theatre and Underground maps. All this, incredibly, in a small pocket size (4.1" x 2.8") diary that won a design award last year. Just the thing for your own use, and that of like-minded friends to whom you may (dare we suggest it?) send Xmas gifts.

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BOOKS

THE GEOGRAPHY OF RELIGION IN ENGLAND

by John D. Gay. Duckworth, £3.95.

It was Marx who observed that a man's political views were but an unconscious reflection of his class position in society. And it was Freud who dedicated himself to unveiling the hidden motives behind our actions, and his more misguided followers who have assiduously propagated the fashionable fallacy that the alleged psychological origins of a belief have something to do with its validity. (Thus, Christianity is false because fear of the unknown constrains people to invent a father-figure to look after them.) In recent years, the sociology of religion has tried to correlate the religious beliefs of a society with its social structure. Now along comes Dr Gay to tell us that the geography of religion is a "neglected field", which his book attempts to cultivate. This new venture does not bear on the truth, or falsity, of the beliefs whose geographical distribution is outlined in this book. Rather, it is the empirical consequences of religion that require examining from the geographical viewpoint.

A reviewer is perennially tempted to criticise an author for not writing the book that he ought to have written. But it is odd that Dr Gay devotes only five pages, out of over 200 of text, to the relationship between religion and its environment. This is surely a ludicrously small part of a book that is presumably designed to make out a case for the importance of the geographical approach to religion. Though in those five pages Dr Gay does advance some pretty bizarre hypotheses. For example, you're more likely to be a Christian in cold and rainy countries, like Britain, than in (say) the Middle East, since Christianity, "a religion which insists on high ethical and spiritual standards", is more acceptable to people who spend much of their time fighting the elements. In hot, sultry climes, apparently, people prefer a sloppier form of religion. Now quite apart from the insulting implication that Islam, for instance, is a debased creed because its devotees are not weather-hardened Englishmen, there is at hand a perfectly credible alternative hypothesis to explain the comparative lack of success of Christianity among semitic peoples: namely, that both Islam and Judaism are rigorously monotheistic religions for which the Christ-centred theology of Christianity has little appeal, representing as it does a departure from the worship of one God. As Dr Gay does finally concede that geographers do not now attempt to "explain" religion as in some way the product of the environment, the purpose of his book remains unclear to me. For either the geography of religion has something significant to say about the genesis, development and structure of religious belief, or it has not. If it has, then one looks in vain for it in this book. If it has not, then the geographical approach merely becomes part of the general perspective of the sociology of religion, relapsing into historical description that lacks analytic content.

Historical description, since the geography of religion in England—so far as the official statistics are concerned—is a hundred years out of date. The 1851 census was the first, and last, to measure attendances at places of worship, and since then no British government has tried to collect information about religious practice. Religion was included in the 1851 census to prove, or so it was hoped, that the Church of England was still the church of the overwhelm-

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ing majority of Englishmen and therefore entitled to its established status. Unfortunately, this pious hope was dispelled by the census returns: for what they showed was that the C of E accounted for under 50 per cent of the total attendances at church on the census Sunday. Moreover, of the total population of nearly 18 million, only just over 7 million had chosen to attend church at all; and the non-religious majority was heavily concentrated in the new industrial areas. Not that there were nearly enough church and chapel places to accommodate the workers, even if they had come, which accounts for the frenzy of building in the 1860s and 1870s as the census returns were gradually digested by the ecclesiastical authorities.

The churches never wielded much influence over the working class in the 18th and 19th centuries. Anglicanism was then, as it is today, very much a rural affair of tea and cucumber sandwiches. It seems that the Church of England never quite recovered from the rude shock of finding out in 1851 that half the nation was nonconformist; for present-day maps of Easter communicants show that the Church is still geared to a pre-industrial and pre-urban pattern of society, which of course contributes to its continuing decline.

