

The FREETHINKER

Founded 1881

Secular Humanist Monthly

Vol. 95, No. 5

MAY 1975

6p

BABIES FOR BURNING: AUTHORS' LEGAL THREAT TO THE FREETHINKER

As we briefly announced last month, solicitors acting for Michael Litchfield and Susan Kentish, authors of "Babies for Burning", about the working of the 1967 Abortion Act, have written to "The Freethinker" editor and one of our reviewers claiming that their clients were libelled in a review of the book published in our January issue. The book contained many allegations about the effects of the Act and the authors' solicitors claim that Jean Anderson's review contained remarks which constituted a damaging attack on Mr Litchfield and Mrs Kentish, "and are, on the face of them, a very serious libel". The editor has said that he himself read "Babies for Burning", and the review seemed to him fair criticism of the book.

Mr Litchfield's and Mrs Kentish's solicitors stated that their clients' requirements of *The Freethinker* included payment of compensation and indemnification in respect of costs incurred. They further demanded that we publish a retraction and an apology to their clients "for the distress and embarrassment they have been caused". While having no desire to wound their feelings, we can only say that we regard the need for free expression of views in this most serious debate as overriding.

It is likely that distress and embarrassment have been caused, not by our article but by the publication of *Babies for Burning*. We fear that many of the allegations that are made in the book will cause deep distress to women who have had an abortion. And there is little doubt that the book has now become a great embarrassment to those religious groups which have campaigned unremittingly against the 1967 Abortion Act. They have puffed up this tawdry paperback, and seem to have accepted its authors as literary pilgrims who, according to Leo Abse's *Spectator* review of their contribution to the abortion debate, "came to the problem as virginal and pristine as only young journalists can be".

The present controversy over legal abortion is a continuation of the struggle for sexual freedom. This movement was started in the last century by men and women who believed that sexual relationships should be determined by human needs rather than by religious dogma. It was pioneered and sustained mainly by freethinkers, and for some decades was condemned by all the churches. But as far as contraception was concerned, the Roman Catholic Church stood alone, and now even they have almost given up the struggle.

Having lost the battle against birth control, Catholics in Britain have been concentrating their fire against the Abortion Act that was passed eight years ago. Catholic front organisations have pressurised Parliament through letter-writing campaigns, petitions and rallies—at which priests, nuns and schoolchildren have been much in evidence. There is at Westminster a hard core of Catholic MPs as well as non-Catholics like Jill Knight and Leo Abse who are implacable opponents of the Act.

"Crying Their Heads Off"

Babies for Burning hit the headlines last December and the religious press kept it in the news during succeeding weeks. *The Freethinker* and some other journals questioned some of the book's contents which included the claim that a doctor (unnamed) had admitted that he aborted babies so late the operation was an act of murder. He is quoted as saying that once he "had four of them lined up crying their heads off. I hadn't time to kill them there and then because we were so busy". This overworked doctor added that he thought Hitler "had some very progressive ideas and philosophies".

There was also an American doctor named as Dr Malcolm Ridley who is said to have come especially to Britain to tell the authors of *Babies for Burning* about the abortion scene in the United

(Continued on page 66)

States. Dr Ridley "poured out his story as if making a confession and unloading himself of a burden of guilt that had been weighing very heavily on his conscience for longer than it had been possible to bear". Dr Ridley's "confessions" included abortions on women who were already in labour, extortion, assault and keeping babies alive for experiments. Dr Ridley relates how he had "taken babies away from their mothers while husbands have been pacing up and down in the corridors outside, wondering whether they were going to have a boy or a girl. Whilst they have been clutching a bunch of flowers and wiping away nervous sweat, we've been dropping their child into an incinerator".

One of the authors' most publicised claims was that Mrs Kentish, who was not pregnant, sent urine samples to seven pregnancy testing centres; they all declared her to be pregnant and referred her to private or charitable abortion clinics, where she was offered abortions without serious attempts being made to ascertain whether her reasons were justifiable under the 1967 Abortion Act. During the October 1974 General Election, Michael Litchfield (who stood as Conservative parliamentary candidate at Ashton under Lyne), said that he had sent samples of his own urine to pregnancy testing centres and they too were declared to be positive. (This 20th-century miracle is not recorded in Mr Litchfield's book but it was referred to in his publisher's press release.)

The "Sunday Times" Report

Many other lurid accusations were made, backed up by the authors' impressive credentials including Mr Litchfield's Pulitzer Prize for journalism for exposing the Mafia's dirty work in the Bahamas. For four months the anti-abortionists had a propaganda bonanza and the Litchfield-Kentish story improved with the telling. James White's Abortion (Amendment) Bill came before the House of Commons and was referred to a Select Committee.

The publisher, Alan Learmouth, who founded the Serpentine Press in 1973 (*Babies for Burning* was only his second title), is reported as saying that he knew the book would be a sensation. He added: "I know a good thing when I see it". Whether Mr Learmouth was referring to the book's literary merits or its financial possibilities is unclear; certainly *Babies for Burning* caused a sensation.

The balloon went up on 30 March when the *Sunday Times* published a devastating report entitled "Abortion Horror Tales Revealed as Fantasies". No trace could be found of Dr Malcolm Ridley, the American ghoul. The anonymous doctor who expressed pro-Hitler views was traced by the *Sunday Times*. He was a Jew whose wife and son had perished in Auschwitz concentration camp

and who had been imprisoned himself at Dachau and Buchenwald. Litchfield has said there are tape-recordings on which almost all the book stands or falls. The police and the Department of Health do not seem to have been given an opportunity of studying these all-important recordings.

Last, and by all means least, we come to Michael Litchfield's Pulitzer Prize for journalism. He had sworn on oath that he had been awarded the Pulitzer Prize for articles about the Mafia published in *Life* magazine. But according to Professor John Hohenberg, the Prize administrator, no one named Michael Litchfield had won the Pulitzer Prize for journalism. And *Life* magazine was not eligible for the award.

All Quiet on the Westminster Front

Politicians and others who had previously been singing hosannas to Saints Michael and Susan were suddenly bereft of speech. Reporters and interviewers were fobbed off with murmurings about impending legal proceedings, writs and libel actions. Malcolm Muggeridge tried to salvage something from the wreck by informing *Sunday Times* readers that *Babies for Burning* was concerned only with a secondary issue and "the case against abortion . . . rests on a certain concept of human values and of God's purpose for us here on earth". He added that it would be a pity if the book proved to be unreliable. (One would have supposed that most people would be relieved if the book did prove to be unreliable.)

The columns of *The Freethinker* are open to anyone who wishes to dispute with us. Copies of the review were sent to the authors of *Babies for Burning* and by way of reply they threatened legal proceedings. But we are not without support, and any action that Mr Litchfield and Mrs Kentish decide to start will be strongly defended.

The Freethinker will not be muzzled.

THE FREETHINKER

BOUND VOLUME 1974

EDITED BY CHRISTOPHER MOREY

Price £2.70 plus 25p postage

G. W. Foote & Company
698 Holloway Road, London N19 3NL

In a pastoral letter the Catholic bishops of Bolivia have called on the people to reject all forms of birth control, and to subject themselves "to the commandments of God and the interest of Bolivia".

The current upsurge of interest in exorcism and other forms of superstition is causing deep anxiety to doctors, psychiatrists and others who are involved with people who have mental and emotional problems. Although the Taylor case has demonstrated that great unhappiness and even tragedy can result, Church leaders are endeavouring to show that "supervised" exorcism has, in the words of the Archbishop of Canterbury, "a part to play in the Church's task of delivering men from the bondage of evil". Rather than bestowing an air of authority on a form of superstition which has been central to Christian belief for centuries, has the time come to legislate against such practices?

Seven years ago I touched on the legality of exorcism in an article entitled "Legal Recognition of Ghosts" which was published in the *Law Society Gazette*. The topic may then have seemed recondite. It is now only too relevant. In *R v Taylor* the defendant was accused of murdering his wife in circumstances of "unspeakable brutality". He was found not guilty because of insanity. The killing took place immediately after the defendant had submitted to a night-long session of exorcism carried out by an Anglican and a Methodist clergyman and four others.

