

THE FREETHINKER

Registered at the Post Office as a Newspaper

Founded 1881 by G. W. FOOTE

Vol. 94, No. 2

FEBRUARY 1974

6p

LEGALIZED ROBBERY

CHURCH ACCUSED IN HOUSE OF LORDS

In moving the second reading of his Education (Amendment) Bill on 28 January in the House of Lords, Lord Clifford of Chudleigh accused the Church of England of "legalized robbery" in the way that it sold off to the highest bidder village schools which were no longer needed as such. His Bill seeks to enable the Secretary of State for Education to offer such buildings to the local community at a price that takes into consideration its original charitable contribution. In many areas the school is the only meeting place and is therefore the heart of the community, which is what its original benefactors had intended it to be. Although it may be necessary to base primary education in rural areas on larger units, the local community should not be impoverished for the enrichment of the Diocesan Board of Finance when the latter provides a holiday home for "some Midlands tycoon with more brass than brains". Although the community could obtain grants towards the purchase of such buildings, the amount to be raised locally would still be in excess of what a village could afford with real estate at its present inflated value, but why, asked Lord Clifford, should one have "to pay for one's own heritage"?

Trusts revoked

The background to the present situation is that in the negotiations prior to the 1944 Education Act the Minister of Education, Mr. R. A. Butler, had insisted that the Church should capitalize on its assets if it wanted to enjoy privileges within the State education system. When he was informed that in fact most village schools were not owned by the Church he took steps in his Act to revoke the relevant trusts and wills and to vest the schools in the Diocesan Boards of Finance, and imposed on them the obligation of securing the best price they could subject to the Minister's approval. This provision of the 1944 Act is now incorporated in Section 2 of the Education Act 1973 and it is the intention of Lord Clifford's Bill to amend that Act to secure the rights of the local community.

To support his contention that to transfer this money for the provision of other church schools was a perversion of the original donations, Lord Clifford cited the case of his own village, Ideford in Devon. Here a plot of land was given in 1856 for a school hall to be used for a day school, a Sunday school and for *adult education*. A sum of money was raised locally and the hall built. Now, this is a predominantly Nonconformist area, while the largest benefactor was one of Lord Clifford's ancestors who was a Catholic. That this school now be sold to the highest bidder to further Anglican education elsewhere in Devon, without reference to the local community, is nothing less than outrageous. Lord Clifford said that since first raising this matter he had been inundated by letters from all over the country relating similar occurrences.

Later in the debate Viscount Eccles pointed out how this provision operated in his area. Not inconsiderable sums of money had been raised locally for the village school since 1944. This had been raised largely by people who did not go to church. They had given the money to the school not as a church school but as the village school. "It really would be a tremendous upset for the village," he

said, "if the school was put up for auction [as has nearly happened] and all we have put into it in the last thirty years went into the diocesan pool."

Enjoying, as it does, direct representation in the House of Lords the Church of England was able to make its reply in the form of a maiden speech from the Bishop of St. Albans. He thought that the matter should be left to the Secretary of State, who even under the present arrangement could take local interests into consideration when approving the sale of redundant schools, without this being made a specific obligation on the Minister. The Church of England has every reason to invite reliance on the discretion of the Department of Education and Science in view of the favourable treatment it has received at its hands over the years; others have less reason to be so confident. The noble prelate also pointed out that, "The cost of the school built 100 years ago would no doubt be 100th of its market price today". Quite, but why should not the local community benefit from escalating land values as much as the Churches do when they sell off redundant sites in city centres?

The economic cost

He also urged that some consideration must be had of the contribution of the dioceses, the National Society and the local education authorities towards the maintenance of the schools over the years. This is true, but increasingly it has been the last of these that has borne the brunt of the cost. At the present time, the State in one form or another pays 80 per cent of the capital costs of church schools and all the running costs. If the Church had to pay the economic cost of its participation in education, it would have used up all its capital resources long ago, and its educational effort would be restricted to a few private sector schools. The Bishop recognizes this when he says, "If this Bill has the positive aim of making money more freely available for general and unspecified community purposes, it is bound to be negative in affecting seriously

THE FREETHINKER

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U.K. ISSN 0016-0687

The views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Publishers or of the Editor.

POSTAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Inland and Overseas

Twelve months: £1.10 Six months: 55p

U.S.A. and Canada

Twelve months: \$3.25 Six months: \$1.65

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The Freethinker can also be ordered through any newsagent.

the principal source of income for maintaining the participation of the Church in the statutory system of education." In other words, it is only by sly dodges like the one complained of here that the Church keeps its educational effort going, and even then it is necessary for it to come crawling with its begging bowl for ever larger hand-outs. So critical is the situation that it was necessary for the Bishop to plead with their lordships that "Church participation in the maintained system [of education] should not be allowed to die of starvation or collapse."

He concluded by saying that the scheme proposed by Lord Clifford, as well as damaging the Church's position, would cause local difficulties and administrative confusion. But most of this arises from the anomalous presence of the Church in the State's educational system. If when redundant village schools came to be disposed of, the only interests to be consulted were those of the local community on the one hand and those of the educational authorities, local and national, on the other, the clear needs of the community and the wishes, expressed or implied, of the original benefactors could be more easily met, since the educational authorities have an acknowledged responsibility towards local community needs. The Diocesan Boards of Finance, however, has no responsibility other than to maximize their assets and pull out. Such is the price we are paying for the ill-advised compromises made by successive governments to a grasping Church.

DEMOGRAPHY OF BEATIFICATION

It must be rather depressing for the non-European Catholic layman to realize that his chances of becoming a saint are not what they might be. To stand the best chance of unalloyed heavenly bliss and superabundant grace one needs to be both Italian and a priest. These are among the findings of a survey carried out by a Dutch Jesuit, Father Rene Mob. In a study of the 1,848 saints canonized in the last one thousand years, it was found that 626 were Italians and 1,044 priests. The British Isles scraped in a creditable 271. However, if you are a married woman, you needn't both to apply; only 14 (1½ every hundred years).

Perhaps our hypothetical candidate for sainthood can get some consolation from, say, the ever increasing secularization of western Europe, or the distant prospect of women priests. Moreover with more and more priests leaving the

priesthood and many of these marrying the odds must be appreciably shortening for the run-of-the-mill randy layman. Think too what a responsibility will be placed on Catholic parents should it ever be possible to decide the sex of a baby in advance. If the present Catholic population's concern for the wider issues of population are anything to go by, there is no doubt which would take precedence — between producing a population balanced between the sexes and manipulating the salvation stakes.

TIT FOR TAT

In December a document was published entitled, *Ministry and Ordination*, which was an agreed statement on the doctrine of the ministry prepared by an Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission. These are ecumenical days, with Churches hoping there is safety in numbers. We have Catholics, Anglicans and Methodists having a simultaneous Eucharist in Stoke Newington (albeit at three separate altars). We have discussions to see if there is a way for the Catholic Church to join the British Council of Churches. Accordingly this document is perhaps not so remarkable, representing as it does a consensus position which must have been not too difficult to arrive at between two Churches having a tripartite ministry of bishops, priests and deacons. However, the report concludes, "We are fully aware of the issues raised by the judgment of the Roman Catholic Church on Anglican Orders . . . It will be clear that we have not broached the wide-ranging problems of authority which may arise in any discussion of Ministry, nor the question of primacy." But the report ends with pious hopes for the future.

These are allusions to the extravagant claims made by the Papacy towards the end of the last century at a time when its power was waning, in a desperate attempt to assert its authority in the medieval manner. The first of these was Pope Pius IX's Doctrine of Papal Infallibility of 1870, followed twenty-six years later by Pope Leo XIII's epistle *Apostolicae curae* on Anglican Orders, which includes the statement, "And so we pronounce and declare that ordinations performed according to the Anglican rite are utterly invalid and altogether void."

That the Catholic Church should have lurking among its official doctrines such a rigid statement is perhaps not surprising, but it does seem odd that at a time of conciliation the Catholic Truth Society should publish a pamphlet by Dr. Alan Clark, Auxiliary Bishop of Northampton, in which he reprints in full the Papal Declaration *Mysterium Ecclesiae* of 1973, which restates papal infallibility in a manner completely unacceptable to most Anglicans. Infallibility it says, rests in the whole Church, but it finds its clearest manifestation when "the Roman Pontiff speaks *ex cathedra*; that is, when exercising the office of Pastor and Teacher of all Christians, through his supreme apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the universal Church." Presumably you take one point of view in moments of ecumenical euphoria; another in times of sectarian despond.

It might be thought that the Anglicans, who are altogether more easy going, would avoid such embarrassments, but it seems that the Anglican doctrinal lumber-room contains a gem of a statement that is nothing less than a vitriolic tirade against one aspect of Catholicism. It occurs in one of the homilies (ready-made sermons) "Against the

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AND NOTES

Peril of Idolatry". These are not used today, and their undiplomatic language would not matter, if they were not commended by the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, the supreme statement of doctrine in the Church of England, as containing "a godly and wholesome doctrine and necessary for these times". In the homily in question the Church of Rome is referred to in these terms:

Now concerning excessive decking of images and idols . . . what is it else but for the further provocation and enticement to spiritual fornication, to deck spiritual harlots most costly and wantonly, which the idolatrous church understandeth well enough. For she being indeed not only a harlot (as scripture calleth her) but also a foul, filthy, old withered harlot (for she is indeed of ancient years) and understanding her lack of natural and true beauty, and great loathsomeness which of herself she hath, doth, after the custom of such harlots, paint herself with gold, pearl, stone and all kinds of precious jewels, that she, shining with the outward beauty and glory of them, may please the foolish phantasy of fond lovers, and so entice them to spiritual fornication with here: who, if they saw her (I will not say naked) but in simple apparel, would abhor her, as the foulest and filthiest harlot that ever was seen. (Quoted by C. Leo Berry, *Prism*, Aug. 1964.)

Had there been a sixteenth century editor of *The Freethinker*, he could hardly have expressed it better.

THE BEGGING BOWL AGAIN

In the Middle Ages the Church in England made what must be considered an excessive investment in its places of worship. It was able to do this by extorting from its members large sums of money with the promise of reward in a life to come, or more exactly by holding out the possibility of escaping the terrible punishments which, if maintained, must await them if they did not make some such contribution. The churches and cathedrals that came into existence in this way were erected, it was said, to the glory of God; needless to say, they were also to the greater glory of the Church. Now these buildings undoubtedly form a significant part of this country's architectural heritage, but the enormous burden of maintaining monuments of such antiquity comes at a time when the Church is less able to meet it than at any time in its history owing to its declining number of adherents and to the diminishing psychological hold it has over this remnant. The problem is what acceptable means can be found for preserving the country's heritage in this field.

