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COMMUNITY LAND BILL: SPECULATION LICENCE FOR THE CHURCHES

Parliament is soon to receive the Progress on the Report Stage of the Community Land Bill—incorporating the Amendment put by Catholic MP, Kevin McNamara, to exempt Churches from the provisions of the Bill. For, as announced by the Minister for Planning and Local Government on 15 July, the Government has (with the connivance of the Opposition) acceded to ecclesiastical pressure by agreeing (behind the scenes) to this anti-social concession. They have also decided to extend it to registered charities.

The National Secular Society, in line with its campaigns for more than a century past against over-indulged Church privilege, has already issued a press statement, protesting against this latest instance of the Churches being placed above the law in such a way as to defeat the intentions of Parliament and the public interest. As for the extension of the concession to registered charities, the NSS points out that "whether or not a voluntary organisation is granted charity status has nothing to do with 'charity' in the ordinary sense but has a great deal to do with arbitrary categories laid down in a preamble to a Statute of 1601, and the financial injustice that already exists as a result of this arbitrary gulf will only be aggravated by the new law".

The NSS statement continued as follows: Exemption of Church buildings and land from the Community Land Bill will have the effect of allowing redundant churches to go on being sold to developers, at prices based not upon their current use value (to which other property owners will be restricted by the new law) but upon their site development value and that of adjacent land. Since many churches occupy strategic town-planning sites, this exemption will not only give the ecclesiastical authorities even more financial privilege—in our view, completely without justification—but will also impede town improvement plans, and, at a time of dwindling land resource, will enable important urban sites to be disposed of, without regard to the

wishes of elected councils, in order to augment financial profits rather than badly needed dwellings or social amenities.

Exempting particular sites from the new law regulating land use, on the totally irrelevant basis of who owns them, is a betrayal of the very principle underlying the Bill—and, indeed, of our whole legal system. It means one law for the religious and another for the profane.

The main argument that has been put forward in favour of making the Churches a "special case" is that they "plough back" all their profits. But the same might be said of almost any business enterprise—which, apart from the fees paid to directors (comparable with bishops) and salaries to staff (in this case, clergymen, most of whom would have to seek useful employment if their redundancy were not subsidised by the investments of the Church Commissioners and other inherited wealth), will generally plough back its profits, with the pure objective of further enriching the enterprise.

Financial Privileges

At this moment of economic crisis, when we are all being urged to tighten our belts it is hardly edifying to read the delighted comments of Church dignitaries on being handed this huge slice of the national cake.

Other voluntary, but legally non-charitable, organisations—which are often far more relevant to society's needs today than the Churches or many of the so-called charities—are not cushioned by fiscal privilege against having to cut down on staff whose salaries they can no longer afford to pay. The Churches, already thus privileged financially by law, will be further privileged under this new law—both by being allowed to make vast profits out of selling land for development, when this is made illegal for everyone else, and by being protected from compulsory purchase of such High Street premises as

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The Religious Brainwashers Take Over

A report published last month in a national daily newspaper revealed that no less than three Government departments and a police force are inquiring into the affairs of the Unification Church, a reactionary, fundamentalist Christian sect which is suspected of brainwashing its followers and of theft and fraud. Paul Rose, MP (Labour, Blackley), has initiated some of the inquiries, and the Government departments concerned are the Attorney General's office, the Health Ministry and the Charity Commissioners. The messiah of the movement is an Eastern gentleman named the Reverend Sun Moon, who, now a millionaire, lives in the United States.

The sect has only a small following in Britain, but its influence and activities have caused deep distress to many people. One nursing student who became involved tried to hand over a £27,000 legacy to the sect, and was prevented from doing so only by the intervention of her parents. She decided to abandon her studies in order to devote herself exclusively to the sect, but was then persuaded to return home. Her father said that she was in a terrible state and on the verge of a nervous breakdown.

A 21-year-old Cambridge student who joined the movement was said by his mother to "switch off and retreat behind his eyes" when anyone tried to discuss his religious beliefs. Eventually, however, his suspicions about the sect's money-raising methods were aroused and he decided to leave.

Moonstruck

Although the Unification Church seems to attract mainly young people, particularly students, its greatest "catch" in Britain has undoubtedly been Henry Masters, a wealthy architect and landowner, who was reported last month to be giving the sect properties valued at £800,000. Masters and his wife, both aged 48, were introduced to the Church by their daughter, Rosalind, who persuaded them to spend a weekend at the sect's headquarters, Rowlane Farm House, near Reading, in Berkshire. Henry Masters was led, as a relative said, "like a lamb to the slaughter".

His daughter, now married, has broken away from the Church. They tried to get her back, and a member of the family said that at her wedding "she was afraid that she would be struck dead at the altar for leaving the Church".