So far as the writer is aware, the legality of exorcism had not as such been considered prior to 1968, when he wrote "the only official reference to the practice is in Canon 72 of the Canons Ecclesiastical 1603 (at present under review), which provides that "no minister shall, without the licence of the bishop of the diocese under his hand and seal, attempt . . . to cast out any devil or devils": the Roman Catholic Church has a similar ruling. The reference is apparently to the demoniac possession of individuals, and it is not clear to what extent it really applies to the haunting of a property, though this is its modern application".

In his 1968 article the writer was primarily concerned with the protection, if any, for ghosts—granting their existence—against the activities of humans. Professor Glanville Williams had said as long ago as 1949 that a person could not be found guilty of killing a ghost, assuming this to be a possibility. The law gave protection, by recognising the crime of homicide, to a certain class only, namely human beings. "A ghost", he wrote in the *Law Quarterly Review*, "not possessing by definition a corporeal body, quite clearly fails to come within the accepted definition of a human being". Accepting this view, the present writer concluded "it would seem to follow that, a ghost being as much outside the law's protection as a spider or a

fly, anyone may attempt to banish or destroy it by exorcism or any other means. Seen in this light, Canon 72 operates as a restriction of this general licence, rather than the grant of a right, subject to conditions, to a particular section of the community".

The position under ecclesiastical law has now changed, Canon 72 having been repealed in 1969. At the present time there is therefore no legal regulation of the practice of exorcism within the Church of England. In 1972 a study of exorcism was published under the authority of the then Bishop of Exeter, Dr Mortimer. This took the view that no case should be considered suitable for a service of exorcism until physical and psychiatric disorders had been ruled out. Proposals to introduce a new canon or regulate the position under ecclesiastical law in some other manner are likely to be considered as a result of the Taylor case. It appears however to have been largely overlooked that any alteration of the position within the Church of England will in no way restrict the practice of exorcism by members of other Christian sects, or the "general licence" available to the community at large.

Prohibition of Exorcism?

It could of course be argued that an exorcism ceremony is unlikely in itself to cause harm to the allegedly possessed person, or any third party. It is only the demon who is banished. Such a view ignores psychological realities, as the recent case shows only too clearly. But if the individual has consented to the practices of the exorcist, he cannot, it seems, be heard to complain in the criminal or civil courts if the result is more detrimental than beneficial. It is theoretically possible that a third party suffering injury at the hands of the individual subjected to exorcism might have an action for negligence against the exorcist. But he would have to overcome some formidable legal hurdles; could the exorcist reasonably have foreseen the risk of injury to a third party, did he fail to take reasonable care before deciding to carry out the ceremony or in its performance, was not the exorcised individual's act of violence a *novus actus interveniens*?

At a time when mental illness is only too common, the risks involved in attempting to treat an apparently "possessed" person by exorcism are very real. This was indeed emphasised by the Wakefield coroner when returning a verdict of death by misadventure on Mrs Taylor. The practice of hypnotism has been regulated to a limited extent by the Hypnotism Act 1952. It is time now for strict legislative control, if not complete prohibition, of the practice of exorcism.

Paul claims personal acquaintance with "James the Lord's brother". To interpret this as meaning anything other than "blood brother of Jesus" is usually regarded as special pleading. This article, however, shows that not only in the gospels, but even in their source material, the risen Jesus is made to call followers who are not his blood relatives "brothers"; and that his blood brothers, who figure in two pre-crucifixion incidents in Mark, were invented for theological reasons.

Paul mentions (Galatians 1:19, written *circa* AD 60) a person he calls "James the Lord's brother". If this means blood brother of a historical Jesus, then it would suffice to establish that Jesus had really lived in the first half of the first century. I have given evidence elsewhere¹ that Paul means by the phrase "brother of the Lord" to designate James not as a blood relative of Jesus, but as a member of a religious fraternity called "the brethren of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 9:5). Against this interpretation it is frequently urged that Mark (writing, it is held, only ten or 20 years later than Paul) and also Matthew and Luke (who, of course, are secondary to Mark, and drew on and adapted his gospel) allege that Jesus did have blood brothers, and that one of them was named James. In this article I shall try to show (1) that the relevant gospel stories supply Jesus with a family in order to argue a certain theological point, not because they represent a chronicle of historical facts; and (2) that two gospels testify to Christian use of the term "brethren of the Lord" as meaning members of a religious fraternity by making the risen Jesus designate a group of his followers as his "brethren".

Mark 3:31-5 introduces Jesus' "mother and brothers". They seek him, but he shows no interest and declares instead that the "multitudes sitting about him" are his true kin: "for whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother". Matthew and Luke also give this story, and, as already noted, they are not independent witnesses as to its truth, but have taken it from Mark. Now one of the most oft-repeated doctrines in the New Testament is the supreme importance of faith in and service to Jesus. Jesus, for instance, turns to a vast multitude, and tells them that they cannot be his disciples unless they are prepared to hate their parents and brothers as well as their own lives (Luke 14:26; cf. Mark 10:29-30). This is the usual claim of the revolutionary leader. His followers must obey him at all times, without hesitation and whatever the cost. What, then, could be more appropriate, from the evangelists' point of view, than to represent Jesus

as implementing his own precept by neglecting his family for the sake of his followers?

In Mark 3 and parallels there is, then, mention of Jesus' "brethren", but these personages are specifically named only in the episode (Mark 6:2-3) where Jesus amazes the Jews of his "own country" by his teaching. The ground of their amazement is that they know him as a perfectly ordinary local personage, with entirely undistinguished connections; as "a carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon"; as a man whose "sisters" are also known. Matthew repeats this story (with "Joseph" instead of "Joses" as the second of the four brothers). Luke places it earlier in Jesus' public career, and makes no mention of his brethren; in Luke's version, the Jews simply ask: "Is not this Joseph's son?"

Acts of the Apostles

I have noted elsewhere how careful Luke is—both in his gospel and in the Acts of the Apostles (which was written by the author of the third gospel) to avoid suggesting that Jesus had a brother named James.² The reasonable inference is that he did not believe that the James whom he represents in Acts as the leader of the post-ascension Church was Jesus' brother—even though this James of Acts is obviously the same person as the James whom Paul calls "the brother of the Lord". As for Jesus' rejection in his own country, I have given reasons³ for believing that all that was available to Mark was a tradition that Jesus had preached there without success, and that the concrete details of the rejection are Mark's own construction. Jewish Wisdom literature had already told of a series of agents of God's saving purpose who came to earth and were rejected by man. A recent student of this literature has discreetly suggested that "the myth of Wisdom's messengers exercised some influence on Mark's Christology here".⁴

The two incidents—Mark 3 and parallels, and Mark 6 and parallels—are the only ones in the first three gospels in which Jesus' brethren figure. The fourth gospel knows of a tradition according to which "his brethren did not believe in him" (John 7:5). That he was rejected not only by his countrymen but even by those closest to him is an easy inference from Isaiah 53:3 ("he was despised and rejected"; cf. Mark 9:12) and is in any case a fate not unusually ascribed to divine men (Apollonius of Tyana is represented as complaining that his "native place" ignored him).

The evidence, then, shows that when Mark wrote, he was able at two points to draw on traditions which may already have referred to Jesus' family, including brothers. I have said enough to show that

such traditions, and Mark's use of them, may well have arisen as support for the Christology of a Christian community. And I have by no means indicated all the possible motives which could have prompted them. V. Taylor, for instance, points to another when he notes that "the fact that Jesus had blood brothers and sisters, it may be held, underlines the reality and completeness of the Incarnation".⁵

In Matthew's resurrection narrative, when Jesus appears to the women near the empty tomb, *they took hold of his feet and worshipped him. Then saith Jesus unto them, Fear not: go tell my brethren that they depart into Galilee and there shall they see me (Matthew 28:9-11).*

Matthew has supplemented Mark's empty tomb narrative with this evidence of the corporeal reality of Jesus' feet as further proof of the reality of the resurrection. Jesus' designation here of his disciples as his "brethren" is not in accordance with Matthew's previous usage, and comes as a surprise. That the disciples (and not Jesus' family) is meant is clear from the sequel. "The eleven disciples went into Galilee, where they saw and worshipped the risen one" (verse 16). The use of "brethren" to mean disciples is not here just a Matthean linguistic aberration. The word, in this sense, was clearly in the source from which the evangelist here drew. Evidence for this is that, in the fourth gospel, Jesus says—in the same circumstances: "*Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto the Father: but go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father*" (John 20:17).