In an article in *The Guardian* (12 January) Michael De-La-Noy pointed out that the Church had not found any solution to this problem and that it was left to each church to do the best it could for itself. While a cathedral like St. Paul's had no difficulty getting funds from the conscience money of the City of London, one like Hereford had no such ready source of income. Mr. De-La-Noy writes:

Given the size of the problem, the relatively inadequate resources of even a well endowed denomination like the Church of England, and the cultural value to the nation of beautiful buildings, the time has surely come to call a halt to piecemeal appeals and get speedy agreement between Government and Church on a future policy for preservation . . . Under a plan whereby the State was responsible for fabric there need be no threat to the Church's freedom to conduct its liturgical worship unhindered.

To the religionist this argument will seem quite reasonable, but to readers of this journal many objections will spring to mind. Yet again, it seems, the Church is asking not to have to cut its coat according to its cloth. The

churches and cathedrals may well be the glory of our towns and villages, but they also reflect glory on the Church of England and it is this glory which is the last flickering impression the Church holds on the consciousness of the majority of the population of this country. What would be the popular reaction if the occupant of a Georgian stately home were to invite public subsidy on condition that his family be allowed to live there in the manner they were accustomed to in the eighteenth century? It is all very well for Mr. De-La-Noy to say, "Here is a concrete opportunity for Establishment to be made to mean something positive", but for most people Establishment is an irrelevance, not a persuasive argument to part unconditionally with large sums of money.

It also seems to have been overlooked that these buildings were built and maintained for centuries at a time when by fair means and foul the Church obtained the adherence of the whole community. Now that the Church is very much a minority club, the community must claim its right to have the largest say in the administration of these buildings, especially when it is being asked to bear a large share of the cost of their upkeep. The Church is quick enough to cry, "National heritage", when it is asking for money, but pays scant heed to the community interest when disposing of its assets.

(That the Church is capable of the sharpest financial practices is amply illustrated by a case quoted by Lord Clifford in the House of Lords debate dealt with elsewhere. A friend of his was buying a redundant rectory in Devon. He agreed a price on a Friday, and was gazumped for £2,000 on the Saturday. Their Lord may have said "Ye or nay" was enough, but when dealing with the Church it is clearly a case of "*Caveat emptor, Amen.*")

Most of the wealth the Church calls its own derives from the time when congregations and community were synonymous, with late gratuitous state subsidies thrown in. One aspect of this is illustrated by Sir William Hart, when he writes:

The expenses of the repair and maintenance of the church fabric and the provision of its furniture had led to the necessity for some call upon the financial resources of the flock, implying in turn the growth of a parochial organization. The voting of money for church purposes was the function of the whole body of parishioners met for the purpose in the vestry . . . Usually it was an open vestry composed of all the ratepayers. (*Introduction to the Law of Local Government and Administration.*)

Even now the Church enjoys massive public subsidies in the form of tax concessions and immunity from rates on sites of very high rateable value. It is impossible to justify this subsidy if it is to be used solely to finance the practice and propagation of superstition. Were this subsidy not disbursed to all religions indiscriminately, it might begin to be justified as the State's contribution to the upkeep of its architectural heritage. But if this is the case and if what would be ever increasing subsidies are required to maintain its fabric, the Church must accept decreasing control over and use of this community resource. It cannot expect to maintain the edifice of a former age at another's expense. The pattern must be of either the Church retaining full independence and full financial responsibility for its buildings, or of the State deciding which buildings it will support and imposing conditions which reflect the community's predominant interest in these buildings. If the Church chooses to continue to have an interest in these latter, it must accept the progressive withdrawal of liturgical use to, say, the crypt—which should be quite cosy if congregations continue to decline as they have in the past. The rest of the building would be devoted to the community. If on special

occasions the Church wished to make use of the whole building, they could hire it at a rate which took account not only of the value of the site but also of the (if not anti-social) socially irrelevant use to which the building would be put. At present the Church jeopardizes the preservation of that part of the national architectural heritage in its care by refusing any measure of control commensurate to the size of the subsidy it already receives and further demands.

Hardly had the ink of Mr. De-LaNoy's article dried than it was announced that £8 million was urgently needed to clean and restore the outside of Westminster Abbey. Westminster City Council were approached and have agreed to pay £50,000 a year for five years (although the first payment has been deferred as part of government-imposed cuts in spending). Westminster Abbey is probably more completely a museum than most large churches. Nonetheless, the Abbey authorities take every opportunity to thrust religion at the tourists and the Church of England as a whole basks in the popular awe of the state ceremonies held there. At the risk of straying on to another subject, one could well imagine there the institution of a monarch or president by the Lord Chancellor or a royal wedding performed by the Registrar General—in suitably outlandish and telegenic get-up, of course.

N.S.S. ANNUAL DINNER

The National Secular Society is holding its annual dinner on Saturday 30 March (for details see advertisement elsewhere in this issue). Readers should note that there has been a change of speakers since it was first advertised last month. Owing to pressure of constituency business Arthur Davidson is unable to be present. His place has been taken by John Calder of the publishers, Calder & Boyars. Their most famous title is *Last Exit to Brooklyn*, which was the subject of an unsuccessful obscenity prosecution. Not surprisingly he is a prominent member of the Defence of Literature and the Arts Society. He will propose the toasts to the guest of honour, who is Tony Smythe. Mr. Smythe was general secretary of the National Council for Civil Liberties for eight indefatigable years, during which time the N.C.C.L.'s activities and influence were considerably extended. He was until recently Field Director of the American Civil Liberties Union and is probably the best known worker for civil liberty in this country.

The toast to the Society will be proposed by Madeleine Simms, who is well known to readers of *The Freethinker*. In this issue she makes a contribution on abortion statistics and her recent pamphlet on abortion counselling is reviewed. In fact, Mrs. Simms played a leading part in the campaign which led to the passing of the Abortion Act. She has been general secretary of the Abortion Law Reform Association, and is presently Research Fellow of the Eugenics Society. Recently she participated in the B.B.C. television series, *Sunday Debate*, on the subject of the social cost of the Roman Catholic Church. In this one of her opponents was Cardinal Heenan. The response for the N.S.S. will be made by the irrepressible Bill McIlroy, who is general secretary of the Society and a former editor of *The Freethinker*. In the chair will be the Society's president, Barbara Smoker, author of the highly commended booklet, *Humanism* (Ward Lock Educational). Surely, an occasion not to be missed.

The editor wishes to express his gratitude to the printers and their staff for their help and co-operation in getting The Freethinker out against the difficulties arising from the Government's imposition of a three-day working week.

SACK FOR ATHEIST

The Minnesota Human Rights Commission has ordered the State Highway Department to pay one of its former employees, Garry DeYoung, \$12,200 in lost pay, having found that the Department discriminated against DeYoung on account of his "religion" in that he was an atheist. His atheistic beliefs had been a matter of general knowledge among his supervisors and fellow employees from the beginning. His relationship with his supervisors deteriorated as his views on religion and other topics were expressed. Finally after he had objected to Christmas music being played at an office party he was suspended without pay and finally dismissed. The hearing examiner, Charles Quaintance held that, "the primary, if not sole, reason for that suspension was religious discrimination."

Mr. DeYoung is far from satisfied with the outcome, which, he said, "makes a mockery of the First Amendment". Firstly, the Commission did not order his reinstatement, but merely offered the Highway Department a reduction in the amount payable if he were reinstated within a given period. Secondly, Mr. DeYoung is not to be repaid the total of his lost earnings; these have been reduced by almost a half, because it was held that he had not constantly attempted to find other employment and so mitigate his loss. He claims he should be paid the full amount plus interest, damages, and costs. Finally, he was not allowed to be represented by his own attorney; his case was put by a lawyer from the Human Rights Department which was the official complainant. Both sides are considering an appeal. In these circumstances it is difficult to see how discrimination on these grounds is to be prevented, if those doing the discriminating can get away with it so easily.

OBITUARIES

Harry Fiddian

Harry Fiddian, who died recently in London at the age of 82, was a keen member of several freethought organisations and was active in Hampstead Humanist Society for many years. He was the last of the Humanist Housing Association's tenants at Burnet House, and he latterly resided at Rose Bush Court.

There was a secular committal ceremony at St. Marylbone Crematorium on 15 January.

Ludwig S. Weill

Ludwig S. Weill, a keen freethinker and member of the National Secular Society, has died. He was aged 88, and had resided in Britain for many years. Mr. Weill had travelled widely and was a keen amateur artist. His wife died several years ago and he is survived by three brothers.

A secular committal ceremony took place at Eltham Crematorium on 30 January.

FREETHINKER FUND

We are most grateful to those readers who kindly contributed to the Freethinker Fund during January.

Our thanks to: Anonymous (£3 & 90p), W. Armstrong (£1), S. Birkin (90p), A. G. Brooker (£1.40), J. G. Burdon (32p), G. Cartman (£1), S. Clowes (55p), H. Davies (45p), L. Dignam (£2), P. Graham (90p), D. Harper (£5), D. F. Heath (90p), E. J. Hughes (£1), C. Inkpen (50p), G. M. Jones (40p), G. A. Kirk (£1), Mr. Lennan (25p), G. P. T. Lewis (40p), J. McCorrisken (50p), J. A. McKechnie (£1.40), H. Madoc-Jones (£1), D. Pickett (40p), S. G. Salter (75p), T. Sato (90p), R. H. Scott (£3.50), M. J. Skinner (£1.53), W. Southgate (90p), D. C. Taylor (£2), F. White (90p), J. Wightmore (50p), D. Wright (90p), J. S. Wright (£1.40), I. Yettram (£1). Total for January: £39.45.

ABORTION STATISTICS: TWO VIEWS

C. B. GOODHART
MADELEINE SIMMS

In a review in the November issue of The Freethinker Madeleine Simms made mention of a research paper by Dr. C. B. Goodhart. Arising from this, Dr. Goodhart wrote a letter to The Freethinker. In view of the importance of this subject, Dr. Goodhart's letter and Mrs. Simms's reply are printed here in article form. Dr. Goodhart is a Fellow of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, and is associated with the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children. Mrs. Simms is Research Fellow of the Eugenics Society and regular contributor to The Freethinker. These differing views of the statistical evidence will certainly be one of the areas of contention when Parliament comes to consider the Lane report on the working of the Abortion Act, which is expected shortly.

Dr. GOODHART writes:

Mrs. Madeleine Simms (*Freethinker*, November 1973, p. 170) doesn't think much of a recent research paper of mine concerned with the interpretation of abortion statistics, because she supposes that it hasn't "anything to do with social policy for abortion, but how many criminal abortions might there have been in Britain a decade ago. (Anyone who thinks I am inventing this, should peruse *Population Studies*.) There is nothing wrong with playing statistical games provided they are not taken seriously".

I am sorry if Mrs. Simms failed to notice that this paper (*Population Studies*, Vol. 24: 241, July 1973, which of course wasn't written for a popular audience) actually does have some serious relevance to decisions on social policy, both now and for the future, even though it was largely concerned with the situation before the Abortion Act 1967 came into force. Perhaps I should now try to explain further what this is.