The penal enactments of Elizabeth I against her Catholic subjects, and the anti-Catholic legislation of the Hanoverians following the 1688 revolution, led to the virtual eclipse of Roman Catholicism in England for centuries. By 1800, the Catholics numbered a bare one per cent of the population, and the preservation of the faith had become the task of the great Catholic families of the north of England whose aristocratic status was some kind of guarantee against complete social ostracism. Paradoxically, however, the more enlightened atmosphere of the 19th century, and the consequent removal of their legal disabilities by Parliament, indirectly gave rise to renewed suspicion of Catholics as a threat. For this greater tolerance encouraged the mass immigration of Irish Catholics, who driven as they were by economic necessity to leave their native land, found Victorian England a not unfriendly home. Initially welcomed for the contribution they made to the building of roads, railways and docks, the Irish Catholics came, however, to be regarded with hostility by the host population, on account of their low social standing.

The immigration of over half a million Irish Catholics into England between 1800 and 1860 made English Catholicism an increasingly urban phenomenon. The 1851 census revealed that Catholic strength was greatest in Lancashire and London. Today, four areas of high Catholic density stand out: the north-east, Lancashire, London and the Midlands. The focal point of Catholic strength has drifted to London and the south-east, owing to the growth of a Catholic middle class which has concentrated itself in the more prosperous parts of the country. Catholics now account for about ten per cent of the total population, though the number of actively practising Catholics is low enough to make this percentage much smaller—a point not mentioned by Dr Gay. Unlike Anglicanism, the Catholic Church is very much town-based, and thus more nearly reflects the general distribution pattern of the population at large. Dr Gay does not give an estimate of the rate of growth of the Catholic population, but clearly continued

REVIEWS

immigration from Ireland, and the higher fertility rate of the Irish, must account for the sustained growth of the Church.

The Catholics, indeed, are the only Christian denomination of any size to enjoy moderate health and vigour. Nonconformity, which reached its peak of strength and influence in the decades leading up to the great Liberal victory of 1906, went into rapid decline after the first world war. The number of children attending nonconformist Sunday schools has fallen from three million in 1910 to about half a million today. As with Catholicism, the centre of gravity of nonconformity has shifted to the south-east, away from the industrial areas of the north, so that dissent is becoming an increasingly middle-class activity. Dr Gray argues indeed that the free churches can ideally meet the need of new suburban areas for a kind of community centre, on the American pattern, which helps to explain why the doctrinal divisions between the various Protestant churches are being blurred. A more formless version of Christianity may well emerge as a result of this trend to non-denominational religion.

Among the smaller Christian groups, only the Mormons are a really flourishing growth point. Their strength in 1851 was already considerable, considering the American origin of the sect. Joseph Smith received his call to be a prophet only in the 1820's, and in the next 20 years Mormon evangelists carried the new faith all over America and into England. Mormon activity in England in 1851 was, however, mostly confined to London and the industrial heartland, and the increasing professionalism of the Mormon "hard sell" approach has not, as yet, brought the faith any marked success outside the north, especially the port areas of Liverpool and Hull.

Apart from the Church of England, then, the distribution pattern of the Christian churches in this country reflects the general concentration of people in the urban areas. Even the distinctive Jewish settlement pattern of close-knit communities is breaking up as orthodox Judaism declines. It will be interesting to see whether church-going becomes, once again, a "respectable" middle-class activity, an accepted feature of suburban life, as it has in some parts of the United States. What does seem clear, though, is that if the growth of Catholicism (and, to a lesser extent, of the more zealous American sects) continues at the same rates in the future as it has to date, when whatever is peculiarly "English" about religion in this country will slowly wither away. Henry VIII, thou shouldst be living at this hour!

PHILIP HINCHLIFF

THE ARTS IN A PERMISSIVE SOCIETY

Edited by Christopher Macy. Pemberton Books, £1.00, and (paperback) 25p.