A Group of Disciples

Here we have, as in Matthew, a reference to touching the risen one, followed by the designation of the disciples as Jesus' "brethren". Matthew makes the women touch the risen one, and thereby shows that he is risen in body; John makes him prohibit touching in order, as B. Lindars says in his recent commentary, "to establish the proper relationship which must exist from now on. . . . The desire to hold Jesus must be restrained, because it is an attempt to recapture the conditions of the incarnate life in place of the universal and abiding relationship which is the object of his mission."⁶ If we accept the good grounds many theologians give for thinking that John did not know the other gospels directly, but at times drew on sources very similar to theirs, then the present parallel between Matthew and John is clearly due to a common source, in which some statement about touching was made, was retained by the one evangelist but altered by the other; and which also contained an address by Jesus in which he designated his disciples his "brethren". This has been retained by both evangelists.

"Brethren" of Jesus, then, meant (in the

Serving God and Uncle Sam

Directors of two religious agencies engaged in "humanitarian relief work" in South-East Asia have admitted that they are receiving massive subsidies from the United States Government in return for political and military intelligence. The organisations concerned are Catholic Relief Services and a Protestant group known as World Vision Incorporated. The admission that they were working for the American Government was made to the secretary of the National Christian Council of Japan.

It was revealed that about 95 per cent of the organisations' operating costs in that part of the world were met by the American government, and that the Catholic Relief Services alone received over a million dollars a month for the information they supplied. But the Reverend Carl Harris, director of World Vision Incorporated, complained: "We give much more to the United States Government than we get from it . . . We often go to places where government officials cannot go".

G. A. WELLS

Did Jesus Exist?

£5.80 plus 20p postage

G. W. FOOTE & COMPANY

698 Holloway Road London N19 3NL

Christian community in which this source document circulated) a group of his disciples. Need Paul's references to "the brethren of the Lord" mean anything but this?

NOTES

1. *Did Jesus Exist?*, London, 1975, pp. 21-2.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 149-151.
4. R. G. Hamerton-Kelly, *Pre-Existence, Wisdom, and the Son of Man*, Cambridge, 1973, p. 50.
5. *The Gospel According to St Mark*, second edition, 1966, p. 249.
6. *The Gospel of John*, London, 1972, p. 607.

From among the Immediate Practical Objects of the National Secular Society: "The extension of the moral law to animals, so as to secure for them legal protection against cruelty. . . ."

"I have damaged property", said Ronnie Lee at Oxford Crown Court on 24 March of this year, "in order to save life and prevent cruelty. Can it really be that justice considers bricks and mortar, boards and engines, of more value than life?"

Justice gave its answer in the form of a sentence on Lee and his fellow defendant, Cliff Goodman, of three years' imprisonment apiece.

The 14 charges to which, singly or jointly, Goodman and Lee pleaded Guilty were episodes in a Resistance movement.

The campaign began on a November night in 1973, when £26,000-worth of damage was done by fire to a half constructed building in Buckinghamshire. It was being constructed as a laboratory for experiments on living animals.

In June 1974, a 30-foot boat, empty and moored at Sutton Bridge, was burnt. It was a boat used in the commercial killing (proceeds: from £10 to £30 a skin) of baby seals in the Wash.

In July and August various objects, in various parts of England and Wales, were variously damaged. All belonged to firms that experiment on animals or that breed animals to sell to experimenters. The vans in which one firm of breeders transports the animals to the laboratories were sprayed overnight with the messages "Stop torturing animals" and "There are alternatives to animals".

It was towards the end of August that a night watchman spotted two intruders on the premises of a firm in Oxfordshire, and summoned the police. Lee and Goodman were caught. Presently they gave the police a full account of their campaign and its motives.

No one in court questioned that the motives were sincere. The prosecution no less than the defence emphasised that the two had taken the utmost care to make sure that there were no humans or animals nearby to be endangered by their acts. Everyone agreed on the "previous good character" of both men. True, one of them already had a conviction against him. But the prosecution called it a "minor matter", and the defence explained that it "concerned an incident at a hunt".

Cliff Goodman, 33, earning £40 a week in a job he had held for years, was described by a witness as "a man of principle" and "gentle". To the public gallery, two cramped rows of benches looking down

into a court like a dingy chapel, he was only a voice. He spoke only to enter his Guilty pleas in a firm, rural-to-northern tone. Ronnie Lee, ten years younger, had chosen to conduct his own defence—which he did competently and unaggressively, in a light London-tinged, occasionally inaudible voice.

Before he made his argument, which was seconded by the probation report, for his client to be given a suspended sentence, Goodman's defence counsel called a character witness: Richard Ryder, a clinical psychologist by profession and author of *Victims of Science*. From him counsel began to extract the facts that are the rationale of the Goodman-and-Lee Resistance movement. How many experiments are there on live animals? Under Home Office licence, about five million a year. How many of those have a medical purpose? At most, a third. Was it true ("Don't be modest about this") that *Victims of Science* had recently been very widely and favourably reviewed, especially in scientific journals? Yes, the subject of animal experimentation is currently causing very great concern in scientific and medical circles.

Experiments Without Anaesthetics

Lee, exercising the prerogative of a defendant conducting his own defence, then took over the questioning. Yes, the Act under which experiments are licensed dates from 1876. Yes, the Act permits experiments calculated to cause "severe pain". Yes, the great majority of experiments are done without the use of anaesthetics.

Then Lee began to take the witness through the establishments, by name, whose property Lee and Goodman had damaged. Yes, this one breeds cats and dogs for sale to laboratories. That one advertises in the technical press that it supplies horses and ponies for experiments. This laboratory has forced dogs and monkeys to smoke new smoking materials. ("That is not, in my view, a medical experiment.") This firm tests cosmetics, toiletries and weedkillers on animals. This one tests such substances on animals' eyes. That one carries out toxicity tests, which consist of force-feeding a substance to a given number of animals and assessing the toxicity of the substance from how long it takes to kill 50 per cent of them.

One of the uniformed policemen in the public gallery looked sick.

Lee's questions then approached, but didn't name, the metaphysical heart of the matter. Without saying so, he was defending himself against the traditional objection that must have been present to every well-schooled mind in court: surely, when the law is wrong, the correct course of action in a

democracy is to persuade one's elected representatives to reform it?

Had there been attempts to reform the law, Lee asked. There had been repeated parliamentary initiatives, Richard Ryder said, ever since the Act was passed. Have any of them got anywhere? No. Wasn't there a government committee? Yes. It was set up twelve years ago. Its report was published. Three years elapsed before it was even debated by Parliament. Not one of the report's 83 recommendations has yet been acted on.

The Judge's final remarks contained no recommendation to Parliament. Instead, they emphasised that Goodman and Lee "caused tens of thousands of pounds' worth of damage". (To be precise, the number of tens of thousands was five. The outside estimate of the total value of the damage was £57,604.)

The Campaign to Continue

The sentences (which were not suspended) provoked horror in the public gallery, which was quickly cleared. Outside the court, a handful of friends and supporters of the two men improvised a march through a cold, sleepy Oxford empty of undergraduates, and stood on the steps of the Martyrs' Memorial holding up their amateur placards in the wind. A friend of Cliff Goodman's, his teeth chattering, moved round the group muttering that he didn't know how Cliff would manage for food in prison. "Cliff's against exploiting animals. He is a vegan. Will the prison authorities know what a vegan is?"

Before being sentenced to imprisonment, Ronnie Lee, again using his prerogative, had put his own argument to the court. He said he wasn't sorry for what he had done; he believed he had saved many animals from pain and death; how could he be sorry for that? He said that the movement against the slave trade in animals, and against unnecessary, non-medical experiments on animals, will go on. (The public gallery applauded.) He added: "Whatever sentence is passed on me, however terrible it is, it will amount to nothing compared to what is done to them."

● Protests against the imprisonment of Goodman and Lee are organised by Stop Cruel Experiments, 58 Great Holme Court, Thorplands, Northampton.

A Press Council adjudication has declared the action of members of the Scottish Graphical Association on a Dumfries newspaper to be "a grave violation of press freedom". They refused to print a news item about a charitable organisation which started using a cheaper printing process in another town. A representative of the charity was told that the item would not be published even as an advertisement.