The point at issue, of which Mrs. Simms seems a little scornful, is how many illegal abortions were there in Britain before the law was changed. Were there something over 100,000 a year, as used at one time to be widely believed, or was the true figure around 15,000 and certainly not over 20,000, as all the available evidence now indicates? The figure of 100,000 was used by supporters of Mr. David Steel's Medical Termination of Pregnancy Bill in 1966 and 1967, among whom Mrs. Simms herself gained some prominence, as General Secretary of the Abortion Law Reform Association at the time. It was indeed one of their strongest arguments, that a radical reform of the law was required to reduce such a shocking total. Parliament is now getting ready to look in again to the working of the Abortion Act, so it may be of more than merely academic interest to discover whether it was misled by false figures when the Act was originally passed.

But more important than this is the problem of ascertaining the extent of any net increase in the total for legal and illegal abortions resulting from the Act. There were 171,000 legal abortions in England and Wales last year, plus about 8,000 in Scotland, of which a little under 55,000 were for foreign visitors. Allowing for at least 20,000 a year done legally before 1967 (the exact total isn't recorded), the annual rate of *legal* abortions for British residents is up by well over 100,000, five years after the law was changed. If however there really were 100,000 done illegally before 1968, and if the Act has resulted in the transfer of most of the demand for abortion from illegal to legal practice (that it would do so was another of the main arguments of the reformers; and although there is little evidence one way or the other, it would be surprising if it hadn't had some such effect), then possibly there might have been very little net increase

in the legal and illegal total, since 1968. So a definite gain could be claimed, since if an abortion is going to be done anyway, it is better for it to be done legally than illegally, and possibly dangerously, in some back street.

But if there had only been about 15,000 a year done illegally before 1968, then there must have been a net increase of some 90,000 in the annual total for residents, not including the 55,000 for foreigners—which surely even many of the original supporters of the Act would have to regard as an unexpectedly disappointing result. Furthermore if there had been 100,000 illegal abortions before the Act, and nearly all of them were now transferred to the legal sector, the present legal total for residents would represent pretty well all of the expected demand, and we might hope to see it levelling off at the present figure, with only foreigners showing further increases. If however the residents' total (legal and illegal) has already been multiplied three or four times as a result of the Act, there is no particular reason why it should level off there, rather than anywhere else. In Hungary, where they have nearly twenty years' experience of free abortion, about three babies are aborted for every two allowed to be born alive, which would correspond to over a million abortions a year for British women. I hope Mrs. Simms will agree that predicting the level at which the demand for legal abortion in Britain can be expected to stabilize does have something "to do with social policy for abortion".

Mrs. Simms is also critical of the French, who "with typical Gallic rigour, have invented a category of 'official under-estimates' (*sous-estime*) to attach to the number of women they are prepared to allow die of abortion in France". Mrs. Simms mentions no figures here, but the latest I have to hand is of 40 deaths from all forms of abortion (legal + illegal + spontaneous) for 1968, as compared with 50 in England and Wales for the same year. That could well be an under-estimate, though Mrs. Simms didn't say what other figure she would prefer, or why. Recently in the *New Scientist* (8 November 1973), however, she gave currency to two really quite absurd estimates, that "about 11,000" or "nearer 20,000 . . . women die in Italy each year as a result of abortion", said to derive from the Vatican and from an Italian lady socialist respectively. These are at least 100 times higher than any other plausible estimate of maternal abortion deaths in Italy nowadays, and if the Vatican really is responsible for the them, it is high time the Pope got himself some competent statisticians. Or has there perhaps been a misunderstanding, with the figures referring to *fetal* deaths resulting from abortion?

MADELEINE SIMMS replies:

I am, needless to say, flattered by the assiduity with which Dr. Goodhart of SPUC pursues my lightest word through the columns of successive British newspapers, castigating error and misrepresentation wherever he finds it (practically everywhere as it turns out).

He generally has two themes. One is, that in using the Registrar General's abortion deaths figures instead of his own version of them, I am deceiving my readers. The other is, that there were very few abortions in Britain (variously, 10,000, 15,000 or 20,000) until the wicked Abortion Act put the notion of abortion into the heads of previously innocent British women, thereby driving up the figures.

Dr. Goodhart seems a little hazy about the distinction between 'hard' and 'soft' data. The first is based on evidence; the second, on estimates. All Dr. Goodhart's theories about pre-Act abortion are based on the latter. The combination of 'soft' data, and a total ignorance of social history, makes an inadequate foundation for the great edifices of abstraction he bases on them.

If we really knew the differences in the numbers of abortions between 1963 and 1973, this would of course be useful. If we really knew that these differences (if any) were due to the Abortion Act, this would be even more useful. But of course we *know* neither of these things. This does not stop either Dr. Goodhart or myself having our own interpretation and views on the subject, which bear no relation to each other's.

What we do know is that there is more *legal* abortion now than a decade ago. Moreover, we can *infer* from the fall in abortion deaths and abortion emergencies (see Mr. Michael Alison's statement of 11 January) that there is less criminal abortion now than a decade ago—a common observation among hospital gynaecologists these days. We can reasonably *deduce* from this, that in a country in which most abortions are done criminally, very many more women will die than will in a country where most abortions are carried out legally.

Since we know now that early, legal abortion is very much safer than childbirth, we know it is quite unnecessary

that women should die as a result of abortion. They only do so in large numbers where the law forces them to have unsafe abortions. Dr. Goodhart supports such a law in the name of the principle of the "sanctity of life". I do not, as Dr. Goodhart has not yet succeeded in convincing me that murdering women for religious reasons is a socially useful activity.

On 15 December 1973, *The Guardian* reported of the French abortion situation:

According to the Ministry of Justice, clandestine abortions have been taking place in France since 1920 at the rate of about 1,000 a *day*—and on average have resulted in the death of one woman a *day*. As the Ministry of Health pointed out, if the 1920 law had been fully observed, some 15 million hapless women who had sought to end their pregnancies would have been thrown into prison during the past 53 years—not to mention the tens of thousands of doctors and others who had performed or assisted in the operations.

Thus, in France, a Catholic country with a savage abortion law, some 350 women are thought to die each year of abortion, even by the highly conservative Ministry of Justice. In England, in 1972, only 23 women died in this way.

Dr. Goodhart has till the next issue to think up some good reason why this comparison, besides being inconvenient to his Society, is (a) untrue, (b) unimportant (because foetuses matter more than women), (c) irrelevant, (d) other . . .

COMMUNALISTS AND SECULARISTS IN INDIA

MOIN SHAKIR

Dr. Shakir teaches in the Department of Philosophy of Marathwada University, Aurangabad. This article is the text of the inaugural address he gave at the Muslim Social Conference sponsored by the Indian Secular Society and Muslim Satyashodhak Mandal at Bombay in March 1973.

Secularists ought to feel greatly concerned over the recent developments in Indian public life along communal lines. Even those political parties which have a secular programme seem to postpone it in favour of short-term goals inconsistent with their professed objectives and thus undermine the secular basis of the Indian polity. Pronouncedly reactionary parties cast off the secular mask and work against the national ideal. Leaders in general have been yielding to communal pressures and have been maintaining a discreet silence in order to retain their "base" in the community. It is imperative that we take note of the issues which are being raised by the communalists and the obscurantists of all shades and varieties. The gravity of the issues can be understood by those who are familiar with the pre-independence politics of the country, the result of which was the disastrous Partition. It was a great set-back to the forces of composite nationhood and secular democracy. It "settled nothing and satisfied none". A small section of the Indian Muslims, after 1947, realized that the consciousness of being a separate "nation" could not offer a solution to their problems arising out of the fear of Hindu domination. It also realized that no uniform policy could be formulated in view of the regional diversification of the community. Before the partition of the country, the political strategy and vague sense of religious identity provided a so-called homogeneity to the Indian Muslims. Consequently the obsession with religion and politics kept them indifferent to the vital problems of social change and economic uplift.

In the post-partition period certain subjective considerations and the absence of effective, enlightened leadership on the one hand and the lack of courage and imagination on the part of the modernizing non-political élite on the other, hampered the process of adjustment with the new secular order, devoted to the ideal of the welfare state. The Muslim leadership failed to comprehend the extent to which the sinister two-nation theory could be and can be positively injurious. It was partly because the Muslims had never been confronted with such a situation in the past. Now they were obliged to join a common national stream on an equal basis, irrespective of religious considerations unless they chose to hold back in sullen isolation. It meant giving up the traditional categories of ruler and ruled. It also implied integration—breaking up of the communal identities and the consequent emergence of an Indian identity. The obvious hindrance in the way of such integration is the tendency to live in the past and the demoralization resulting from the events of the Partition. The Muslim community was wrongly led to believe that any change in the *status quo* should be resisted lest it should be assimilated and absorbed into the Hindu mass and deprived of its identity. This has resulted in a narrow communitarian orientation. The net effect is that non-religious problems are not perceived in the context of a democratic and secular perspective.

The projection of the community-oriented outlook was the establishment of the All India Muslim-Majlis-e-Mushawarat. This federation of the various Muslim organizations got the support of the various political parties in 1967. It gave respectability and vigour to the Muslim political groups. The greatest beneficiary was, of course, the Muslim League. It grew to such an extent that

Mr. Suleiman Sait, General Secretary of the All India Muslim League, claimed that his organization was "the sole representative of Indian Muslims".

The beginning of the seventies marks a turning point in Muslim politics. The question of the reform of Muslim Personal Law, reform of the constitution of the Aligarh Muslim University and the Vande Mataram issue and the Bombay Municipal elections provide evidence of this new development. The speeches delivered in the Muslim Personal Law Convention held at Bombay (December 1972), and the Aligarh Muslim University Convention at Delhi (March 1973) highlight the emergence of a communal consensus in a new and virulent form. The electoral gains of the Muslim League in the Bombay Municipal elections show the Muslims' style of articulating their diffuse but particularistic political interests seeking the aid of a cultural insecurity phobia. This has produced two results: one, the continuity of a type of unenlightened leadership wedded either to obscurantism or hypocrisy, and two, the absence of a conflict and confrontation between secular forces on the one hand, and inertia and orthodox fundamentalism in the life of the community, on the other.

Unlike the other segments of the Indian population, there has surprisingly been no change in the class character of the Muslim leadership. This has created the false impression that there are no competing interests within the community. But the reality should be perceived in the context of a stable and self-perpetuating subculture of the Muslims; it would explain why the process of political recruitment favourable to a particular type of leadership or élite groups has not been affected by the competitive democratic federal polity in the country. It is not surprising that the Muslim leadership vigorously raises only those issues which automatically alienate the non-Muslim leaders and reinforce their own obscurantist grip. The "Durbari" politics of the ruling party and the electoral opportunism of the opposition parties keep the Muslim masses in the wilderness.