The activities and malignant influence of the Unification Church have also scared the villagers of Stanton Fitzwarren, Wiltshire. For Henry Masters, their squire, has already handed over to the Church his house and 200-acre farm, and other properties which he plans to give to them include three farmhouses, nine cottages, a millhouse, a post-office store, and 600 acres of farmland.

Diana Hayward, chairman of the parish council, says that amongst the villagers "the real fear is that we are being taken over . . . People are concerned for their homes". Of the "Moon people" who have moved into Stanton Fitzwarren, Mrs Hayward says: "They have this fixed smile. They say they are happy, but you can tell by their eyes they are not". Villagers have complained bitterly about the disruption and noise caused by the religious fanatics, who often start hymn-singing sessions at six o'clock in the morning.

Loss of Critical Faculties

Dr William Sargant, the psychiatrist and author of *Battle for the Mind*, has commented: "Judging by reports of the Unification Church's way of converting people, they use an age-old and very effective method. Sects like this recognise that they cannot get through to people intellectually . . . The only way to convert people is emotionally . . . There is a phase of brain activity in which your mental computer stops working, you lose your critical faculties and you accept whatever is thrown at you".

One of the Church's publications invites readers to send "charity donations", and it has been revealed recently that they have 60 full-time fundraisers at work. But a representative of the Church told a national daily newspaper: "We don't give money to outside charities. We are a charity ourselves".

IRISH COMING TO BRITAIN FOR DIVORCE

Irish Catholics who have already had their marriages annulled by the Roman Catholic Church are coming to Britain from the Irish Republic to acquire a civil divorce, because the procedure for getting a divorce in Ireland is much more lengthy and expensive.

There has been a marked relaxation in the Church's attitude towards annulment of marriages, and an increasing number of people are seeking annulments. They normally receive an early hearing, since the hierarchy have set up four tribunals to deal with such cases.

The procedure for obtaining a civil divorce is, by contrast, complex and expensive. As Church annulments are not valid in law, people who re-marry without a divorce can be charged with bigamy. Additionally, children of such marriages are illegitimate.

Divorces which have been granted in British courts are recognised in Ireland.

The C of E working party set up to look into dying and euthanasia included no fewer than three Oxford professors, but only one medical expert—Dr Cicely Saunders, well known as an opponent of euthanasia. Their conclusions, recently published as a booklet, were predictably opposed to any euthanasia—but only just. They come surprisingly close to accepting euthanasia in some circumstances.

The latest contribution to the euthanasia debate is a booklet entitled *On Dying Well*, written by an Anglican working party and published by the Church Information Office.

The work has two appendices. The first gives details of seven cases where the hospice concerned was unable adequately to relieve patients' pain. The second is a rather unbalanced bibliography, with the astonishing omission of the best book in favour, *The Case for Voluntary Euthanasia*, a collection of articles edited by the Reverend A. B. Downing, (published by Peter Owen in 1969, and still in print).

The authors are correct in calling the report "an Anglican contribution to the debate": it was followed immediately by a long letter in the *Guardian* from a Yorkshire clergyman supporting euthanasia, and by an article by a Religious Affairs Correspondent in *The Times* saying that the subject deserves the Church's "further and deeper consideration". There are many good points in the work. However, since some people may be swayed by the arguments given against legalisation, this article must necessarily be a critical one.

The chapter on "Theological Considerations" reaches a far higher standard than one normally expects from official spokesmen of the Church, and successfully demolishes all the standard Christian objections to euthanasia. The argument that "death is the divinely appointed consequence of sin" is dismissed briefly and almost with contempt. The argument that "God gives life so only he can take it away" is countered by saying that this leaves out of account "the ongoing creative activity of God and the high calling of man to share in that activity." And if, in certain circumstances, a patient's death could be said to be good rather than evil, "the act of physical destruction, it could then be argued, would be a morally creative act."

Inadequate Arguments

The only Christian arguments which they suggest as having some validity are two exceedingly verbose restatements of the view that "suffering as exposure to what is beyond one's voluntary control" (doesn't

this just mean "involuntary suffering"?) "is part of the pattern of becoming human", and that we can show our neighbourly love better to the helpless and hopeless by caring for and "carefully accompanying" them than by putting them out of their misery. As to the first, the fact that something is human does not imply we must accept it as unchangeable, and, in any case, what about "man's calling to share in the creative activity of God"? (Here the authors of this chapter come close to contradiction.) As to the second, this is a policy which *might* do the onlooker some good; but it is hardly going to benefit the patient.

Significantly, the authors admit that even these two arguments may well seem inadequate. Earlier they mention the case (a favourite among Oxford philosophers) in which a man who is trapped in a burning lorry asks a bystander to shoot him so he will not have to burn to death: few would object to euthanasia here. The authors, quoting Jesus's commandment to "Do unto others as you would they should do unto you", now admit "Thus a direct application of the teaching of Jesus to these cases would legitimise at least some instances of euthanasia"!