Humanists Protest to Canadian Authorities

A deputation from the British Humanist Association visited the Canadian High Commission in London on 30 April to protest against what had been described as an unprecedented attack on the jury system in Canada. The Canadian Supreme Court has rejected by six votes to three—the dissenting judges including the Chief Justice—the appeal of Dr Henry Morgentaler, a Montreal physician against conviction on a charge of performing an illegal abortion. He had been found not guilty by a twelve-man, French-speaking jury. The Quebec Court of Appeal quashed the jury verdict, and it is this action that the Canadian Supreme Court has now upheld.

Dr Morgentaler has been a vigorous campaigner for women's rights, particularly in relation to abortion. He is a board member of the International Humanist and Ethical Union and the first president of the Canadian Humanist Association. During the war he was interned for five years in German concentration camps.

Despite mounting international protests the Canadian Minister of Justice—a Roman Catholic father of seven—has curtly rejected any consideration by the federal cabinet of clemency for Dr Morgentaler. The *Toronto Star* has declared that the justice minister's whole attitude in this sensitive public issue is again in question, as it was when he warned the medical profession in Canada of possible prosecution for "any but the strictest interpretation of the abortion law as it stands now".

Canadian law establishes a woman's right to have an abortion when her health is endangered. It requires that her case be reviewed by a hospital committee, and this imposes a moral obligation on all hospitals to establish such committees. Yet less than a third of all Canadian hospitals have them, and only 27 out of Quebec's 281 hospitals permit therapeutic abortions.

Christopher Evans

CULTS OF UNREASON

75p plus 9p postage

G. W. Foote & Company

698 Holloway Road, London N19 3NL

Lord Raglan has agreed to serve on the Distinguished Members Panel of the National Secular Society. He succeeds the late Professor Hyman Levy.

RELIGIOUS RACKET

The ease with which religious organisations and individuals can obtain handouts from public funds was demonstrated at the Old Bailey earlier this month when Roger Charles Gleaves, described by the judge as "a wicked and a cruel man" was sent to prison for four and a half years after being found guilty of causing actual bodily harm. Gleaves had previous convictions for theft, assault and indecent assault, but that did not deter him from masquerading as a social worker in London and establishing a number of hostels for boys, many of whom had run away from home or had been released from penal institutions.

In fact, Gleaves, an ordained minister in the Old Catholic Church of America, was running a racket and he conducted a reign of terror in the hostels. The matter came to light when one of the residents died after being attacked by three of Gleaves's "heavy mob".

Gleaves had little difficulty in registering his business as a charity. (Even if the Charity Commissioners were sceptical about the application from Charles, Bishop of Medway, there was little they could do as they have no power to investigate applicants.) The "bent bishop of Brixton", as he was known, then approached a number of London boroughs asking for rundown properties which he could convert into hostels. Once again the reverend gentleman's religious credentials and trappings were accepted as evidence of his worth and he was given several properties. Local authorities in the London area are not particularly noted for their generosity but they handed property to Gleaves because he "seemed genuine".

We cannot help speculating whether the authorities would have been willing to hand over houses to Gleaves, however genuine he may have seemed, if he had not represented himself to be a clergyman.

A WASTED LIFE

Denys Christian was a 26-year-old Londoner who "found Jesus" and became involved with the Pentecostal Church less than a year ago. He then took to carrying sandwich boards displaying religious text, and for six months he attended every service in the local church. On the day after his wedding he told his wife that he was going to put his faith in God to the ultimate test, and minutes later Denys Christian, firmly believing that God would save him, stepped off the balcony of his thirteenth-floor flat.

Mrs Christian appeared at the inquest wearing a "Jesus Saves" badge in her lapel.

NEWS

MR MOON'S MUGS

The activities of yet another imported religious sect are being scrutinised following police action against its fund raisers in Newquay, Cornwall. The sect is known as the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity whose founder and leader is the Reverend Sun Moon. Since it was started in South Korea 21 years ago the Association has flourished and is now an international business empire. Although its literature is generously sprinkled with the words love, truth and purity, there can be little doubt that the Association is just one more outfit with an investment in human credulity. Mr Moon lives in New York and his headquarters in Britain are at Dunsden, Berkshire. Dennis Orme, spiritual director, and Timothy Miller, financial director, are in charge of operations, and Mr Moon's dupes are based in 17 centres throughout the country.

The Cornish police were alerted by the activities of some of the sect's 60 full-time fund raisers. Many of these are young people, and it is reported they netted £50,000 in the West Country alone last year. During the same period, contributions totalling over £6 million were sent from all parts of the world. Mr Orme is reported as saying that the church does control millions of pounds, "but the money is well spent". He denied reports that Mr Moon is a millionaire, and said rather ambiguously: "A monthly payment of less than £100 goes to him in his name".

The Association for the Unification of World Christianity—usually referred to as the Unification Church—seems to be the parent body of a conglomeration of religions, political and business concerns. There is an associated company called United Family Enterprises; it runs a printing works, manufactures candles, and markets an assortment of products including marble vases and ginseng tea. The political wing of the movement is the World Federation of World Peace and Unification which was established "to uphold and protect the spiritual values upon which our civilisation stands". It publishes a weekly journal, *Rising Tide*, whose contents reflect the Right-wing politics, fundamentalist Christianity and puritanical outlook of the sect. Another unit is known as God's Light Infantry.

The Association was registered as a charity in this country in 1968.

AND NOTES

ZIONIST MENACE

Fleet Street and the broadcasters, always ready to send reporters to cover the most insignificant campus fracas, have been almost totally silent about the activities of a group of Zionist thugs who present the latest threat to free speech and discussion in London. They belong to a Right-wing organisation known as Herut. Meetings have been disrupted, property damaged and quite serious injuries have been inflicted on members of the public.

One such incident took place at Conway Hall, and on that occasion Charles Edridge, a photographer who is well known in the humanist movement, and a young Jewish member of South Place Ethical Society were attacked. A fortnight later Uri Davis, Vice-Chairman of the Israeli League for Human Rights, had to be taken to hospital where four stitches were inserted in his face.

The Zionists also tried to break up a meeting at the Polytechnic of Central London where they attacked members of the audience. The police were called and they arrested three Zionists who were attacking an Arab on the pavement outside the building.

HOUSE WARNING

A large segment of British Christianity, embarrassed and genuinely distressed by Christine Taylor's death, now agree that house fellowships, although a useful method of recruitment and consolidation, can also be a psychological minefield into which even the wariest can stray at their peril.

During the last decade there has been a mushrooming of house fellowships encouraged by evangelical churches and sects in a desperate attempt to hold on to their dwindling numbers. They have increasingly attracted the young and impressionable recruits to the Jesus movement. Many Christians in their ignorance and enthusiasm diagnose demon possession when they encounter any psychological disorder. A considerable number of them believe that epilepsy, hysteria, schizophrenia and sexual deviation are the end result of demon possession. It is impossible to prevent such people from exerting their harmful and at times deadly influence. (Indeed there was another equally tragic if less sensational case a year ago when two members of a Jesus group were convinced that they could walk on water. Both of them were drowned.)

OBITUARIES

WILLIAM CRONAN

William Cronan, who has died in his 91st year, was one of the National Secular Society's oldest members and a familiar figure in Edinburgh freethought circles for many years. He was of a working-class family and made the most of any opportunities he had to develop his intellect. He read widely and was keenly interested in the study of anthropology, ecology, politics and religion. In his younger days Mr Cronan made many stage appearances as a singer and dancer.

Mr Cronan was a man of great warmth, kindness and good humour. He debated vigorously but without rancour. He was held in deep respect by a wide circle of friends. Mr Cronan is survived by his wife, five daughters and other relatives. Donald MacRae conducted a committal ceremony at Sea-view Crematorium, Edinburgh, on 1 May.

CLIFFORD G. CORSTORPHINE

Clifford George Corstorphine, who died suddenly at his home in London on 13 April, was associated with the freethought movement for most of his life. He served on the Executive Committee of the National Secular Society for several years and was a member of the London Secular Group. Mr Corstorphine had worked for the Post Office and had retired only a few months at the time of his unexpected death at the age of 70. He is survived by his wife, Amy, who was with him at the end.

Friends and former colleagues assembled at the Islington Crematorium on 21 April, when Fred McKay conducted a committal ceremony.

REBECCA KATHLEEN TACCHI

Rebecca Kathleen Tacchi, who has died at the age of 99, was a secularist and a former suffragette. Mrs Tacchi was born in London and after medical training went to South Africa where she served as a nurse in the Boer War. Her father was killed in the fighting. She was married in 1897 and had three sons and two daughters. Her eldest daughter, Kathleen Tacchi-Morris, is the founder and president of Women for World Disarmament.