In these circumstances, one feels pessimistic about the Muslim situation. The most discouraging thing is the alliance, the considerable degree of understanding, between the religious and non-religious leadership of the community. It is considered desirable as it has produced excellent results in the immediate past. It should be noted that the grievances of the community are never carefully analysed but they are voiced vigorously for perpetuating a conservative and reactionary sway over the community. The common Muslims are viewed by these leaders as material to be manipulated. The in-built conservatism of the Muslim mind is exploited by pandering to its obscurantist leaning. The working of the Muslim League clearly bears it out. This type of leadership is not concerned with the secularization of the Muslim attitudes as it has developed a vested interest in communalism.

The Muslim leaders belonging to the secular parties, particularly to the ruling party, generally play to the gallery rather than make any real effort at promoting the political advance of the community. Their stand on the issue of Muslim Personal Law is an instance in point. They feel that the process of modernization and secularization of the community will undermine their political position. There is nothing wrong if the Muslims feel that "as a community they have their beliefs and traditions, that they represent certain moral and social values and have their own way of life" but one fails to understand why this should be smuggled into public life; and why the areas of identity with other communities should not

lead to joint activity. Herein lies the tragedy of the Muslim leadership.

The communal leadership wants to organize the community as a separate political party. Such an attitude is inimical to the community itself. It ignores the Hindu communal organizations. It also gives a new lease of life to tribal thinking and action within the community. One does not know how long the Muslims shall be victims of the viewpoint that Muslim leaders alone, particularly leaders of the brand now popular, can safeguard their interests. What is needed is the creation of a secular atmosphere. And for this the Muslims must contribute their mite and not merely wait and see. The minimum they can do is to discard this type of leadership.

The rôle of Muslim intellectuals has been equally deplorable. They may express differences with the present religious and political élites but they have failed to project any fresh ideas or new issues. Their attitude to the common man has been characterized by snobbery. They neither know the poor Muslim masses nor do they seem to have any interest in knowing them. They are similar to other leaders in the sense that they also just want to speak in the name of Muslims. They do not believe in structural change but in the change of personnel in the system of power. To them the biggest problem of the community is the employment of the educated few and they foster the falsehood that the Muslims are a sophisticated urban community.

Two factors should be taken into account regarding the ineffectiveness of the non-political élite. It cannot succeed in the given circumstances, as the community has "inordinate respect for wealth and position". The non-political élite does not have either of the two. To work on the non-political plane appears to be a thankless task. The prevailing cultural backwardness, absence of independent thinking and the low educational level of the common Muslims makes every effort a highly frustrating venture.

Secondly, the political situation offers many opportunities to the communalists to operate. The validity of the traditional bonds and their projection into the democratic and competitive polity obstructs the establishment of a really modern and secular system. It should be admitted that the Muslim community has a capacity to adjust but this process is certainly slow. The secular Hindu leadership has an awareness of the need to strengthen the non-communal forces in the Muslim community but it has failed to act with firmness. What is urgently needed is an effort to bring about the unity of secular leadership to renounce traditional allegiances and particularistic appeals and to set the community resolutely and irrevocably on the nation's chosen road to secularism, modernization and unity.

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HOLY RELICS

R. J. CONDON

In July 1973 it was announced that the Pope would soon pronounce genuine the much-disputed Holy Shroud at Turin, and that the relic would then be sent on a world tour which His Holiness confidently expects to result in mass conversions to the Faith. The Shroud has been investigated—in secret—by a commission of doctors, scientists and archaeologists, all devout Catholics and utterly convinced of the relic's authenticity. It would indeed be churlish to question the impartiality of so obvious a body of truth-seekers.

The Shroud's antecedents, however, are not such as to inspire confidence. After Constantine the Great had established Christianity as the religion of the Roman Empire, he ordered Macarius, Bishop of Jerusalem, to make a search for the True Cross. During three centuries the topography of Jerusalem had been extensively altered, and nobody could remember the sites of the holy places or the whereabouts of the Passion relics, if indeed they had ever been known. But what a Roman Emperor sought, prudence generally found, and when Constantine's aged mother Helena arrived in Jerusalem on a pilgrimage the Cross, its superscription and the crosses of the two thieves were dutifully produced for her inspection. Being nothing if not thorough, Macarius proceeded to demolish a small temple of Venus, declaring that he had discovered the Holy Sepulchre beneath its foundations. For good measure he laid before the dotting octogenarian the bones of the three Magi, said to have been converted to Christianity and ordained priest by the Apostle Thomas. Other goodies in this remarkable haul included the nails used in the Crucifixion, the Crown of Thorns—and the Holy Shroud. This is claimed to be the one at Turin, but there is no continuity since it disappeared during the Crusades, allegedly turning up later in the possession of some French counts.

For sheer imposture and gullibility the history of relics is rivalled only by the modern cult of Spiritualism. Their earliest known use in the Christian Church is described in a letter written by some inhabitants of Smyrna about A.D. 150. They tell how they put the bones of St. Polycarp, who had been burnt at the stake, in a suitable place where they could celebrate the "birthday of his martyrdom". The custom foreshadowed here of building a chapel over a martyr's remains grew considerably in the following centuries. As it spread the idea arose that no church was complete without relics, and in 787 the second Council of Nicaea made obligatory the placing of relics under the altar.

By this time the relic cult was flourishing as never before, seemingly justified by the numerous miracles reported. The clergy had early discovered that the possession of a notable relic was an easy road to wealth in the form of lavish offerings by supplicants, and they readily stooped to spurious manufactures, displaying much ingenuity in the process. Portions of the bodies of New Testament characters, and articles associated with them, naturally suggested themselves and were easily faked. But what kind of perverted imagination could have produced such absurdities as a bottle of St. Joseph's breath, a finger of the Holy Ghost, feathers from the wings of the Archangel Gabriel, the corner-stone rejected by the builders and the wood with which St. Peter proposed to make three tabernacles?

The Old Testament patriarchs were not neglected. Relics included the rod of Moses, Enoch's slippers, parts of the

burning bush, the bones of Isaac, hairs from Noah's beard, fragments of the Ark (the doors of the Cathedral of St. Sophia in Constantinople were said to have been made of this well-seasoned timber), portions of manna and Job's dung-heap, and soot from Daniel's fiery furnace.

The sites of long-forgotten graves of martyrs were sometimes pointed out by their occupants, who appeared to the faithful in dreams or visions. Occasionally whole cemeteries were dug up, as happened at the Church of St. Gereon in Cologne, where the bones were distributed round the walls as those of St. Gereon and his Theban band of martyrs. The wells of the neighbouring Church of St. Ursula were adorned with the spoils of another cemetery, said to be the bones of St. Ursula and her eleven thousand virgin martyrs. The discovery that many of the bones were those of men made no noticeable difference to their healing efficacy. Similarly the relics of St. Rosalie at Palermo went on curing diseases after they were found to be the bones of a goat.

It must not be thought that spurious relics were always the result of fraud. There was a tendency to regard any human remains discovered near a church or in the Roman catacombs as those of martyrs. God, it was reasoned, would send the genuine article to the deserving faithful. A facsimile, sanctified by contact with an authentic relic, might in time become regarded as the real thing.

It was believed that touching or moving the corpse of a martyr was a perilous enterprise, and that prodigies had struck terror into the hearts of well-meaning men who had attempted it. None the less they were the subject of a regular commerce, the high prices charged reflecting their income-producing value, and there was keen rivalry between churches and monasteries for the possession of some startling relic. We even read of the "hi-jacking" of certain martyr's bodies in transit by armed bands of monks.

To be buried near the tomb of a martyr was a highly prized privilege, for it was believed that on the Day of Resurrection the bodies of the martyrs, reunited with their souls, would be accompanied to heaven by those who lay around them. The martyrs, having died for Jesus, could on that account ask favours of him, and might be expected to perform this service for those who had kept them company in the grave.

Apart from their healing qualities, a miracle peculiar to relics was that of reproducing themselves, or allowing portions of themselves to be cut away without diminution. Thus there are thirty-three fingers and thumbs of St. John, plus two whole hands, all in Italy, and that despite his complete ashes at Genoa. The known fragments of the True Cross would be sufficient to build a man-of-war, although a single individual was able to carry the original. The multiplication of relics was readily admitted by the priests, and as readily explained. If Jesus could feed a multitude on a few loaves, what was to prevent him multiplying the relics of his Cross for the benefit and consolation of the faithful? Indeed, the more a relic proliferated the greater its value, as it must then be a standing proof of the power of the Almighty.

In fairness to the ecclesiastical authorities it must be said that they did try to secure the credulous against deception. Such tests were applied as the science of the day could devise. Often this took the form of an appeal to the miraculous, as when Egbert, Bishop of Trier in 979,

doubting the authenticity of the body of St. Celsus, threw a finger joint of the saint into a thurible of burning coals, where it remained unhurt during the whole time of the Canon of the Mass.

By the eighteenth century more sophisticated tests were being used. When Jesus ascended into heaven, one portion of his body remained behind, that from which he was separated at the age of eight days. The Holy Prepuce, preserved at Calcata in Italy, came under suspicion and a Dominican was sent to investigate it. Alas, it failed the test for elasticity and is now in two pieces, no longer being shown to the curious. Fortunately this was one of the relics so thoughtfully multiplied by Jesus, several other examples being known.

As might be expected, an enormous concentration of relics was to be found in Rome, although the Church has been doubly unfortunate with regard to the gem of the collection, the Chair of St. Peter. Before the rise of Christianity, the chief priest of Rome had been the Mithraic Pontifex Maximus, and it was the throne of that pagan dignitary, appropriated by the Church, which was annually exposed to public adoration on 18 January, the festival of the said Chair. But an unlucky decision to clean the Chair resulted in the Labours of Hercules being discovered engraved upon it, and it had to be laid aside. Its successor fared no better, for when Napoleon captured Rome his soldiers found inscribed on the back of it, in Arabic: "God is God and Mohammed is his Prophet".

A fifteenth-century visitor to Canterbury Cathedral listed some of the relics he found there:

First we saw the head-band of the Blessed Virgin, a piece of Christ's garment, and three thorns from His Crown; then we saw the bedstead of St. Thomas and his brain, and the blood of St. Thomas and of St. John, the Apostles. We saw also the sword with which St. Thomas of Canterbury was beheaded, the hair of the Mother of God, and a part of the Sepulchre. There was also shown to us a part of the shoulder of the Blessed Simeon, who bore Christ in his arms; the head of the Blessed Lustrabena; one leg of St. George; a piece of the body and the bones of St. Lawrence; a leg of the Bishop of St. Romanus; a cup of St. Thomas, which he had been accustomed to use in administering the Sacrament at Canterbury; a leg of

the Virgin Milda; a leg of the Virgin Eduarda. We also saw a tooth and a finger of St. Stephen the Martyr; bones of the Virgin Catherine, and oil from her sepulchre, which is said to flow to this day; hair of the Blessed Virgin (sic!) Magdalene; a tooth of St. Benedict; a finger of St. Urban; the lips of one of the infants slain by Herod; bones of the Blessed Clement; bones of St. Vincent. Very many other things were also shown to us . . .