In this attractive publication, which gathers together the important lectures given at a conference of the Rationalist Press Association in 1970, there are more stimulating ideas per page than one usually finds in a hundred conventionally scholastic volumes. Daniel Salem, for instance, ranges over the whole complex field of contemporary theatre and its methods of communication, with all the possibilities and limitations of what is called audience participation.

Many schools and colleges have by now experienced visits of the Royal Shakespeare Company's Theatreground, and have seen its stimulating effect on young audiences. The bringing of the live theatre away from the conventional setting, where audiences are stratified according to social class, and the whole atmosphere smacks of middle-class, middle-aged ritual, can be exhilarating.

John Calder, one of the most enterprising publishers in the business, asks what is happening to the novel at a time when it is feasible that words may themselves be sooner or later replaced by think machines. Writing before the questions of OZ and *The Little Red Schoolbook* came along, he plants the question of censorship right on our doorstep: "A tool of authority, to withhold authority from other people", he castigates it. Roger Manvell, however, in a percipient article on cinema and television, shows some of the dangers of a completely laissez-faire attitude, particularly in relation to the wholesale exportation of cultural productions, books, films and plays to peoples of widely different cultural experience. Some sort of local censorship may be necessary, he says, especially when one considers some of the near sadism that goes currently under the name of "culture". How far should we, or can we, judge for other people? Who would like to be limited at home to the sort of thing people like Mrs Whitehouse would approve of?

One more important contribution to this book must be mentioned. Peter Faulkner looks at the questions of permissiveness and puritanism in past ages; in the later Roman Empire, the English Restoration, and the time of Victoria. The first two are treated with considerable wit, and the Victorians with astuteness. Intelligent writers like Charles Dickens and George Eliot had to cope with the inhibitions of their time. How they did this, without ruining their work but even making it more subtle and ironic, is part of Faulkner's thesis.

This book raises many questions. Perhaps only one is answered—that raised by D. J. Stewart in his introduction. Are rationalists interested in the Arts? The answer would seem to be very much in the affirmative.

MERLE TOLFREE

CINEMA

THE GO-BETWEEN (ABC Cinemas One and Two Shaftesbury Avenue, London, London W1)

This film of what is really L. P. Hartley's best novel is most enjoyable if, as I did, you read the book first. People who hadn't come away a little mystified, but nevertheless they had comprehended and enjoyed the greater part of the film.

The confusion arises because Harold Pinter in his screenplay choses to emphasise the time element in the story by interposing short clips of film representing the boy hero of the story in middle age. Thus one suddenly sees a man driving around in a car in the middle of the story proper which occurs in the days of horses, large mansions and daily prayer sessions in the home attended by family, guests and rows of servants. The confusion is added to when one notices that this man in his anachronistic car is Michael Redgrave. He only appears about five times in the whole film for an average of five seconds a time. He doesn't speak until the very end when to the initiated all is revealed.

(Continued on back page)

CINEMA (Continued from previous page)

Apart from this mistake on Pinter's and Joseph Losey, the director's part, the film is very successful both as itself and with regard to Hartley's book. What Pinter fails to make clear, as Hartley did in the prologue to his book, is that this is a man who has suffered through his life from a single event in his childhood, suddenly reminded of it and looking back.

Now that you know this you can see and enjoy the film without any problems. Ninety-nine per cent of it is the story of a small boy, staying at the home of a school friend and becoming a carrier of messages, a go-between, for his school friend's sister (Julie Christie) and a local farmer (Alan Bates) who are having an affair. Such things are at first quite outside the awareness of the 13-year-old Leo, who complies out of admiration for the beautiful, smiling Marian, who is at first the only adult to take any interest in him.

The conflicts set up inside this small boy as his innocence is slowly, arbitrarily and only partially erased is conveyed utterly convincingly. Pinter's screenplay is brilliantly subtle and captures the Victorian period when what was talked about was prescribed by a strict code, but what was done was relatively unrestricted. The resultant atmosphere of humbug pervades the film magnificently. With great effect Losey takes from the book many of Hartley's images—deadly nightshade, the catalyst of evil in the small boy's mind, the throwing of clothes on the floor merely to show the servants their place as they pick them up. Leo wades through this, to him, strange life alternately jubilant and miserable, nearly always bewildered by something. Bewildered to the extent that the remark: "Nothing is ever a woman's fault", comes to him as a great enlightener.