Who Benefits?

Finally, they fall back on "the good and simple principle" that innocent human life is sacred; "for our society to recognise any departure from it . . . would require clear, cogent and conclusive justification. We do not think that such exists." They themselves put this "good and simple principle" in quotation marks—after all, they have just admitted some exceptions—and if we really required conclusive justification before changing a law, no law would ever be changed.

In the chapter on medical considerations, Dr Cicely Saunders gives seven examples of cases where she feels that hospice treatment produced good results. Naturally, we can hardly expect her to quote cases which would point to the need for euthanasia. Yet I invite the reader to consider cases five and six given by her, and see whether you really think anything was gained by refusing the requests of these patients for euthanasia. Even Dr Saunders does not claim they benefited; she merely thinks their relatives or friends were better for the experience. I would mention one contrary example of a lady I know who spent six years watching her husband die slowly of cancer. The experience rendered her permanently mentally unstable, and she still has frequent spells of treatment in a mental hospital.

I turn now to the authors' conclusions—six reasons

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August 1914—the very date is full of meaning. The 1914-18 war is seen here from the perspective of three generations' distance. Contemporaries saw only its horror—death and destruction on an unprecedented scale. But today we can see that the losses, while staggering, left no permanent scar on the face of Europe: the lives lost were soon made up, the areas of destruction soon rebuilt. The most momentous effects of the holocaust, though hardly noticed at first, were the political and industrial upheavals and the psychological repercussions.

The war of 1914-18 was one of the most paradoxical wars of history. Its psychological impact was immense: the old Europe of the historic empires could not survive it. Nor could the new Europe of the democracies and the League of Nations survive it.

Marshal Petain, victor of Verdun in 1916, was so crushed by that tremendous cascade of fire and slaughter that he had not the stomach to resist the invading Germans in 1940. France, having lasted for four years, undefeated, in the first world war, fell in six weeks in the second. Pacifist sentiment in Britain between the two wars was equally fervent. So bitter was the anti-war mood in Britain in the 1930s that the ominous signs of growing militarism in Germany and Italy were discounted.

Yet the fabric of Europe, if not its political institutions, had endured the great war almost without mark. The material destruction was minor compared with the devastation of Hitler's war. The great cities of Europe—Berlin, Paris, Rome, London—were untouched by the stalemate of trench warfare; whereas in 1945, Berlin, Stalingrad, Warsaw and many another ancient and famous city lay in ruins. Contrasted with that of 25 years later, the violence of 1914-18 poured into only a few corners of Europe; unlike 1939, 1914 revolutionised the politics of the continent. The empires of Germany, Austria and Russia collapsed: Austria split into its constituent nationalities; the centuries-old Prussian hegemony in Germany gave way to the Weimar democracy; the Romanov dynasty in Russia disappeared for ever, to be replaced by a communist regime more ferocious than the reign of "Bloody Nicholas". But in 1945, after the deliberation of the statesmen, the old frontiers of 1919 were restored, only Germany suffering further division. Greater wars may sometimes have smaller consequences.

Men are reluctant to accept that great events may have small, and sometimes ludicrous, causes. The spark touching off the conflagration in August

1914 was the assassination in Sarajevo of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Hapsburg throne of the empire of Austria-Hungary. It was one of the most bodged assassinations of all time. The Serbian conspirators threw bombs at the Archduke's car—and missed. They would have lost their chance entirely had not the Czech driver taken a wrong turning, stopped to reverse, and accidentally presented the chief assassin, Gavrilo Princip, with a sitting target. Even then, it was pure luck that a fellow conspirator was able to knock away the restraining hand of a policeman just before the fatal shots were fired at Ferdinand and his wife. And so, at 11.30 a.m. on June 28, 1914—though nobody then knew it—the great war was set in motion.

The killing of Ferdinand was the spark. The deeper causes of the war, however, lay in the great question mark that hung over Germany, the most vigorous nation of Europe. Some socialists of the time saw the cause of the war as the greed of the capitalist system, alleged to encourage national rivalries over trade and investments and to thrive on the growth of armaments. Others saw the essential evil as the intricate system of alliances that had evolved since the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, splitting Europe into uneasy and hostile armed camps whose procedures acquired a kind of momentum of their own that pushed Europe into war. Others, more plausibly, dismissed any such attempt to give the great war a great cause; what mattered was the extent to which policy was subordinated to questions of technique, military plans and railway timetables. Students of the famous "Willy-Nicky" correspondence between the Kaiser, Wilhelm II and the Tsar of Russia, Nicholas II, can discern the alarming extent to which each was a prisoner of his mobilisation plans, which conveyed to the other a sense of unstoppable force that belied the pacific noises made in telegrams flying across Europe.