This must have been an impressive collection to behold, the nice line in virgins' legs being particularly noteworthy.

The wealthy collected relics much as their successors now hoard works of art. We shall never again see the like of the eighteenth-century Austrian margrave who assembled no fewer than five thousand relics, and whose simple faith was not a whit shaken by his finding himself the possessor of sixteen Crowns of Thorns.

It would be nice to think that the days of relic-worship were past. But in Padua people still fight to get into St. Antony's Basilica in order to apply their hands, their babies and their lottery tickets to the saints' marble sarcophagus. In Naples the blood of Januarius (doubly miraculous since it use to be the blood of St. Stephen) still liquifies and boils in front of enormous crowds, who hiss and boo if it fails to do so. Among those always present are the "Relatives of San Gennaro", a group of women claiming to be descended from those who collected vials of the saints' blood after decapitation in 305. Until the present Cardinal Archbishop of Naples arrived, these women would crowd around the altar rail, screaming and tearing their hair, and shouting insults at the saint for failing to deliver his miracle at their invocation. It says much for the personality of His Eminence that he has managed to persuade the ladies to confine their lamentations to prayers found in the liturgy.

In Britain we hear little of relics, but occasionally surprising news items appear. A few years ago a Sunday newspaper revealed that a Catholic church in South London rejoiced in the possession of some seventy relics, including bits of all the Twelve Apostles. A scandalized new comer to the parish reported the matter to the Bishop, but that good man didn't want to know.

REVIEWS

BOOKS

ULSTER DIVIDED by James Callaghan. Collins, £2.50.

Few politicians have emerged from the Irish tangle with enhanced reputations. James Callaghan, now Shadow Foreign Secretary, is one who did. Of course it is a matter of speculation or argument whether this was due to the departure from office of the Labour Government. However, Callaghan excels as a mediator and is able to combine thoroughness and toughness with a straightforward approach and down to earth manner. He can also plunge a knife neatly between the shoulder blades with the best of them and no one without these skills should be given responsibility for Ulster.

Callaghan's style of writing, like many of his speeches, is disarming and without frills. He learned a great deal very quickly about the harsh realities of Ulster, but in a very curiously economic interpretation he initially over-emphasized the common bond of suffering of Protestant

and Catholic through unemployment and poor housing. In this he made the same error that Marxists frequently fall into through under-estimating the driving force of racial or religious antagonisms.

Many of us, who for several years had been forecasting the violence to which we are now unhappily accustomed, felt the Labour Government learned and acted too late. Callaghan has significantly omitted any reference to the delegation of members of the Campaign for Democracy in Ulster which sought to prevent the provocative march of the Derry Apprentice Boys. He gives the B Specials and R.U.C. more credit than they deserve, since there is little doubt doubt they would have led the assault on Bogside, had Callaghan not taken the fateful but necessary decision to send in the troops. The battle of Bogside was the first stage of the escalating pattern of violence.

For the the same basic reason Callaghan intially miscalculated in considering that the Northern Ireland Labour Party had an important rôle to play and now he pays tribute along with Mr. Whitelaw to the S.D.L.P. and Gerry Fitt. These matters are glossed over in this ministerial view of the Ulster crisis during his tenure of office as Home Secretary. History overlays all that is happening in Ireland today and sometimes it is more valuable to have a deep

consciousness of Irish history than the political sophistication of Ministers and Party leaders when dealing with the current situation.

When Callaghan came to that office, Ulster was still largely ignored in a casual corner of the Department. The Campaign for Democracy in Ulster had exposed Unionist rule to the British public and acted as a catalyst to a new Movement for Civil Rights in Northern Ireland. Its hopes were dashed as every long-needed reform came too late to be effective and the Provisional I.R.A. alienated the goodwill for the minority which it had painstakingly built up. Callaghan is not alone either in recognizing the talented by destructive nature of Bernadette Devlin's intervention. Curiously, that particular star seems to have burned itself out and is irrelevant to the Irish scene other than in an ability to exploit tensions for her own narrow and selfish ends, while pursuing absenteeism insofar as Westminster is concerned. Mr. Ian Paisley who plays a sinister rôle on the other side of the divide, has carved out a more permanent place in the power structure, having revealed to Mr. Callaghan the grim reality of Ulster fundamentalism by his well known reference to "children of wrath" in his meeting with Mr. Callaghan.

The current attempt at power sharing has created a fragile basis for a future in line with the original ideas of civil rights campaigners in Britain and Ulster. It is also in line with the policies adopted at the Home Office under Callaghan in the face of the slide towards extremism and violence. That policy has been pursued by Mr. Whitelaw. The current bipartisan approach should not conceal the revelations of torture, the events of "bloody Sunday" and internment without trial. All these have fed the flames that the burning of Catholic Bombay Street started and which ignited the fuses of the I.R.A. Internment was an act of unmitigated folly which made Ulster the first casualty of the Tory Government. Since then they have worked hard to put the pieces together and one hopes they will adopt Mr. Callaghan's view that "If by sabotaging the political structure of Northern Ireland the majority deliberately contracted out, then Britain should feel morally free to reconsider the link between herself and Northern Ireland, the provision of troops in Northern Ireland and the financial subsidy to the province". In other words, Mr. Callaghan has adopted the view that Ulster must adopt British standards or Britain will have to abandon Ulster.

"At the end of the day," concludes Mr. Callaghan, "I would like to see Ireland come together again." It is a conclusion which comes all the more welcome from one who backed the Northern Ireland Labour Party. However, he is right to insist on consent since a coerced Ulster would create in Ireland an Ulster in reverse. Curiously Mr. Callaghan writes in an almost detached manner on his Ministerial experiences as if shielded by a curtained office and a bodyguard of civil servants. He traces step by step his period of office from 1967 to June 1970. It coincides with the inevitable slide of Stormont towards its own self destruction. Callaghan's vantage point seems distant from the bloody ferocity of the passions that rend the Shankill and the Falls Road. However, Jim Callaghan walked unshielded in both, took tea in Bogside and met the embattled of both communities where many a less courageous man would have driven through under armed escort.

James Callaghan's account does not reflect the on-the-ground excitement and feeling of the *Sunday Times* Insight team. However, a shrewd Minister taking the initiative in

attacking an intractable problem has a fascination on a different level. Orders are given: meetings are held: decisions are taken.

In short, this is the unpretentious public diary of a Home Secretary. It provides a different sort of insight. It is a placid account of a man keeping his head while all about him were losing theirs. The tragedy is that by the time Callaghan became Home Secretary it was already too late for cool heads to prevail.

PAUL ROSE, M.P.

JESUS BUBBLE OR JESUS REVOLUTION by Geoffrey Corry. The British Council of Churches Youth Department (10 Eaton Gate, London SW1), 35p.

This is a sensible and straightforward, if unsubtle, pamphlet. Apart from its implicit Christian viewpoint, it is a relatively objective survey of the Jesus movement, and is able to be critical of aspects of the movement without being dismissive of all the implications of the experiments of the various groups.

The survey shows the development from Californian hippy-orientated groups to the establishment of diverse groups such as the Children of God (C.O.G.), the Jesus Family and the Jesus Liberation Front. More than a passing reference is made to the wanderings of Arthur Blessitt, really akin to an old-fashioned tub-thumping evangelist, a kind of nomad Billy Graham with a mastery of "hip" jargon. The Children of God, still to be encountered in the streets of London, are rather a special case and Geoffrey Corry rightly questions the legitimacy of including them within the Jesus movement, they having more affinities perhaps with Jehovah's Witnesses than Jesus freaks. He lays little emphasis on the Festival of Light activities, in my view an attempt by the puritan branch of the establishment to capitalize on the movement; he suggests that the "Dunkirk Miracle 72" event (leafleted by the N.S.S.) had little relevance to a group predominantly born after 1940.

One of the most noticeable features of the movement is their attempt to set up a commune life-style. This clearly takes its impetus from the hippy movement, but becomes transmuted in some cases into an attempt to imitate the life of first century Christians, supported by legion interpretations of the Pauline epistles. But they don't seem to have solved the problems inherent in commune living (it is important to remember that many communes with political, ecological and artistic, as well as religious, orientations are struggling or foundering today). I should like to read a serious study of the problems of alternative group attempts at communal living, recounting the tensions and economic and inter-personal difficulties. The implicit rejection of institutional religion led to the need for looser alternative communities, but the only way to hold them together seems to have been a disturbingly authoritarian concern with obedience and discipline: the C.O.G. seem to place a naive trust in the authority of their leader, Moses Berg, and seem to be strongly controlled by the "shepherd" of each commune. Perhaps it is one of the paradoxes of the Jesus movement that it rejects institutions but cannot survive without them.

One of the weaknesses of the pamphlet seems to be lack of detailed examination of the ideas of the various groups; but it could be a criticism of the movement itself, for it seems to be peculiarly lacking in ideas. Indeed my own

conversations with Jesus people have suggested that they are astonishingly mindless. Their knowledge of the Bible may be extended by intense Bible study sessions, but the result seems curiously eccentric and distorted and their essential theology seems fundamentalist to an excessive degree. The author admits that they "have a profound distrust of conceptual knowledge and academic learning". The pamphlet however notably fails to mention the C.O.G.'s odd emphasis on the adulation of Gadafy as a political leader who places a premium on the religious life. It is an interesting fact, which the pamphlet fails to observe, that the movement seems totally unaware of the so-called "new theology" importantly coming from Bonhoeffer filtered through John Robinson, one-time Bishop of Woolwich—a movement that seems to me to be desperately struggling not to throw the baby out with the bath water.

The lack of intellectual content is probably related to the intensely emotional nature of the religious experience offered by the Jesus movement. I have the impression that the rewards of the movement are essentially emotional and appeal particularly to the emotionally immature. The self-validating experience of being a member of a group with a common purpose and the self-induced ecstasy of a religious "high" must be important aspects of the movement.

The experience of being "high" is possibly what the movement has in common with other aspects of the youth counter-culture. Of course, sociologists question whether there is such a phenomenon as youth culture or counter-culture; perhaps if there is it is the diverse quests for the "high" that unifies its disparate elements. A minor criticism of the pamphlet might be its lack of sociological perspective, for the Jesus movement ought to be seen in the context of drugs, pop music and a fascination with Eastern religions. *I.T.* and *Oz* were much more important and pervasive publications than Jesus newsheets and "Clapton is God" (Clapton was an idolized pop singer) was as important a slogan as "Jesus lives". But, to be fair, I must mention Geoffrey Corry's quotation of the concept of "alternation", an interpretation of the "conversion experience" which involves a process of "re-socialization" in which the young adult copes with "a problem of dismantling and disintegrating" all his previous experiences in school, church and family. But I suppose to have explored this theme further would have been to write a different essay. Another interesting comment which puts the movement in perspective, is a quote which suggests how the movement was dissipated by commercialism:

Have you ever noticed how the most effective movements get killed off in capitalist countries? It's simple. You produce a cheap commercial version of the real thing and sell it back to the masses. Through this process of trivialization you render the once-powerful movement harmless. (Steve Turner.)