Mrs Tacchi spent the last years of her life in Somerset, and remained mentally alert despite her great age. Cremation took place, without a service, at Taunton.

The number of Catholic nuns in all areas of the world has decreased by over 24 per cent during the past four years. The greatest losses occurred in North America where the percentage fall in members of women's religious orders was 38.5. The losses suffered were lowest in Africa where the figure was 8.9 per cent. These statistics have been issued by the Vatican's Congregation for the Religious.

THE RELIGION OF ISAAC NEWTON by Frank E. Manuel. Clarendon Press/Oxford University Press, £3.50.

Newton was probably the greatest scientist—possibly the cleverest man—who ever lived. We are still living in his world in more than one sense—our physical world continues to behave for all practical purposes in the way he was the first person to describe successfully, and our intellectual world continues to follow the pattern established as a result of his success. Virtually all the advances in human knowledge since Newton have been made by using his methods, even when they have contradicted his conclusions. The age of Newton is only three centuries old, a short enough period in our history, and it will be some time yet before the Newtonian system is superseded in the mind of the general public by that of Einstein and the other revisionists of the 20th century.

Most people know something about Newton's scientific work—his brilliant innovations in mathematics, mechanics, astronomy, and optics, his elegant synthesis of the theories of his predecessors into a single, simple system—but few people know anything about his religious work, and those who do tend to think of it as being unimportant and uninteresting. Yet to Newton himself the two sides of his work had equal value, and the masses of his manuscripts which have survived discuss religion as much as science. Such writers as Maynard Keynes and Arthur Koestler, Frances Yates and Jerry Ravetz, have shown how scientific work is often associated with irrational attitudes, so it should not be surprising to find that a great scientist may have strong religious beliefs. In fact Newton's religion is important because he is so important, and it is also interesting because it is so curious.

Frank Manuel, who has written two previous books on Newton's thought—*Isaac Newton, Historian* (1963) and *A Portrait of Isaac Newton* (1968)—has now produced a short one printing the Fremantle Lectures he gave in Oxford in 1973. His new book is certainly fascinating, but it is not entirely satisfactory as an account of his subject, and it offers not so much a total description as a partial discussion of certain aspects of it. The four lectures cover four connected topics—his faith in God, his belief in God's revelation through both nature and scripture, his trust in the text of scripture, and his interpretation of that text.

Newton's theology was strongly Protestant, and was closer to Judaism and Islam than to orthodox Christianity in its concentration on God the Father and its doubts about the divinity of Jesus—indeed

FREETHINKER

it was not far from Unitarianism, which was still a dangerous heresy in those days. Manuel suggests possible reasons for this in the circumstances of Newton's birth as a premature, posthumous child on a Christmas Day and his upbringing as a neglected orphan, but these psychoanalytic speculations are irritating rather than illuminating and fade into insignificance as he turns to the philosophical application of Newton's faith. It is often supposed that Newton banished God from the universe—or at least turned him from an absolute into a constitutional monarch! Manuel shows that this is the reverse of the truth—Newton insisted that God was always present in the universe, not just to initiate the motions of its parts, which he did more than anyone else to describe, but also to regulate them at all times. Unlike many of his followers, he was not a deist but a theist, and his God was not just a First Cause but an Eternal Father.

So far the pattern seems simple enough, but it is complicated by the problem that Newton was as obsessed by the Bible as by the universe. Here too he followed tradition. Just as there was in the Middle Ages a dualism of reason and revelation, of philosophy and religion, as equal sources of truth about God, so there was in the Enlightenment a dualism of the Book of Nature and the Book of Scripture, of God's work and God's word, as equal sources of information about the world. Newton, who was so successful at reading the book of nature, spent just as much time reading the book of scripture. It is often supposed that he was a mystical or numerological fantasist, but Manuel shows that he was a much more rational interpreter of the Bible than might be imagined. He saw most of its books as being historical or ethical in character, and only two of them—Daniel in the Old Testament and the Revelation in the New Testament—as being literally prophetic. His preoccupation with the interpretation of these two books, far from being abnormal, was normal enough among educated men in seventeenth-century England—though the effort he devoted to it was as abnormal as that he devoted to science. He spent much of his time for most of his life in reading the apocalyptic prophecies as future history, and in trying to synchronize what Daniel and St John had supposedly foretold with what had subsequently occurred. Although he believed that his "methodising of prophecy" was the last word in biblical interpretation, just as he believed that

REVIEWS

his systematizing of nature was the last word in scientific investigation, he did not publish the results—but then he was always most reluctant to publish anything, even the finest works of his genius.

All this is entertaining enough, and the actual details of Newton's interpretation are frequently farcical—wrestling with the precise date of the Creation, or realising that all references to frogs were allusions to Roman Catholics!—but the real point, which Manuel does not discuss, is that Newton was using quite different methodologies in his two fields of study. He used rational methods to study nature, whatever irrational elements remained in his system; whereas he used irrational methods to study scripture, whatever rational elements entered his exegesis. Thus, however hard he tried to keep a place for the divine presence in the universe, he actually left no room for such a concept, and the imperfections of his system were eventually explained not by the existence of God but by the observations of Laplace (who commented when asked about God that he “had no need for such a hypothesis”). On the other hand, however hard he tried to bring reason to bear on the message of the Bible, he made no serious attempt to investigate its origins, and the significance of the prophetic books was eventually explained not by religious interpretation but by rational criticism.

Ironically, modern biblical criticism was being founded during Newton's own lifetime by both Christian and Jewish scholars, and he knew at least some of their work. But the man who constructed the first genuinely rational description of the universe could not conceive of an equally rational destruction of the Bible. He repeatedly attacked those responsible for previous commentaries who, he thought, had misinterpreted the text; but he never appreciated the existence of those responsible for the original canon who had produced the text itself. He accepted the Bible as given, like the universe—and here the two sides of his work come together. Just as he failed to bring reason to bear on the origins of the Bible, he also failed to bring reason to bear on the origins of the universe; for God and for the Bible, as for gravity, he “feigned no hypotheses” and had no explanation.

The ultimate test of Newton's rationalism and irrationalism was a matter of time rather than logic. The Newtonian method of studying natural phenomena—by physical observation, concrete thought, and mathematical calculation—led to

repeated advances and a constant improvement in scientific knowledge. The Newtonian method of studying scriptural texts—by devotional reading, symbolic thought, and chronological calculation—led to repeated absurdities and the complete undermining of biblical authority. What is odd is that Newton seems to have had no notion of this fundamental contradiction in his thought, and that few of those who came after him either knew or cared about it. Blake even attacked what he called “single vision and Newton's sleep”, in utter ignorance of Newton's double vision and intellectual insomnia. Modern obscurantists, of course, accept Newton's mixture of rationalism and irrationalism with delight and turn it to their own purpose—over-emphasising the significance of his familiarity of Rosicrucianism and his interest in alchemy, for instance, but under-emphasising the greater significance of his rejection of Rosicrucianism as an imposture and his lack of interest in astrology.

The moral of Newton's religion is obscured by those who argue that religion and science, faith and fact, dogma and reason are equivalent ways of reaching the truth; that primitive nonsense and modern sense, intuitive beliefs and empirical hypotheses, Newton's blindness and Newton's vision have equal value; that everything is somehow the same thing. But the moral is unchanged—it is that all statements should be tested on the basis not of who they are made by but of why and when and how they are made. Newton—like Faraday and Darwin and Einstein and many other great scientists—did brilliant work and also held strong religious beliefs. This proves not that religious beliefs may be scientific after all, but that great scientists can be as stupid as anyone else when they begin to think unscientifically, abandon reason, and try to reach beyond this world.

NICOLAS WALTER

HOMOSEXUALITY: TIME TO TELL THE TRUTH by Leonard Barnett. Victor Gollancz Ltd, £2.50.

This book has been written by a Christian minister who admits that at one time he unthinkingly accepted traditional attitudes to homosexuality, but found these attitudes invalid when he was called upon to give pastoral care to a family in which the young son grew up homosexual.