The Russian Revolution

Yet, if the great war had a cause, the cause was Germany. Not that Germany "started" the war; but rather that her role in Europe, surrounded by three great empires, all hostile or at best unfriendly, was acutely uncertain. The great war was an attempt to place Germany squarely among the ranks of the great world powers. It failed. Both Germany and Austria fell victims of their own delusions. And their collapse in 1918, together with the Russian revolution a year earlier, finally put an end to the old Europe.

The Germans had thought it clever, in 1917, to convey Lenin "sealed like a plague bacillus" in a railway carriage across Germany to Russia, to precipitate the downfall of the Tsar. The Russian

revolution indeed took Russia out of the war; but it also made possible a tremendous revolt in Germany itself, in the desperate days following the failure of the great German offensive on the Somme in the spring of 1918. Continuation of a defensive war was by autumn 1918 impossible. The people of Germany were themselves in rebellion. The Kaiser abdicated.

Winston Churchill, writing in 1914, had said that "there was a strange temper in the air. Unsatisfied by material prosperity, the nations turned restlessly towards strife, both internal and external". There was some truth in this. War was to some extent a release from difficult, if not insoluble, social and national problems. (In July 1914, Britain, for instance, was on the verge of civil war over Ulster. In the Balkans, virulent nationalisms simmered constantly.) All the propaganda of the nascent socialist movements could not quash ethnic and national hatreds that plunged Europe into the abyss. Everyone thought the war would be short, sharp and purgative. They were wrong.

Modern War

Very few people had understood what modern war, backed by the great industrial machines of the belligerent nations, would be like. The internal combustion engine, the tank, barbed wire, huge guns, the aeroplane, poison gas—all presented new methods of waging war. Mobilisation of whole peoples for war had not previously been known. The fearful stranglehold of trench warfare was forecast by none.

The Schlieffen Plan of the German army called for a holding operation against the slow lumbering Russian colossus in the east, whilst the western German armies cartwheeled through Belgium, pushed into north-eastern France, and encircled the defending French armies from behind. But by 10 September, 1914, the Schlieffen Plan had failed, and Germany had already lost the war; the next four years were spent in finally securing her defeat.

The Germans had seriously underestimated the enthusiasm, if not the skill, of the Russians in the east, and were forced to switch divisions from the west, where their presence was vital. Bungling German commanders allowed a critical gap to open between their invading armies, skilfully exploited by the French general, Joffre. The timetable was disrupted. The French and British defending armies closed the route to Paris. The German defeat at the Marne in September 1914 was conclusive. There remained the stagnation of the trench systems that straddled western Europe from the Swiss border to the sea in Flanders by the end of the first year of war; and men dimly began to realise that the war would not be short or sharp. It would instead be a bitter, bloody war of attrition.

Not that the Germans were finished in 1914; far from it. Frustrated by failure to break through in north-eastern France, the German general Falken-

hayn decided to attack at Verdun, which had been stripped of its defences earlier in the desperate attempt to control the German advance to the Marne; and 1916, the year of Verdun and the Somme, was a year of total horror. A painting by Georges Leroux, simply entitled "Hell", depicts the raging inferno of fire, mud and blood which was Verdun.

The savage fighting lasted all year, and died down only when the Germans switched troops and guns to the Somme, where the British offensive under Haig had begun in July. Verdun had long since lost any reason or justification, but had acquired a deadly existence of its own, irrespective of military considerations. Men fought and died over the same patches of ground for month after month. The artillery bombardment reached a crescendo at Verdun that was all the more terrifying because the actual front was so narrow. Sheer concentrated firepower drove men out of their minds before robbing them of their lives.

The British armies under Kitchener and Haig left their trenches at 7.30 a.m. on the morning of July 1, 1916, their artillery having let loose on the German trenches such an enormous five-hour bombardment that it was heard in England itself—as well as in Verdun. And on that first day on the Somme, the British lost 20,000 men killed by German machine-gun fire, which rained on the advancing unsuspecting infantry from German positions thought to have been destroyed. British sacrifices on the Somme were dreadful, and nothing of any strategic value was achieved. Militarily, neither Verdun nor the Somme brought success—real success—to either side.

The Real Enemy

It was the same dismal story in 1917: the year of the Third Battle of Ypres. The grotesque spectacle of Germans and English burrowing towards each other like sewer-rats through the mud of Flanders; the misery of the raging welter of war, to which there now seemed no end; the heroism of the troops of the armies at Passchendaele and Caporetto which yielded only negligible results: all these combined to give men an overwhelming hatred of war, which was itself the real enemy. Nothing was real any more except the war; and, since men could not be induced to throw away their lives indefinitely in pursuit of ever elusive military gains, the war would have to be ended.