Or how the underground became the overground?

If you wish to understand the curious phenomenon of the Jesus movement, and I am coming to feel that it is more valuable to try to understand than to dismiss, this is a valuable introduction. As a final comment on the movement I shall refer to the religious pop group called "Sheep". It is in honourable Christian traditions—"All we like sheep . . ."—but as a metaphor of human existence, with its implications of mindlessness and aimless following of the herd, it surely cannot appeal to thinking humanists.

JIM HERRICK

SPRE-E 73 by David Coomes.
Coverdale House Publishers, 45p.

David Coomes opens the first three paragraphs of his book with the words "All day they arrive . . ." It is reminiscent of a trailer to one of those awful American films showing how John Wayne won the Second World War. In fact the author is describing the scene last August at Earls Court, London, where a five-day programme of American-style religiosity and salesmanship took place. What follows is a dreary, repetitive chronicle of stereotyped testimonies, mindless adulation of high-powered religious entrepreneur, gullibility and wasted resources. But there are also moments of unintended hilarity; Mr. Coomes seriously reports episodes that could have come straight from *Monty Python's Flying Circus*.

SPRE-E was the brainwave of Maurice Rowlandson, British director of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, who had been to EXPLO '72 in Dallas, Texas. Mr. Rowlandson admitted that he had originally hoped for an attendance of 100,000, but he realistically settled for "God's figure" of 11,600, a large proportion of whom came from other countries. The Northern Ireland contingent was probably the largest from the United Kingdom; one of them told David Coomes that she was an admirer of the Rev. Ian Paisley, but felt that his comparison of the Pope to the devil "is going a bit far".

There were evening performances at which Billy Graham was the star turn. Unlike the 1972 London Festival for Jesus, SPRE-E was attended by delegates, and there was much emphasis on teaching and training for evangelism. But at the end of the week I found that most of the participants were incapable of intellectual activity more strenuous than parrot-like repetition of slogans and hymns. David Coomes tells how he was bombarded with stories of instant conversions, and of the delegates who summarized their feelings about SPRE-E with the word "fantastic". Quite so; my dictionary defines "fantastic" as "grotesque, exaggerated . . . unbelievable, preposterous".

It was almost inevitable that there would be a book on SPRE-E, but was it necessary to write and publish this "official" record within two months of the event? If David Coomes had given himself time to reflect, and to assess the reaction and the criticisms of SPRE-E, he would have written a more balanced and reliable account. He would also have avoided creating the impression that while writing he was fearful of being overtaken by a printers' strike or by Armageddon itself. Could it be that Mr. Coomes and his publishers were afraid that if there had been any undue delay many of the potential buyers would have already jumped on to another bandwagon?

David Coomes refers sniffily to the National Secular leaflets which were distributed, and to some of the criticism and doubts which were expressed by Christians. But by the time that some of the most critical pieces were published it was too late for the author to deal with them in his hastily prepared book. *The Free Presbyterian Magazine* rather uncharitably described Cliff Richard as "the pop-star of the pseudo-evangelical world", and added that "The true gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ needs no such props . . ." The Rev. Hugh D. Morgan, who went to SPRE-E "determined to look for the best", published a report describing his visit to Earls Court: "Little did I realise on entering how prophetic the direction 'to the exhibition' was, for that was truly what we witnessed . . . I have never been enamoured by the B.G. Organization, but little did I think that the deterioration from 1955 was so great".

No doubt there will be similar events to SPRE-E in the future; those who are making a good living out of the religious industry will see to that. More seriously, there are reactionary and authoritarian elements in society who are always ready to encourage the spread of conformism, authoritarianism and superstition. The pious are always good for a giggle, but we ignore them at our peril.

WILLIAM McILROY

HAUNTED BRITAIN by Antony D. Hippisley Coxe. Hutchinson, £4.

The clergy, it is said, welcome the opportunity of meeting secularists because it is so nice to find people with a genuine interest in religion. By the same token we can enjoy reading about ghosts without accepting them as anything more than projections of mental images, outward and visible signs of inward fears as Ambrose Bierce defined them. *Haunted Britain* is a guide to more than a thousand places connected with ghosts, hauntings, witchcraft, mysteries, strange customs and legends. The entries, extending over the whole of Great Britain, are arranged as a series of tours, and you can take in a dozen or more supernatural sites in a day if you want to. Many of the places described appear well worth visiting for their own sakes.

This is a handsomely produced volume, copiously illustrated and with fourteen pages of maps. Photographs of alleged ghosts include one with a group of no less than eleven, from which your reviewer failed to pick out Charles Darwin. We read about ghosts plain and ghosts coloured, ghosts clothed and ghosts naked, ghosts mutilated and ghosts entire, sweet smelling ghosts and stinkers. The sturdy refusal of the British ghost to conform to a type is a pleasure to behold, the only notable exception being the rather monotonous procession of spectral coaches drawn by headless horses winding its way through these pages. One place even has an annual traffic jam of them.

Mr. Coxe believes in ghosts and has a quasi-scientific theory to account for them, though he is prepared to admit that hallucination may sometimes be the answer. For good measure he also accepts poltergeists, miracles, the efficacy of prayer, and the findings of Dr. J. B. Rhine. With such a childlike faith it must be a matter of deep personal regret that he has never in his life experienced even the tiniest spectral squeak or gibber. None the less he has written a book which one sceptic at any rate has been reluctant to put down.

R. J. CONDON

REPORT ON NON-MEDICAL ABORTION COUNSELLING by Madeleine Simms. Birth Control Trust, 50p.

It is evident that it is more important to make the right decision about having a baby than about having an abortion—a mistaken abortion is reversible, a mistaken baby is not—yet the assumption is that counselling is unnecessary if contemplating motherhood, whereas it is appropriate if contemplating abortion. What a curious state of affairs! However, as Madeleine Simms points out, much that she discusses in response to her brief to review abortion counselling in Britain and the U.S.A. applies even more strongly to counselling for parenthood.

Mrs. Simms shows in her report that the benefits of successful abortion counselling include support at a time of crisis, and help in talking through fears and sorting out mixed feelings, thereby avoiding unnecessary regrets and guilt. Important, also, so that she does not come back a second time, is the help the client receives in accepting the necessity of contraception in the future (not always a straightforward matter when it is borne in mind that she has already become unwantedly pregnant in spite of increasingly wider availability of family planning).

Abortion counselling in Britain today suffers two constraints to one of the basic tenets of good counselling, client self-determination. One is that the law, although less restrictive since 1967, still lays down specific grounds for legal abortion, and some women, therefore, no matter what their best interests, will have their decision made for them. The second and more subtle is the bias that can be brought to a woman at a very vulnerable time by some counsellors with strong moral and religious commitment.

Where are the paragons to be found who possess none of the vices of dogmatism and rigidity, and yet have the required qualities of sensitivity, tolerance and common sense? Mrs. Simms makes a good case for using properly supported in-service trained lay workers with the right personal attributes.

This short, clear easily read report is a valuable clarification of the major areas of consideration, problems, and research and development needs, and should be essential reading for anyone concerned in this field.

MARGARET ROGERS

(The report is available at 55p, including postage from G. W. Foote Ltd., 698 Holloway Road, London N19 3NL.)

THEATRE

ASHES by David Rudkin. Open Space Theatre.

This play in its early part chronicles in clinical detail the difficulties experienced by a childless couple in their efforts to procreate. The explicitness of the opening scene may have been intended to shock (for serious reasons, of course) but the tape-recorded sounds of love-making and the hand of a doctor between the splayed legs of a woman produced no frisson in these permissive days in this basement theatre. The humiliations received by the couple at the hands of various medical specialists verge on the comic and are so treated, but retaining a delicate touch: producing a specimen for a sperm count, the mechanics of achieving two minutes of cold water round the testicles twice daily, the proffer of an ant-acid vagina douche.

Finally success, and the play enters a new phase with a spotlight on the positive tested urine specimen to the accompaniment of Mahler's *Veni Creator Spiritus*—a conjunction which some might find distasteful, but which seemed genuinely triumphant to me. The couple are next found lying in the countryside, he happily caressing her extended stomach, but the idyll is shortlived: she starts bleeding and the pregnancy is at risk. From this point the play quickens, becomes funnier (albeit bitter) and more human. The husband's incompetent attempts to cope with domestic realities and the visit of a neighbouring wife who has become pregnant yet again add acid humour. By cruel steps we are led to the hospital bed and the miscarriage. I found the woman's shriek of "Nurse, nurse" at the moment of crucial loss searingly painful and the intimate

hospital scene between the husband and wife in which she explains that her womb has been removed and their future as progenitors is ended tenderly moving.

Apart from a stern lecture on the difficulties of adoption and edgy encounters with adoption officers you might think the play was to end with a whimper—a nicely observed domestic tragedy. And at that point the observant might have wondered what was the relevance of the programme with its picture of a broken egg/grenade on a silhouette of Ireland. We were to discover. The husband, from Ireland, attends the funeral of an uncle killed in a bomb explosion in Ulster; while returning he delivers a long speech describing in graphic detail the appalling horror of that destructive act, seeming to emphasize the layers of complacency and smugness that that bomb vainly strikes against. And then in a moment of darting theatrical connection we see the link between the private and public tragedy: despite all the diagnoses, all the effort, how has the future of Ireland miscarried!

Yet this is not enough to define the bleak title *Ashes*: the wife recounts a dream which seems to foresee an ecological disaster destroying the world and so the news that adoption requests have been rejected is merged with pessimistic questions about the future of the human race. The movement of the play from the individual to the regional to the universal seems exactly calculated so that the deepness of David Rudkin's compassionate concern creeps up behind us and takes us unawares. The success of the play owes much to David Rudkin's skilful use of language ranging from the precise and explicit to the rich and suggestive—what reverberations of ambiguity are established by the placing of the word "husbandry". It is a tribute to the actors that they compel me to write of the play rather than their performance.

JIM HERRICK

THE PARTY by Trevor Griffiths.

A National Theatre production at the Old Vic.

STATEMENTS AFTER AN ARREST UNDER THE IMMORALITY ACT by Athol Fugard. Royal Court Theatre (South African Season).

This new play is set in May 1968, the time of the Paris students' uprising, moments from which are intermittently flashed on to the screens dotted about the set. The "live" action takes place in a T.V. producer's Kensington house, very swish with its spacious rooms, its well-stocked bar and black leather upholstery. The producer is Joe Shawcross (played by Ronald Pickup), a working-class Northerner who wears his glossy new image uncasily. The arts of being a husband and a radical seem also to elude him . . .