Dr Barnett aims to dispel prejudice by giving a straightforward account of the facts about homosexuality. He insists that the same moral standards should be applied to “gay” and “straight” sexual behaviour—that is, he disapproves of casual sex for anyone. He interprets those biblical references which have always been taken as implying the utmost disapproval of homosexual practices to refer only to conduct involving “prostitution, sexual

assault, or plain sexuality" which is no less and no more reprehensible when heterosexual.

The author insists that homosexual behaviour is not unnatural, as for some people it is the only form of sexual behaviour which appears natural, and he is opposed to discrimination against homosexuals particularly in regard to the age of consent.

Dr Barnett points out that, as far as can be ascertained, the proportion of homosexuals in the population does not vary in different countries or at various periods in time, and concludes that it does not arise from young people being led astray by others. But a certain proportion of children are certain to grow up "gay". This means that "in any average mixed school of 500 pupils there will be around 15 boys and girls who for the rest of their lives whatever happens will develop homosexual friendships and love relationships exclusively with people of their own sex". (That is about one child per class.) These boys and girls, together with others whose sexual orientation may at some stage seem doubtful (though they will ultimately be heterosexual) are the ones most in need of help through sex education. But their needs are likely to be totally ignored. Dr Barnett pleads for a sex education that will both enable these young people to understand themselves and assist the heterosexual majority to accept them.

Apart from the satisfaction one may feel in seeing a movement in the churches for a more enlightened attitude on sexual questions, this is a book to be recommended in its own right. It is addressed largely to young people, but it should also be of great assistance to anyone who is forced by the emergence of homosexuality in his or her own family to re-examine personal attitudes.

The Dean of Liverpool has contributed a foreword.

MARGARET McILROY

THE FREETHINKER, VOLUME 94 edited by Christopher Morey. G. W. Foote & Company, £2.70.

As years go, 1974 is likely to survive in memory as the beginning of what we summarily identify as "the crisis". Humanists—for those who see us as an isolated minority—were helped to a generous helping of the collective dilemma, as readers of the latest volume of *The Freethinker* will readily appreciate. It is an all too accurate barometer of the climate of economic fear and frustration, having sustained in the past twelve months rising production costs, a dearer post, the effects of the three-day week and, for added measure, its own curious brand of industrial action—all without a significant sacrifice of customary standards. As important, however, the editor and contributors continued the policy of providing comprehensive material on the widest area of related interest with

enough depth and variety to present the humanist view effectively and with purpose. At a time when reason traditionally yields to the most manic devotion to blind faith, the balanced argument is not only vital but in demand. It requires a proper degree of authority and perception, social integration and persistence to reveal and serve that demand, and *The Freethinker* can lay claim to both in the most successful of these articles.

Authority in the presence of contributors who are leading spokesmen in the subject; perception in the ability to distinguish the genuine from the spurious; social integration in the capacity to work with the community with sympathetic bodies who share the same goals, and persistence to resist other "benevolent" institutions who call for a broadly "ecumenical" effort for the *benefit of mankind*—these are the features for which *The Freethinker* has been rightly praised in the past. Once again they are amply displayed in articles on as varied a range as blanket tax exemption for religious organisations (no matter how bogus their claims), the "legalised robbery" by the Church in selling land formerly used by village schools, the dangers to the freedom of speech inherent in a renewed and particularly vicious censorship campaign, the plight of homeless children neglected by the social services and the scurrilous tactics of "innocuous" religious sects like the Children of God. There is, as well, detailed coverage of the anti-Abortion Law witch-hunt, including a complete account of the Lane Committee's conclusions. In this respect I would commend to the attention of new readers the notable absence of invective writing evident in the decision to publish on the same page opposing interpretations of the abortion statistics since the passing of the Act.

Such a contribution to reasoned debate necessarily compensates for a regrettable weakness in the review section. For some reason, there is a tendency toward the indiscriminate selection of the films and plays for review: material of a strictly non-secularist nature is included along with items that are of importance, with no apparent distinction between the two. This, surprisingly, is not the case with the books, however. It is a fault which has so far been rectified in the issues for this year. But its effect here is to spoil the appearance of an otherwise valuable volume.

JAMES MACDONALD

David Johnson, a 24-year-old Scout leader from Heysham, Lancashire, has been refused permission to continue in the post because he does not believe in God. He was visited by senior officials and told that he had to resign. Mr Johnson commented: "I was given a form asking me to declare my religion. It would have been easy to say C of E, but why be hypocritical?"

ANARCHY by Errico Malatesta. Freedom Press, 25p.

From the 1870s until his death in 1932 Malatesta worked ceaselessly in the cause of international anarchism, in his native Italy, in England, the United States and Latin America. He was also one of the best known, most lucid and most prolific exponents of anarchist ideas at a time when the anarchist movement was at its strongest and most widespread. But in spite of the present revival of interest in figures such as Bakunin, Kropotkin and Emma Goldman, and the consequent reappearances of many of their writings, Malatesta has been comparatively neglected, even in Italy. This fact alone would make welcome this new edition of one of his best known works, in a new translation by Vernon Watkins. But the value of *Anarchy*, as Vernon Watkins points out in his introduction, is far from being purely academic. It would be difficult to imagine a more lucid and compressed statement of the basic tenets of anarchism than Malatesta gives us in this pamphlet.

Malatesta was first and foremost an activist, and his attitudes were tempered by long experience of struggle, both against the ruling class and against tendencies such as social democracy and individualism within the revolutionary movement itself; perhaps this is why his writing has worn better than that of some of his more Utopian contemporaries. In particular his lifelong concern for organisation within the anarchist movement and the emphasis which he placed on internationalism make his work interesting today. Malatesta's own concern for words and their accurate use became almost an obsession, so it is gratifying that he has been served so conscientiously by his new translator. At times, though, the literalness of the translation does not make for easy reading in English.

TONY HALLIDAY

Freethinker Fund

We are pleased to announce that donations to the Fund increased again during April. In addition, we received £190 from the estate of the late B. M. Alkens (Canada). Thanks are expressed to the following: Anonymous, £3; C. Ablethorpe, £1; J. Buchanan, £3.60; H. Bowser, 10p; C. Brunel, £1.60; W. V. Cress 30p; H. Lyons-Davies, £2; E. Eagle, 10p; R. A. D. Forrest, £1.85; B. Barlow, 60p; M. Gray, 30p; P. George, 43p; T. Myles Hill, £2.68; E. C. Hughes, 66p; R. Jeffard, 84p; G. P. T. Lewis, 60p; T. W. Lines, 84p; W. Lewis, 60p; J. Little, £5; J. C. McLennan, £41.84; J. McCorrisken, 50p; D. Redhead, 92p; A. F. Row, £3.34; R. H. Scott, £1.50; E. G. Vaughan, 50p. Total £74.70.

A PROGRAMME FOR ADULT EDUCATION

The principals of adult education centres throughout the land are now drawing up their programmes for evening classes starting next September. They have two problems: many are new to their jobs because regional developments in local government have forced a lot of changes; all are subject to cuts in money available and have to drop some classes and put up fees for others. Most are looking for means by which money can be saved and attendances improved.

The centres usually occupy school buildings after normal school hours. The classrooms are made available at no or little cost. The main expenditure is on tutors' fees, and in many cases attendance figures hardly justify the tutor cost.

In the main, evening classes are concerned with practical instruction in vocational skills, coaching for O and A level examinations, on literary, historical and social themes. To my knowledge subjects such as humanism and freethought rarely appear. This suggests our opportunity.

Let each of us who lives near an adult education centre offer to run a weekly evening class (meeting or group—choose the word you prefer) devoted to the secular-humanist philosophy, at no cost to the local authority. All we seek is permission to use a room and to have the event listed in the Adult Centre prospectus. It will then be up to each of us to programme our own course. I have phrased mine in the following terms:

Personal Knowledge: This is an experimental series of discussion groups for those who wish to examine and relate their own thoughts, experiences, fantasies, etc., in sympathetic company. The purpose will be to develop a greater awareness of each person's personal authority and creative capacity and so to enrich the group with such experience. Although reference will be made to established ideas in science, art, philosophy, modern psychology and encounter techniques, the guiding principle will be to encourage freethinking in the individual.

I do not know if my wording will be accepted, nor do I suggest that it be adapted for any other person's course, for each freethinker has his own ideas and puts things in his own way. What I do feel is that it will make an important contribution to the secular/humanist cause if we can establish a number of such courses in adult centres throughout the country. Our difficulty has always been that by our very nature we cannot organise ourselves into a church-like institution to compete with the established religious forces; but as individuals we can establish personal contact with others of like mind who are curious and want to learn.