The German general staff realised this full well—more so than either the weary French, who had been bled white at Verdun, or the British, still reeling under the impact of Ypres and the Somme. The German offensive across the nightmare lunar landscapes of the desolate Somme in 1918 was just one last desperate throw before the Americans could

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Why I Cannot Help Being a Jew

F. C. COHEN

In an article entitled "Why I am Not a Jew", published in the April issue, Ted Myers declared that Jews were never ethnically distinct, and that "marrying out" and social integration had made a substantial number of Jews indistinguishable from the rest of the community. The present writer argues that, although an atheist, he regards himself as a Jew, and contends that "resignations" from Jewry are not recognised by Jew or Gentile.

Ted Myers' article has a misleading title. The burden of his potted history of Israel is that there are no ethnically "pure" Jews and that admixture from non-Jewish sources has always been extensive; hence he cannot regard himself as of legitimate Jewish stock. Fair enough; this applies to all of us Jews (I possess Slavic rather than Semitic features; there were large-scale conversions to 'Jew-ism' in the Balkans and Ukraine before the rise of Christianity) and our diverse sources are freely acknowledged.

Most Jews would not agree with his generally derogatory view of Jewish history, but for my part, as an atheist, I think it a fair summary and agree with his sympathy for Abram's father Terah, and with his views on Jacob (a cheat) and Moses (an Egyptian by birth). So what? Surely no objective person can label our prophets "grievous, appalling bores"? Ignoring their concern with god, can one dismiss in such terms their passion for social justice, their eloquence (I fancy Ted Myers, like myself, can read and understand Hebrew) even in translation, and their totally unique character, unknown in any age before them—or after?

But it is with the more personal aspect of the title that I want to take issue. If Ted Myers is claiming that he personally is no longer a Jew, on the basis of "To be a Jew is just like being a Freemason or a Spurs supporter . . .", then he is dead wrong, and I fancy he knows this as well. To be a Jew is not just like being a member of a club. Sure enough, anyone is free to join, if he or she undertakes to abide by the rules, but, once a member, is committed. So are their offspring. Children are not required to reapply; they are born into the club, and there is no way for them to resign any more than a born Englishman can elect to resign. There is one method of partially successful resignation: publicly embracing Christianity or Islam. This disqualifies a Jew from participating in religious rituals and ceremonies, from being married "according to the laws of Moses and of Israel", and from emigrating to Israel as a Jew. But the would-be apostate

is never lost sight of, and, if it is requested by him or his relatives, can still be buried in the Jewish section of a cemetery, and so, in death if not in life, can still be "gathered unto his people." Marrying out of the faith and the people is not regarded as a form of resignation, though the children of the union, if the mother be Gentile, are no longer Jews. If the mother be Jewish, the children are Jews.

Not only is Jewry most reluctant to lose members, but the "opposition", the Christian world, also refuses to accept the self-diagnosis of "I am no longer a Jew". Even if he becomes a Christian, other Christians, especially from other denominations, still see him as a Jew. Hitler didn't distinguish between Jews and "I am now a Catholic" Jews.

A Member of The Club

Jews who "resign" on the basis of their being freethinkers or humanists convince only others of the same ilk. They do not fool Christians, non-Christian Gentiles or Jews. Ted Myers' resignation is therefore not accepted, and he remains a Jew—a member of our club.

In claiming to have resigned, Ted Myers illustrates two features of short-sighted reasoning: he arrogates to himself a "neutral" status which neither Christian nor Jew will permit him to have, and he ignores the matter of Jewish identity as a historical continuum. Ted Myers is but a temporary statistic. In what manner does his claim affect the Jewish identity of later generations? If Myers opts out, do children and grandchildren also remain neutrals, freethinkers, non-members of any ethnic-religious club? They don't. Within two or three generations they are transformed into Englishmen or Frenchmen (with or without Christian affiliation), and are again born into an ethnic club from which they cannot resign. So far in the history of man, all efforts at non-life membership of some club or other have failed. There is no freethought society in a freethought country anywhere on earth.

Accordingly, Ted Myers has to be a member of some club from which he cannot resign; and both Christians and Jews know very well where he belongs. He also knows. I therefore welcome him with the traditional Hebrew greeting (which I fancy he knows well): *Baruch haba*—Blessed be he who comes.

Three Appeal Court judges have ruled that a 26-year-old man who stabbed a young Jehovah's Witness as she prayed was rightly convicted of killing her, even though she had refused a life-saving blood transfusion. He has been sentenced to life imprisonment, and was refused leave to challenge the court's decision in the House of Lords.

The Morgentaler Case

KENNETH FURNESS

The bizarre case of the Canadian physician Dr Henry Morgentaler has been virtually ignored by the British press. Yet it has implications for the women's rights movement and for civil liberties which extend far beyond Canada. And it demonstrates the lengths to which opponents of sexual freedom—particularly the Roman Catholic lobby—will go in order to harass and silence reformers.