Bottle in hand and shoes slung round his neck by their laces, shambles Malc Sloman, a T.V. dramatist who despises the very criteria by which he has been judged a success. Frank Finlay's sympathetic performance as this sardonic clown provides light relief in a sour, thoughtful evening. Sloman is also a casualty of the class war which is the driving force behind so much of Griffiths's output.

To *The Party* itself. This could mean the British Socialist Party, composed of trendies from *The Guardian*, Street Theatre, and the Black Power and Women's Lib. movements. It could, alternatively, mean the polemical knees-up to which nine such people are invited in Joe's living-room. Most of the guests remain disappointingly on the touchlines, while two major speeches are made by

Ford, an L.S.E. lecturer, and his ideological opponent, the Trotskyite leader, John Tagg, played by Dennis Quilley and Laurence Olivier respectively. Ford has a pundit's discursive, reasoned approach to Revolution, and his interest lies in the Third World. Tagg has not time for measured speech or social niceties. A totally committed man, he demands self-abnegation, and collaboration with the working-class of this country in the struggle to eradicate capitalism.

It is not just the words spoken during these two fifteen-minute monologues that are significant but also their setting within the context of the play, and, of course, the way they are delivered. Quilley just steers clear of caricature, with his lip-smacking relish in his own syntax, his steepled fingers, and those condescending little nods at the upturned faces around him. Ford seems to luxuriate in, and so justify, the modish opulence of his surroundings. As Tagg, Olivier gives one of the finest examples of his particular genius. It is a genius for compelling us with the authority of his eyes and bearing—while humbly showing us the sweat of the man. Tagg enters later, listens, an attentive outsider, and then speaks as though the dilettantes he is addressing were not quite real. Perhaps we aren't.

John Dexter elevates the play he directs to a kind of melancholy grandeur, which can conceal weaknesses in their writing. This is particularly true of *The Party*, in which the development of peripheral characters and of relationships is sadly lacking. To distort one of Shawcross's bleak aphorisms, this play has an "Upper Second soul". Every single performance in it is of first class standard, though, and that's what the theatre's about.

Statements after an Arrest under the Immorality Act is a play that works on two levels. It evokes with courage and honesty the lyrical tenderness, the friction and guilt inherent in an affair between a married man and a woman who has lived alone far too long with her untouched body. *Statements* is also, by implication, an indictment of South African law, which fixes its glaring, heartless and utterly debasing spotlight on a tenuous and precious relationship, simply because the two partners are not the same colour.

I found that the play had unavoidable *longueurs*, but I was deeply impressed by the intelligence and conviction of Yvonne Bryceland and Ben Kingsley. Miss Bryceland creates a child/woman for whom the discovery of love has brought both wonderment and gagging fear. Her performance is quite magnificent.

VERA LUSTIG

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LETTERS

Freethought, integrity and the new R.I.

I was somewhat saddened by William McIlroy's reception of my December letter which I read in the January issue of *The Freethinker*. Perhaps I could inform him that last November I did write in the *Times Educational Supplement* asking that the privileges enjoyed by religion under the 1944 Education Act should be removed and indicating that this would mean the end of school worship.

Of course, I recognize that I am perhaps representing a minority view, but I feel the times are ripe for that view to win acceptance. However, I cannot help feeling that Mr. McIlroy loves a fight and supports the Wishman's dictum, "Make peace if you must, but have a fight if you can". Freethinking, may I say, is impossible if people are ignorant. How can they reject religion with integrity if they have not studied it? Again, I ask, think of the future, work for a new type of religious studies, which will include Humanism and Marxism, but don't let us be so fixed in our traditionally hostile responses that our replies are predictable. Freethinking should surely be flexible rather than stereotyped. When Christians are changing their views, Mr. McIlroy should not express suspicion but ring his bells with joy!

W. OWEN COLE.

Freethinker defended

It was rather arrogant of Michael Edmondson to make sweeping criticisms of *The Freethinker* (January Letters) after "browsing through" the November issue. If Mr. Edmondson had read a number of issues before rushing into print he would be aware it has advocated many important social reforms. During its 93 years of publication *The Freethinker* has made a notable contribution to the promotion of tolerance, rational ethics and civil liberties, and it has nearly always done so in the face of fierce opposition from "Bible-believing Christians".

Mr. Edmondson referred to "a large proportion of the magazine given over to snide and derisive comments on Christianity". Let me assure him that compared to many Christian journals, of which I am an avid reader, the columns of *The Freethinker* are positively awash with the milk of human kindness. It does not have a morbid obsession with Christianity, but is rightly concerned about the psychological and social mischief caused by religion.

The Jesus of the Bible is probably a composite of a number of religious teachers, failed messiahs and self-appointed saviours of mankind. The Christian Church—whose real founder was Paul—is not unique in its longevity; but despite the great wealth and power it accumulated we are now living in the post-Christian era.

Bible-believing Christians were a majority in Britain until the Higher Criticism and Darwinism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries relegated the Good Book to a less exalted position in literature.

WILLIAM MCILROY.

Our most assiduously reluctant reader

More power to the pen of Michael Edmondson, he seems to have hit the nail on the head. *The Freethinker* is only concerned with making blasphemous references to the Lord Jesus Christ and religion in general, this from a reading of *The Freethinker* for several years. Again on your own admission *The Freethinker* is a "scurrilous and blasphemous production" (News and Notes, 11 November 1972); again on another occasion, "Clobbering religion is not some luxury intellectual bloodsport in the twentieth century: it is as much our moral obligation today as it was in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; and however unfashionable or tiresome it may seem to the unconcerned, it is this movement's supreme duty to soldier on, to 'fight theology always'."

Perhaps in future we can see *The Freethinker* putting constructive views of its own, rather than "fighting" other beliefs and ideologies.

D. A. CRIMPTON.

Mr. Crimpton is *The Freethinker's* compositor.—Ed.

Why a freethinker?

I must enter the arena against Michael Edmondson with his attack of freethinkers in *The Freethinker* of January. He asks if we are afraid of Christianity. My answer is "Yes". The power it holds in too many places causes much harm. Children are inflicted with the doctrine but few months after leaving the nappy stage. It grows with a fear of the Almighty and with the view that we are bad and sinners. We are to do good to be rewarded in heaven.

Mr. Edmondson suggests we do not put a proposal of our own. He had better get more information from the bill who declares the dying duck. He can join the N.S.S. Religion can then be forsaken and a new free thinking take place. He might then write to the B.B.C. and ask the majority he talks of being given fair play at religious times. The sheer intolerance of the Christian against other calls will then be appreciated by him. As Ulster proves.

ARTHUR FRANCIS.

Australian view

I hope you will bear with me in giving my view of religion in schools. Although now a seaman sailing from Teesside, I was born in Western Australia. Although I started at the state infant school, I was soon transferred to the convent school and later went to the Christian Brothers in Fremantle. The nuns and brothers had complete control over the children and I used to hear them say, "Better to learn religion than your schoolwork."

I am against religion in schools and against religious schools, whether Catholic, Anglican, Jewish or Muslim. Religious organizations only want control over schoolboys and girls, and complete control at that. Looking back on my time at Catholic schools I would not be surprised if they turned out fewer scholars than other schools. At Catholic schools such a lot of time was taken up with prayers, learning how to confess sins (I used to make up sins to confess), preparation for Communion. Each day we started off singing hymns, followed by prayers. Before going out to play we had prayers again, and more prayers throughout the day. What with this and learning the catechism and Bible stories, I can see why convent children might suffer in their schoolwork. On top of this, they deliberately set out to scare us of hell and the devil.

N. G. STEWART.

Marx and the Orthodox Economists

In my review of Pat Sloan's book *Marx and the Orthodox Economists* (November) I think I broadly stated that I agree with his economic analysis. But when it comes to the political nature of Russia I refuse to share his adulation for a totalitarian state. Pat Sloan's criticism of my review in his letter (December) deals with several points. I think that Marx's accusation against capitalist economics (since Sloan states it is not because they are unscientific) must be ethical. It all depends on the political set up they favour. Both nationally owned and private corporations can find their defenders who have equal scientific credence, but very different ethical approaches to the sort of society best serving men's interests. When I wrote, "there is small difference between the organization of so-called socialist societies and capitalist countries", I used Pat Sloan's term "top people", who appear within both varieties of countries, to emphasize their similarities. These similarities are the hierarchical form of government which either ignores democratic institutions, or knows how to employ them to achieve its own ends. To the ordinary inhabitant of either a capitalist or socialist country, there can be little difference: both feel impotent in the face of a bureaucratic establishment. The letter from Judex amply demonstrates this. I am sorry that Judex thinks I have failed to be extensive enough in my criticism of Sloan's book, but it is not possible to deal with every aspect in the course of a short review.

DENIS COBELL.

Neo-Stalinism and modern economics

In December I quoted Joan Robinson (1973) for a criticism of Marx's theory of Value as "metaphysical". Pat Sloan now refers to this and says, "But in 1973 Joan Robinson and John Eatwell published their *Introduction to Modern Economics*. He goes on to cite part of a sentence from page 33 pointing out the usefulness of "the Marxian apparatus" when certain adjustments to it have been made. He deliberately suppresses the very next sentence which reads: "Without readjustment, however, it [the Marxian apparatus] is a plentiful source of confusion" and also omits—or is ignorant of—the fact that the criticism I quoted a month before his letter was written, appears *verbatim* on page 29 of the very same book to which he now refers. I may add that Professor Robinson's criticism of Marx's value theory is repeated from her earlier work (*Economic Philosophy*, chapter 2) and is supported by recent economic studies deriving from the Marxist tradition (A. Emmanuel, *Unequal Exchange*, 1972, pp. 325-6 and 387-401).

Mr. Sloan is understandably anxious to switch emphasis from the actual life conditions of human beings to the dogma of "the necessary stages of development". For what is beyond dispute is that in the actual course of development in the U.S.S.R. Lenin was succeeded by the mass-murderer Stalin and some of the most scathing contemporary indictments of the Soviet Union come from Soviet citizens and those whose genius and achievement have been described as "part of the glory of Russia"—Solzhenitsyn

(*The Gulag Archipelago*, 1974), Dr. Sakharov, Chornovil (*The Chornovil Papers*, 1968) and many others. Among the surviving criminals Solzhenitsyn mentions Molotov, the former Foreign Minister, "self-satisfied, insensitive, still unreformed, soaked right through with our blood", whilst Mervyn Matthews who spent three years studying sociology in Russia concludes, after a detailed analysis, that by the mid 1960s about a third or more of the Soviet working class were living below accepted Soviet subsistence levels (*Class and Society in Soviet Russia*, 1972, pp. 81-90).