I shall be glad to hear from anyone who wishes to try. Write to me at the Secular Humanism Centre, Ashurstwood Abbey, East Grinstead, Sussex, or telephone Forest Row 2589.

JEAN STRAKER

G. A. Wells' latest book, "Did Jesus Exist?", is described as a sequel to his challenging "Jesus of the Early Christians". Professor Wells argues that there was no historical Jesus, and he raises many vital questions that neither the Christian nor the unbeliever can ignore. (see display advertisement p.69).

Religion and reaction are traditional bedfellows, and despite the contribution of individual Christians to the struggle for human welfare, religious institutions, particularly the Roman Catholic Church, still constitute a formidable barrier to social progress. In countries like Spain and Italy the affluence of the priests and the miserable conditions of their flock are sharply contrasted.

It is no coincidence that disruption in British industry, rampant inflation, despondency on the stock market and despair in the boardroom are occurring at a time when adherence to religion is declining.

That the churches are losing their grip is admitted even by their leaders; and that the financial structure of the nation is crumbling is evidenced every day in the newspapers.

Not that religion and national stability are irretrievably linked. But throughout history, social justice has been achieved only when industry has learned to treat its people properly, and when religious imperatives have been removed from society.

In most countries where religion dominates the way of life, there is the most appalling poverty and deprivation. Where religion has largely been shaken off, social justice is often near to ideal, and industry is run on as near ideal lines as possible.

Anyone who has been abroad will have seen examples of this. Spain and Italy are good examples of religion-dominated nations of social inequality. To the list might be added Malta and other Mediterranean islands, most other Catholic countries, and India and other eastern countries where religion flourishes. Opposite examples include Scandinavia (particularly Sweden), Germany, Holland, Switzerland, many of the Soviet bloc countries, and some parts of South America.

In Spain, some of the peasant villages—where families exist under canvas, cooking and sleeping on a roughly matted floor—are regularly visited by the priest (travelling, of course, in a smart car) whose main errand it is to collect the money the wretched paupers have put away for the occasion of his visit. During a recent trip to such a village in Aragon, the approach of my car was evidently mistaken for that of the priest, which caused a flurry of confusion in the rows of hovels. And in Malta, a common sight is a group of shoe-less, bead-twiddling old women gathering near the cathedrals before a service. They are waiting to pay homage to the priest, as he swishes up in a

Mercedes. In his robes and plush limousine, he makes a fine contrast with the waiting group of paupers.

The places where this rich and poor system is in evidence are nearly always those where the farm labourers and light-engineering workers of greatest industrial exploitation takes place. In Spain, the fishermen and goat-herds of the Basque country, the waiters and vineyard workers of Italy and the factory hands and weavers of Malta, all share appalling deprivation, while their employers and bosses are more often found in the resorts of those countries so sought after by retired English gentlemen and others who seek a life of leisure beneath the hot sun.

Age of Transition

The Scandinavian example presents a complete contrast—there, religion has dwindled to such an extent that “at home” church services are now available in many areas. (A phone call to the vicar, and you get “Rent-a-sermon”!) At the same time, industrial progress has reached the point where company directors and fork-truck drivers often live as neighbours and social justice almost seems unfair to the higher-income section of society. The positive and negative sides of religion and humanism can, therefore, be seen working in many parts of the world. In Britain, we live in an age of transition, hardly dominated by religion, though of course it does have legal stature and official influence. Britain can hardly be reckoned a non-religious state, or one freed from the shackles of theology, while it has subsidised church schools, religious clauses in its education laws, vast church ownership of wealth, and rife social injustice.

Though there are exceptions, it is true to say that developing societies, in terms of equality, social justice and civilisation, are those which have rejected religion, while the countries still dominated by theology are characterized by communities struggling with misery, hardship, poverty, and appalling living conditions.

The Role of Secularism

A common criticism of humanism by the religious is that our aims are merely toward wealth for its own sake and the collection of material possessions. This, of course, is unjust. But while some members of society have great wealth and others none, while some are “more equal than others”, while the basic right to decent living standards is denied to many, action needs to be taken. And if this thesis that developed societies are those where religion has largely been rejected

(Continued on page 80)

PUBLICATIONS

The Jesus Hoax, Phyllis Graham, (hard cover) £3.95, (breakaway edition) £2.25, (24p). **Honest to Man**, Margaret Knight, £3.75, (18p). **Cults of Unreason**, Christopher Evans, 75p, (11p). **Humanism**, Barbara Smoker, 40p, (8p). **The Longford Threat to Freedom**, Bridgid Brophy, 10p, (6p). **The Right to Die**, Charles Wilshaw, 25p, (8p). **An Introduction to Secular Humanism**, Kit Mouat, 45p, (6p). **What Humanism is About**, Kit Mouat, 53p, (17p). **From Jewish Messianism to the Christian Church**, Prosper Alfaric, 3p, (6p). **The Dead Sea Scrolls**, John Allegro, 55p, (11p). **Did Jesus Christ Exist**, Chapman Cohen, 5p, (6p). **Morality Without God**, Chapman Cohen, 5p, (6p). **Woman and Christianity**, Chapman Cohen, 5p, (6p). **Materialism Restated**, Chapman Cohen, 50p, (15p). **Thomas Paine**, Chapman Cohen, 15p, (6p). **Religious Roots of the Taboo on Homosexuality**, John Lauritsen, 20p, (8p). **The Absurdities of Christian Science**, Joseph McCabe, 12p, (6p). **The Jesuits: Religious Rogues**, Joseph McCabe, 12p, (6p). **Christianity and Slavery**, Joseph McCabe, 12p, (6p). **Phallic Elements in Religion**, Joseph McCabe, 12p, (6p). **Did Jesus ever Live?**, Joseph McCabe, 12p, (6p). **Pagan Christs**, Joseph McCabe, 12p, (6p). **The Fraud of Spiritualism**, Joseph McCabe, 12p, (6p). **Legends of Saints and Martyrs**, Joseph McCabe, 12p, (6p). **Morals in Ancient Babylon**, Joseph McCabe, 12p, (6p). **Life and Morals in Greece and Rome**, Joseph McCabe, 12p, (6p). **How Christianity Triumphed**, Joseph McCabe, 12p, (6p). **Revolt Against Religion**, Joseph McCabe, 12p, (6p). **Psychology of Religion**, Joseph McCabe, 12p, (6p). **The Sources of Christian Morality**, Joseph McCabe, 12p, (6p). **How Man Made God**, Joseph McCabe, 12p, (6p). **The Futility of Belief in God**, Joseph McCabe, 12p, (6p). **The Horrors of the Inquisition**, Joseph McCabe, 12p, (6p). **The Moorish Civilisation in Spain**, Joseph McCabe, 12p, (6p). **The Degradation of Women**, Joseph McCabe, 12p, (6p). **RI and Surveys**, Maurice Hill, 5p, (6p). **The Cost of Church Schools**, David Tribe, 20p, (6p). **Religion and Ethics in Schools**, David Tribe, 8p, (6p). **The Case Against Church Schools**, Patricia Knight, 20p, (6p). **The Little Red Schoolbook**, S. Jansen, 30p, (10p). **Why I am Not a Christian**, Bertrand Russell, £1, (13p). **On Education**, Bertrand Russell, 65p, (13p). **Education and the Social Order**, Bertrand Russell, 75p, (11p). **Unpopular Essays**, Bertrand Russell, 45p, (11p). **Roads to Freedom**, Bertrand Russell, 60p, (11p). **Practice and Theory of Bolshevism**, Bertrand Russell, 30p, (11p). **Principles and Social Reconstruction**, Bertrand Russell, 75p, (13p). **Mysticism and Logic**, Bertrand Russell, 50p, (13p). **Marriage and Morals**, Bertrand Russell, 55p, (11p). **Legitimacy versus Industrialism**, Bertrand Russell, 50p, (11p). **In Praise of Idleness**, Bertrand Russell, 70p, (11p). **Authority and the Individual**, Bertrand Russell, 60p, (11p). **Common Sense and Nuclear Warfare**, Bertrand Russell, 40p, (11p). **The Conquest of Happiness**, Bertrand Russell, £1, (11p). **Impact of Science on Society**, Bertrand Russell, 60p, (11p). **Political Ideals**, Bertrand Russell, 50p, (11p). **Bertrand Russell's Best**, Robert E. Enger, 55p, (11p). **Bertrand Russell: a Life**, Herbert Gotthalk, 25p, (11p). **Bertrand Russell: the Passionate Sceptic**, Allan Wood, 50p, (13p). **The Origins of Christianity**, G. A. Wells, 20p, (6p). **The Jesus of the Early Christians**, G. A. Wells, £2.95, (24p). **Broadcasting, Brainwashing, Conditioning**, David Tribe, 25p, (6p). **Nucleoethics: Ethics in Modern Society**, David Tribe, 90p, (17p). **Questions**