Dr Henry Morgentaler, a former president of the Canadian Humanist Association and a Board member of the International Humanist and Ethical Union, ran for some years a highly regarded and efficient abortion clinic in Montreal, where only a tiny proportion of hospitals provide those facilities for legal abortions which, under Canadian law, they are supposed to provide. Henry Morgentaler pioneered in Canada the outpatient suction technique and had many patients referred to him by Canadian hospitals. He wrote widely in the Canadian medical journals about his work. Eventually he was brought to trial in Quebec on a charge of performing an illegal abortion but was found "not guilty" by a jury. The prosecution nevertheless appealed to the Quebec Court of Appeal against this acquittal, the Court reversed the jury's verdict (an act unprecedented in Canadian law) and, after a further appeal to the Canadian Supreme Court, Henry Morgentaler went to jail for 18 months. Recently on a further charge, Dr Morgentaler was again found "not guilty" by a jury, again the prosecution have said that they will appeal.

The activities of the prosecution, egged on by a strong Catholic lobby, have assumed the appearance of a "holy crusade" and have brought the Canadian jury system into total disrepute. They have brought outraged protests from many public figures in Canada, including the Chief Justice, a former Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, the Ontario Criminal Lawyers Association and numerous other bodies. Abroad, an International Committee for the Defence of Dr Morgentaler has been formed and has been active in campaigning for his immediate release and for the dropping of further outstanding charges.

The Canadian Prime Minister, Pierre Trudeau, has himself said of Dr Morgentaler: "He is a fine humanitarian. I've known him personally over 20 years and he is a humanist in the best sense of the word." "But", Trudeau added, "I wouldn't lift a finger to help him".

Nevertheless, as a result of pressure at home and abroad, the Catholic Justice Minister, Otto Lang,

has now been forced to agree to introduce legislation to prevent superior courts from overturning jury verdicts. But Morgentaler, who suffers from a heart complaint, remains in jail—where he has recently been placed in solitary confinement.

● The Canadian Government will not grant executive clemency to Dr Morgentaler without further pressure. You can help by writing to the Canadian High Commissioner at 1 Grosvenor Square, London W1.

An Anglican View of Dying

(which I abbreviate) why they think a change in the law would be undesirable.

(a) "Such cases are few, and could be fewer still." Even if true, it is wrong to ignore such a minority. But the percentage of the dying (outside hospices) who could benefit from euthanasia is probably at least five per cent. We do not refuse to legislate to help other far smaller minorities; why should we refuse to legislate for this five per cent?

(b) "A change in the law would reduce the incentive to improve care of the dying." But what about the other 95 per cent? Are we going to stop caring for them? Does anyone suggest that vets have stopped curing or caring for animals, because they are also allowed to put them to sleep?

(c) "Legalisation would place some patients under pressure to allow themselves to be put away—a pressure they should be spared." One could reword this to: "Legislation would allow patients an opportunity to choose an easy death—an opportunity they should be given." Euthanasia would not be given unless two doctors agreed the patient had an irremediable and distressing condition, and the patient had asked for euthanasia.

(d) "In practice it would result in euthanasia being given in unjustifiable cases, and for unsound reasons." No evidence is given for this libellous statement about the medical profession. If it did occur, the perpetrators would and should be prosecuted.

(e) "In the rare cases where it can be justified, it is better for medical men to rely on flexibilities in the administration of the law." "Flexibilities in the administration" means the hypocrisy of failing to prosecute when someone has broken the law. This is never a healthy thing to happen. Many doctors are still frightened of being prosecuted for giving euthanasia, whatever these "flexibilities". And if the doctor happens to be unsympathetic, that's just too bad for the patient. Without a change in the law, this situation will remain.

(f) "The confidence of most patients in their

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There are strong indications that trouble is brewing for the Vatican when Cardinal Alfrink, the liberal Catholic Primate of Holland retires. Cardinal Alfrink was 75 last month, and he must tender his resignation to the Pope, who may either accept it or invite the Cardinal to remain in office for a further period. Whatever course of action Pope Paul decides to adopt will stir up a hornets' nest, for Dutch Catholics are divided sharply into radical and conservative camps. Cardinal Alfrink is a forthright champion of liberalism and reform, and his supporters would like him to continue in office or to be replaced by a man of a similar disposition. The conservatives will be glad to see the back of him, and want the new Primate to be a traditionalist who will stop the liberal rot.

Cardinal Alfrink's allies and enemies agree that he has endeavoured to prevent a catastrophic split between the warring factions within the Church, a task requiring great skill and patience. There has been a running battle between the Vatican and the majority of Dutch Catholics for some years. The National Pastoral Council came out in favour of birth control, publicly describing Pope Paul's encyclical *Humane Vitae* as "unconvincing". The Pope's appointment of authoritarian bishops like Simonis of Rotterdam and Gijsen of Roermond caused a storm of protest, and if he decides to foist the reactionary Archbishop of Utrecht, a favoured traditionalist, upon his Dutch flock, the Church in Holland may well be split from top to bottom.