Underlying all the humbug is of course the bugbear of ours and most societies, sex. The film thus constitutes a plea for sex education and all-round sexual explicitness, and shows up the dangers of the old-style taboo morality still being promulgated by Mary Whitehouse, Louise Eickhoff and others. Lord Longford's commission on "pornography" would learn much more from *The Go-Between* than from Copenhagen. The point must also be made that *The Go-Between* has been given an AA certificate which means that children under 14 cannot see it. The hero in the film is 13! Losey's study of a boy's sufferings in society, as it was 70 years ago, would open many children's eyes to the history and reason for the current fuss about sex. However, the censors obviously considered the corrupting effect to be gained from a two second flash of Julie Christie's and Alan Bates' bottoms far outweighed this possible beneficial effect. This is a harsh verdict on a film that would provide excellent and provocative entertainment for all ages.

DAVID REYNOLDS

RADICAL POLITICS 1790-1900: RELIGION AND UNBELIEF

by EDWARD ROYLE

65p plus 7p postage

FREETHINKER PUBLICATIONS

(G. W. Foote & Co. Ltd.)

103 Borough High Street, London, SE1

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for 1974.) The Roman Catholic Church itself can never have produced anything more crazily irresponsible than certain South American revolutionaries who welcomed the pressure of population as providing young people to further the revolution. Even if this were good politics it would be morally indefensible, but if the advocates of this had studied the history of revolutions they would realise that most revolutions have ended in vicious dictatorships precisely because they promised the masses a good life they were quite unable to provide. These ignorant revolutionaries, if they ever came to power on the crest of a movement motivated by poverty and starvation, would never be able to satisfy the expectations they had aroused.

Father McCormack rightly rejects the tendency to use the population explosion "as a scapegoat for lack of development traceable to other causes. Family planning is then pursued with crusading zeal as if it were a panacea". However, what cause the world has to be grateful to the crusading zeal of the family planning pioneers! What a state the world would be in now if they had not laid the foundations on which today's international mass movement is being built!

We wish Father McCormack every success in his efforts to convince his co-religionists of the facts, and persuade them to act. There are still Catholic countries where the possession of contraceptives is illegal, and dissemination of knowledge of birth control is a crime. It will require all the zeal and courage of the family planning pioneers to make a breakthrough in such places.

EDUCATION SUNDAY (Continued from page 346)

rates and taxes, and in the latter *all* the costs are similarly borne by the local education authority with the exception of 20 per cent of new building costs. The National Society's message for Education Sunday declared: "The importance of the Society's work is underlined at a time when the pressures of inflation are being felt with some acuteness by those responsible for planning the Church's part in the maintained system of education".

The National Society is appealing for money to support Church schools, but an examination of the way in which Church schools are financed does not suggest a picture of economic plight: "In a recent leaflet the National Society put the cost of aided schools to the Church of England at £1,100,000 a year. A substantial sum for a voluntary body. But not so substantial when one reflects that the Church claims to baptise, marry and bury most of the nation, has somewhere between 2 and 3 million Easter communicants and voters on the parish electoral roll, and, above all, is associated with the Church Commissioners and their assets of hundred of millions" (*The Cost of Church Schools*, by David Tribe, National Secular Society, 20p).

Of course the Church can raise its paltry contribution to the cost of its schools in any way it likes. But the disgraceful fact is that whatever was collected for this purpose on Education Sunday will have been nothing compared to the Church's annual collection of £300 million which, as David Tribe has shown in his excellent pamphlet, is roughly what the tax and rate payers of this country contribute towards the cost of Church schools. It is on economic grounds, as well as out of educational and social considerations, that Church schools should no longer be tolerated.