The eminent Marxist economist, O. Lange, to whom Mr. Sloan repeatedly refers, makes such statements as: "That Marxian economics fails is due to the labour theory of value"—"bourgeois economics is able to grasp the phenomena of the everyday life of a capitalist economy in a manner that is far superior to anything the Marxists can produce". (*Marx and Modern Economics*, edited by David Horowitz, 1968). Professor Meek, economist and former Communist Party member, makes a number of somewhat similar observations on Marxian and "orthodox" economics (*Economics and Ideology*, 1967; *The Marginalist Revolution in Economics*, 1973). Outstanding Soviet and East European economists (such as Kantorovich and Fedorenko) are attacked (as by A. Boyarski) for putting marginal analysis in the place of Value in the Marxist sense (see J. Wilczynski, *The Economics of Socialism*, 1972; and M. Ellman, *Soviet Planning Today*, 1972). These developments call for some comment in any adequate consideration of Marx and the "orthodox" economists. But all this is evidently beyond Pat Sloan and his propagandist purposes, and his reference to "What Marx did not do" is only an evasion of the issue.

As numerous scholars, of widely differing views, have shown, the "Confusion over Marx" is largely due to the ambiguities and inconsistencies in Marxism itself—whether in economics, philosophy or epistemology. It is fraudulent—or uninformed—to suggest that there is a single, definitive, correct, interpretation of Marx, and arrogant and dogmatic nonsense to talk about Marxism embodying the only fully worked-out philosophy adequate to the contemporary world.

All the quotations given in my letters and articles have been carefully verified. References have sometimes been kept short simply in order to save space. As stated previously (*Freethinker*, 7 October 1972), full details (page numbers, etc.) may be obtained by writing c/o the Editor, I am in sympathy with much of what S. Highams writes, but Lenin did say in *State and Revolution* that "this proletarian state will begin to wither away immediately after its victory" (1970 edition p. 33. See also p. 28).

JUDEX.

Which alternative?

In his review of *The Humanist Alternative* in the January issue, Mr. Jack Lindsay says that Marxism is just wonderful and talks about it being "adequate to the contemporary world".

The truth is Marxism is out of date. Essentially it believes that capitalism is responsible for practically all our troubles. But today national sovereignty is a far greater menace. By national sovereignty I mean a situation where the world is divided into different nations and there is no effective world authority. When this happens each nation has to make itself as powerful as possible to defend itself and get the economic resources it needs. Because of the improvement in communications and the complexity of the modern industrial system this means nations are always coming into collision with each other. The increased power of modern weapons makes this more serious. National sovereignty means anarchy; national sovereignty means intrigue; national sovereignty means violence. It has produced two world wars in this century, many smaller ones, and recently a situation where nations having a near-monopoly of oil have been able to hold most of the world to ransom.

We should have been trying to overcome this problem ever since 1918 when it became obvious, and we should have tried to get a world federation. But our nationalist prejudices have prevented us—and so has the propaganda of the Marxists, who are always blethering on about capitalism and nothing but capitalism.

It is no use relying on a philosophy that is based on conditions in the first half of the nineteenth century. We need a new ideal to inspire us, and end the frustrating muddles that encumber the world.

I. S. Low.

Sedgwick, Darwin and modern geology

I fully concur with Dr. Eric Glasgow (December) that the centenary of the clergyman-geologist Adam Sedgwick should not go by without mention. However, it is rather ironic that a centenary which has largely been overlooked in geological circles and in the religious press should be recalled in a freethought journal.

Adam Sedgwick both hated and feared the theory of evolution. He wrote at length against it in a manner that at times borders on the irrational, and certainly was not the type of language one would have expected from an accomplished scientist. It must have irked Sedgwick greatly that he played a major rôle in the geological education of Charles Darwin, an education which he put to use when surveying the geological evidence he sought for his theory.

I cannot agree with Dr. Glasgow's assessment of Sedgwick's rôle in the creation of the British "science and study of geology", nor with his claim that "all subsequent work in that quest has been built upon his". This is untrue. Sedgwick played a key rôle in the formative years of British geology, of that there is no dispute, but he was only one influential individual among a select band, and when we think of the early days of scientific geology in Britain we must also call to mind the work of Sedgwick's contemporaries, or near contemporaries, Buckland, Kidd, Phillips, Hutton and Conybeare. Possibly the furious dispute over the ideas of Hutton could be said to have been much more influential in the establishment of "the British science and study of geology" than the work of Sedgwick.

R. W. MORRELL.

Fatuity of Jehovah's Witnesses

J. Stewart Cook has made a very sensible suggestion about counter-propaganda against the foolishness of many of the more bizarre religious sects.

The Jehovah's Witnesses are a particularly pernicious group because of their insistence that their adherents must not have blood transfusions. To pretend that lives are never saved in hospitals by the use of blood after serious accidents and other emergencies is utter nonsense.

In my opinion to deny any person such a life-saving procedure because of religious bigotry is a crime and should be so regarded by the state. Fortunately magistrates have the authority to overrule this nonsense in the case of children; but not in the case of adults.

Most surgeons dislike having to perform major operations on members of this sect, and in fact many refuse to do so in America where they are very numerous. It is obviously most unfair to ask a surgeon to operate on a dangerously ill patient without the assurance that blood will be available to combat shock and haemorrhage.

I once got into an argument with one of these peculiar people as to why they opposed blood transfusion. Some obscure verse from the Bible was quoted, which as far as I remember did not give the impression that it had anything to do with the subject whatever. But much to my surprise their main opposition appeared to be not on religious grounds, but on medical grounds. I was able to assure her that if that were so the medical profession would have stopped using blood transfusion long ago.

I heartily agree with Mr. Cook that we ought to do far more to dispute the harmful notions put abroad by these idiotic bigots. For it is indeed the more simple-minded among us who are prone to swallow their cleverly disseminated form of "advertising".

I never cease to marvel at the absurdities gullible folk will swallow. Whether in the field of religion or politics (for example, Communism or Fascism) the more simple-minded among us are prepared to accept anything however foolish and outrageous it may be.

The Mormons for example do not object to transfusion but are not permitted to drink tea or coffee. The funniest story I heard, which I believe is true, was of a woman convert who was rather fond of her tea so she got a medical certificate from her doctor permitting her to consume tea "for medical reasons".

No—I did not make this up. Human folly and gullibility knows no limits.

CLAUD WATSON.

Humanist manifesto

I regard Barbara Smoker's new book, *Humanism*, as very well written and as excellent value at 40p (plus postage). Please buy a copy to read yourself and also sell or give copies away to acquaintances who could be interested. The book is ideal for explaining Humanist beliefs to teenagers and adults. Certainly we should all do our best to ensure that teachers know about this book and use it in the class rooms. Order your copy or copies right away from Barbara Smoker (6 Stanstead Grove, London SE6 4UD) or from G. W. Foote & Co. (698 Holloway Road, London N19 3NL).

DON BAKER.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

National Secular Society. Details of membership and inquiries regarding bequests and secular funeral services may be obtained from the General Secretary, 698 Holloway Road, London, N19 3NL (telephone: 01-272 1266). Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the N.S.S.

Freethought books and pamphlets (new). Send for list to G. W. Foote & Company, 698 Holloway Road, London, N19 3NL.

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.

Humanist Counselling Service, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London W8 5PG; telephone 01-937 2341 (for confidential advice on your personal problems—whatever they are).

London Secular Group (outdoor meetings). *Thursdays*, 12.30 a.m.—2 p.m. at Tower Hill; *Sundays*, 3—7 p.m. at Marble Arch. (*The Freethinker* and other literature on sale.)

Humanist Holidays. *Easter Centre* in Folkestone, 11-16 April, at small guest house near Harbour. Bed, breakfast and evening meal, £19 (juniors £15) includes V.A.T. and gratuity. Regret, no singles.

Summer Centre, 17-24 August at Hunstanton, Norfolk. Small quiet town, variety of beaches for all ages. Golf. Country Club Hotel on cliff. Full board (lunch packed if required) £26.50 (single £30), includes V.A.T. and gratuity. Reduction juniors.

Both hotels are licensed, and both will take dogs. Hon. Secretary: Mrs. M. Mephram, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey, SM1 4PD. Tel.: 01-642 8796.

EVENTS

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group, Imperial Centre Hotel, First Avenue, Hove. Sunday 3 March, 5.30 p.m.: ALAN PLASTOW (Division Director of The Industrial Society) "Industrial Relations".

Havering Humanist Society, Harold Wood Social Centre, Squirrels Heath Road/Gubbins Lane, Romford. Tuesday 19 February, 8 p.m.: ROY PORJES, "Brainwashing is alive and well"; Tuesday 5 March, 8 p.m.: Discussion of resolutions for B.H.A. A.G.M.

Leicester Secular Society, Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester. Sundays, 6.30 p.m.: 17 February: Dr. EDWARD ROYLE, "Secularism's Lost Leader—G. J. Holyoake"; 24 February: Discussion; 3 March: AUDREY WILLIAMSON, "Paine, Wilkes and the Radicals" (93rd Anniversary Lecture); 10 March: MARGARET CAREY, "The Psychology of Religion".

Lewisham Humanist Group, Unitarian Meeting House, 41 Bromley Road, London SE6. Friday 22 February, 8 p.m.: Discussion on "Humanist Potential".

London Young Humanists, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London W8. Sunday 17 February, 7.30 p.m.: DEREK MARCUS, "Why Humanism?"; Sunday 3 March, 7.30 p.m.: A.G.M. and CHRISTOPHER SMALL, "Society, Science and Music".

Nottingham and Notts Humanist Group, University Adult Centre, 14 Shakespeare Street, Nottingham. Friday 8 March, 7.30 p.m.: HUNTER DIACK, "Communication—Poetry and Prose".

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. *Sunday Lectures*, 11 a.m.: 17 February: PETER CADOGAN, "The Case for a New Puritanism"; 24 February: Dr. JOHN LEWIS, "Max Weber and Value-free Economics". *Humanist Forum*: Sunday 24 February, 3 p.m.: "Is Humanism Too Tame?" *Tuesday Discussions*, 7 p.m. (admission 10p): 19 February: GRAHAM MURDOCK, "Education and Pop Culture"; 26 February: PETER NORWOOD, "An Anatomy of Deprivation".

Welwyn Garden City Humanist Group, Backhouse Room, Hand-side Lane, Welwyn Garden City. Wednesday 13 March, 8 p.m.: Mrs. R. LEVIN, "Radical Alternatives to Prison".

Worthing Humanist Group, Burlington Hotel, Marine Parade, Worthing. Sunday 24 February, 5.30 p.m.: RASHEED S. AZAM, "The Contribution of Parents to Some of the Basic Needs of the Growing Child".

PUBLICATIONS

TITLE	AUTHOR	Price	Post
The Dead Sea Scrolls	John Allegro	35p	9p
Comparative Religion	A. C. Bouquet	50p	9p
The Longford Threat to Freedom	Brigid Brophy	10p	3p
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Did Jesus Christ Exist?	Chapman Cohen	3p	3p
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