Dutch Catholics have adopted an independent and progressive attitude on many issues, and the liberals are a dominant majority in the Church. There has been much co-operation between them and the Protestant Churches, and they are decidedly tolerant on sexual questions. Many priests have married, and, although they cannot say Mass or hear confessions, they still exercise a strong influence through their pastoral work. One priest who conducted the blessing of a homosexual marriage was not even suspended.

The conservatives are not short of ammunition, and they blame the dramatic decline of the Church and the trend towards secularisation in Holland during the last two decades on the rejection, by their more worldly brethren, of blind faith and obedience. Twenty years ago Holland had more priests per head of the population than any other country in the world. But the rate of ordination is now less than a dozen a year—an amazing decline when it is recalled that during the 1950s over 400 priests were being ordained every year.

No doubt Pope Paul would like to use the appointment of a new Primate of Holland as a weapon with which to curb liberal elements. But whatever we may think about that gentleman's claim to infallibility, he is certainly a shrewd operator who

realises that such a move could lead to the complete disintegration of the Dutch Church.

Holland, the land of flowers, is no longer a bed of roses for the Catholic hierarchy.

SANCTIMONIOUS SELL-OUT

While the rest of us are having to face up to the country's financial problems by a cut in our standards of living, made up of a limit on incomes and cuts in public expenditure, the Churches are claiming as a victory the concessions now firmly promised by the Government in the application of the Community Land Bill to church property. Why is it that whatever pressing priorities beset a government, they always find it possible to slip a bit of public money to the Churches? Recall that already in its nine-month life the present Government has found the necessary parliamentary time and funds to promote an Education Act, the main provision of which was to provide an extra five per cent towards the capital cost of church schools.

Similarly, the Government has again capitulated to pressure from the Churches and made special provisions highly advantageous to their financial dealings. On 15 July Mr John Silkin, the Minister for Planning and Local Government, announced to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Bill that it would be amended to grant the Churches the concessions they had so vigorously sought. They would be allowed to develop land without local authority intervention. They would be exempt from the Development Land Tax. (Others will have to pay between 80 and 100 per cent.) For at least the next ten years the Churches will receive the prevailing use value of land acquired by local authorities.

Mr Silkin said that any provisions "must be within the principles of the schemes, avoid creating specially favoured categories of land, and lead towards our objectives of land at current-use value". Yet, what on earth are his provisions for the Churches if not the creation of a specially favoured category of land, and a gross breach of the basic principle of the Bill that, in his own words, "land values created by the community should be enjoyed by the community"?

Similar provisions will also apply to charities. Charities, Mr Silkin said, were a special case, in that many provided services which would otherwise have to be provided by central or local government. (And many do not, but charity law reform is

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another question.) That the Churches should again be linked with charities is regrettable, since the Churches are clearly not in this category. Whatever peripheral social services they provide, their prime purpose is the propagation of a superannuated superstition. When will governments ever learn?

ANTI-ABORTIONIST BOOK AN "EXERCISE IN SENSATIONALISM"

The credibility of Michael Litchfield and Susan Kentish, who wrote the scurrilous and discredited book *Babies for Burning*, has been considerably shaken in recent weeks. When the authors appeared before the Commons Select Committee on the Abortion (Amendment) Bill they were forced to admit that several of the famous tape-recordings—on which Michael Litchfield has claimed "almost all the book stands or falls"—were not available. The missing recordings are alleged to substantiate some of the book's most crucial passages.

David Steel, the Liberal MP who played a major role in the campaign which resulted in the 1967 Abortion Act, strongly criticised the book and its authors when he addressed a meeting of the Association of Liberal Lawyers in London. He described Michael Litchfield as "a man who was careless about the truth".

Mr Steel complained that at the meeting of the Select Committee (of which he is a member) he was unable to question Litchfield about his claim to have been a Pulitzer Prize winner for journalism, and a former student of Boston University. He was prevented from doing so by Mr Litchfield's plea that he did not wish to answer such questions because of a libel action that was going on. But Mr Steel argued that Parliament need not consider any matter *sub judice* unless it was before the courts or a date had been fixed for its hearing. He added: "It is wholly unacceptable that Parliament should be fettered by the facile cry of *sub judice* when evidence is available from an individual who claims that he is himself a witness of relevant and material events. Writs should never deter Parliament from getting at the truth."

Three days after David Steel had delivered his broadside against Litchfield and Kentish, it was announced that the General Medical Council had rejected their allegations of professional misconduct against two doctors who had worked at a Brook

Advisory Centre. They had claimed that the doctors had sought professional advantage and financial gain from their association with the Centre, which advertised its services.