of Censorship, David Tribe, £4.75, (37p). **Religion and Human Rights**, David Tribe, 3p, (6p). **President Charles Bradlaugh**, MP, David Tribe, £4, (46p). **100 Years of Freethought**, David Tribe, £2.50, (24p). **The Freethinker, Bound Volume 1973**, Editors: Christopher Morey and Nigel Sinnott, £2.50, (24p). **Rights of Man**, Thomas Paine, 35p, (13p). **Pioneers of Social Change**, Royston Pike, 95p, (13p). **A Chronology of British Secularism**, G. H. Taylor, 10p, (6p). **103: History of a House**, Elizabeth Collins, 5p, (6p). **Radical Politics 1790-1900: Religion and Unbelief**, Edward Royle, 65p, (13p). **The Devil's Chaplain**, H. Cutner, 10p, (8p). **Martyrdom of Man**, Winwood Reade, 60p, (24p). **Gods and Myths of Northern Europe**, D. E. E. Davidson, 40p, (11p). **The Bible Handbook**, G. W. Foote and W. Ball, 65p, (13p). **A Short History of Western Atheism**, James Thrower, 95p, (11p). **Sociology of Religion**, Ronald Robertson, 75p, (17p). **Boys and Sex**, W. B. Pomeroy, 25p, (10p). **Girls and Sex**, W. B. Pomeroy, 30p, (10p). **Humanism, Christianity and Sex**, David Tribe, 6p, (6p). **The Nun Who Lived Again**, Phyllis Graham, 5p, (6p). **Rome or Reason**, R. G. Ingersoll, 10p, (8p). **The Vatican versus Mankind**, Adrian Pigott, 20p, (13p). **The Vatican Billions**, Avro Manhattan, £3, (18p). **The Humanist Outlook**, Editor: A. J. Ayer, 75p, (24p). **The Humanist Revolution**, Hector Hawton, 95p (13p). **Controversy**, Hector Hawton, 95p, (13p). **A Humanist Glossary**, Odell & Barfield, 20p, (8p). **Humanism and Moral Theory**, Reuben Osborn, 60p, (13p). **A Humanist Anthology**, Margaret Knight, 60p, (11p). **Christianity: The Debit Account**, Margaret Knight, 3p, (6p). **Comparative Religion**, A. C. Bouquet, 55p, (11p). **Ethics Without God**, Kai Nielson, 95p, (10p). **Birth Control**, NSS Report, 20p, (6p). **Abortion Counselling**, Madeleine Sims, 50p, (8p). **Ten Non Commandments**, Ronald Fletcher, 13p, (6p). **Origin of the Species**, Charles Darwin, 60p, (15p). **The Rights of Old People**, NSS Report, 15p, (6p). **Middle East Mythology**, S. H. Hooke, 45p, (11p). **Lift up Your Heads**, William Kent, 30p, (11p). **Life, Death and Immortality**, P. B. Shelley, 10p, (6p). **The Mask of Anarchy**, P. B. Shelley, 20p, (6p). **The Arts in a Permissive Society**, Christopher Macy, 75p, (10p). **Tutankhamun and the Valley of the Kings**, Otto Nuebert, 40p, (11p). **On the Nature of the Universe**, Lucretius, 45p, (13p). **Way of Zen**, Alan Watts, 60p, (11p). **What is the Sabbath Day?** H. Cutner, 6p, (8p). **Secular Responsibility**, Marghanita Laski, 10p, (6p). **New Thinking on War and Peace**, A. C. Thomson, 5p, (6p). **Civil Liberty: NCCL Guide**, Anna Coote and Larry Grant, 50p, (13p). **Against Censorship**, various authors, 25p, (8p). **Whose Land**, James Parkes, 40p, (13p). **Introduction to Politics**, Harold Laski, 50p, (11p). **Women's Rights: A Practical Guide**, Anna Coote and Tess Gill, 60p, (13p). **Our Pagan Christmas**, R. J. Condon, 20p, (6p). **Power**, Bertrand Russell, £1, (13p). **Did Jesus Exist?**, G. A. Wells, £5.80, (20p). **Poems of an Angry Dove**, Kit Mouat, £1.20, (13p).

Obtainable by post from 698 Holloway Road, London, N19 3NL (telephone 01-272 1266).

Make cheques and postal orders payable to G. W. FOOTE & COMPANY.

Figure in brackets denotes postage charge; any overpayment of postage will be credited.

Bound volumes of "The Freethinker", 1974, are now obtainable at £2.70 (plus 24p postage and packing) from G. W. Foote & Company, 698 Holloway Road, London N19 3NL.

EVENTS

Croydon Humanist Society. Central Library, Katharine Street, Croydon, Wednesday, 21 May, 8 p.m. D. S. Elliott: "Sex Education for Croydon Children".

London, Victoria Embankment (opposite Charing Cross Station), Saturday, 21 June, 2 pm. Demonstration in Defence of the 1967 Abortion Act. Rally at Speakers' Corner, 4 pm.

Merseyside Humanist Group. The Lecture Room, 46 Hamilton Square, Birkenhead. Meeting on the third Wednesday of every month (except August), 7.45 p.m.

South Place Ethical Society. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Sunday morning meetings, 11 a.m. 11 May, Hector Hawton: "The Bloomsbury Group". 18 May, Peter Cadogan and Nicolas Walter: "Gerrard Winstanley—Visionary". Tuesday evening meetings, 7 p.m. 6 May, Mark Moskowitz: "The Morals of Communication". 13 May, Philip Wragge: "A Quaker View of Right and Wrong". 20 May, Keith Gilley: "Authority and Progress in Morals". 27 May, Lord Longford and Stanley Parkenson: "What Basis for Morals?"

West Glamorgan Humanist Group. Friends Meeting House (Annexe), Swansea, Friday, 30 May, 7.30 p.m. Peter Cadogan: "Direct Democracy?"

Worthing Humanist Group. Burlington Hotel, Marine Parade, Worthing, Sunday, 18 May, 5.30 p.m. Annual General Meeting.

Waltham Forest Humanist Group. Wood Street Library, Forest Road, Walthamstow, Tuesday, 27 May, 7.45 p.m. Ros Kane: "Radical Alternatives to Prison".

Religion and Social Justice

is valid, then clearly religion should be sharply challenged, in an attempt to start changing society in a secular direction.

That, surely, is the role of the secularist in modern society. Far from fighting a battle already won many times over, as we are often accused of doing, we still have a great deal to do on the positive side of modern life. It is by no means too late, but it is certainly not before time.

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 NSS.

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).

Humanist Holidays. Hon. Secretary: Mrs M. Mephram, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey; telephone 01-642 8796. Details of holidays at Isle of Man (9-23 August) sent on request.

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

Phyllis Graham

THE JESUS HOAX

£3.95 and £2.25 plus 23p postage

Margaret Knight

HONEST TO MAN

£3.75 plus 23p postage

G. W. Foote & Company

698 Holloway Road, London N19 3NL

THE FREETHINKER

Editor: WILLIAM McILROY

698 HOLLOWAY ROAD

LONDON N19 3NL

TELEPHONE: 01-272 1266

UK ISSN 0016-0687

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

"The Freethinker" was founded in 1881 by G. W. Foote and is published mid-monthly. Material submitted (including Letters and Announcements) must reach this office by the 25th of the preceding month.

POSTAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Inland and Overseas: Twelve months: £1.40 Six months 70p

U.S.A. and Canada: Twelve months: \$3.25 Six months: \$1.65

Please make cheques, etc., payable to G. W. Foote & Company. (Foreign subscriptions by cheque or International Money Order)

"The Freethinker" can also be ordered through any newsagent.