A chapter in *Babies for Burning* describes how Litchfield and Susan Kentish visited the Brook Advisory Centre in Tottenham Court Road, London. She posed as a single girl who suspected that she had become pregnant by her lover (Litchfield) who was a married man.

In March 1974, after the publication of the *News of the World* articles which were later to become the book *Babies for Burning*, the Board of Brook Advisory Centres passed a resolution "to put on record our confidence in the good faith of the nurse who carried out the pregnancy test, and of the social worker and two doctors who saw the couple. On the facts and the clinical situation presented to them, the action they took appeared to be in the best interests of their patients. We can only deplore the waste of professional time and public funds and the erosion of mutual trust between patient and doctor that this exercise in sensationalism has involved."

After the GMC decision became known, Caroline Woodroff, chairman of Brook Advisory Centres, told *The Freethinker*: "We were not worried by these allegations but naturally we are angry at having to waste so much time on this case. In view of the immense amount of energy and care with which organisations in this field gave evidence to the Lane Committee, and subsequently commented at length on the Lane Report to the Department of Health, as requested, the time now being wasted on James White's Bill by the Select Committee, when the main platform for the attack on the 1967 Act has gone up in smoke, is outrageous.

"It is a pity that the GMC decision was not made available when the Bill was given its second reading in February. *Babies for Burning* undoubtedly influenced MPs to vote in favour."

It is now four months since *The Freethinker* editor and publishers were threatened with legal action following the publication of an unfavourable review of the book. Although the demand we received for an apology and retraction has not been met, no writ has been issued.

Community Land Bill

they choose to retain—premises on which, incidentally, they pay no rates.

Why should the Churches expect to evade the need to live within their income like the rest of us? Why should the Churches not be subject to the new Community Land Law, designed for the good of society at large? And, if land speculation is immoral, why should the Churches wish to indulge in this immoral practice? Above all, why should Parliament condone them in it?

BOOKS

SCHOOL WORSHIP: AN OBITUARY, by John M. Hull.
SCM Press, £2.

The title of this book suggests that school worship is already dead. And so, to all intents and purposes, it is, according to the author, who is Lecturer in Education at Birmingham University, and a Christian believer. There remains, however, an Act on the Statute Book which makes it obligatory for schools to organise a corporate daily act of worship. The argument of the book, taken through a reasoned analysis of the situation, is that this act of worship should be abolished, in law as well as practice.

He begins by tracing the different stages through which school worship has passed since the nineteenth century. At first merely a question of rote learning—creeds, prayers, commandments—it went through a sea-change in the 1920s, becoming more “soulful”, missionary-inspired, moralistic, eager to teach not just dead phrases but an all-embracing nurture. This effort to spread the influence of religion culminated in the 1944 Education Act, which was regarded by the faithful as a great victory. For the first time worship and religious instruction became actually obligatory.

It was no longer possible for some local authorities to cast a blind eye, as they had on occasion done before, when their schools’ pietistic observance was less than regular. Now it was the duty of the schools to create Christians, to try even to effect a unity with the Church. It would not be too much to say, says the author, referring to *The Oxford Book of School Worship*, “that this book proceeds on the view that the Act turned the state schools into church schools.” The escape clauses were themselves the most eloquent testimony to the intention of the state to clove for the compulsory nurture of all children in Christianity. No provision was ever made for children who were withdrawn.

During the 1960s, a further fundamental change in attitude to the whole subject became apparent, this change being due to the fact that people were no longer confident of the value of many of the processes children had been put through. Questions began to be asked about the nature of worship, and the nature of the child. The whole educational process has now come under scrutiny, and not before time.

Dr. Hull’s analysis of the nature of worship and of education is well-argued and penetrating. Free-thinkers are familiar with some of the arguments; for example, that worship assumes the existence of a God who has certain powers over the worshipper and demands full and unquestioning loyalty. In the context of a religion freely chosen, all this may be logical, but unfortunately the schools have not until recently related religion to educational principles.

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Education, in its broad and general sense, concerns the passing on of the culture of a society, and, as such, includes training, instruction, indoctrination, nurture, schooling, and education in the specific sense. Training and instruction are obviously necessary at certain stages. Indoctrination is a method of instruction using non-rational means, and is only justified when the ideas to be instilled are considered more important than the human subject. Hull claims that this is not compatible with Christianity, which gives value to man.

As opposed to all these processes, the true principle of education is concerned not with the instilling of habits or dogma but with the questioning of the validity of authorities and with the unfolding of personality. It is concerned with controversy itself, with differences, with finding out, with the principles behind beliefs. Its only real interest is further enquiry. Indoctrination has an unethical principle built into it; education, in the specific sense, has an ethical principle built into it, regardless of content.

From this analysis it is obvious that education and worship cannot take place concurrently. There is an unresolved tension between the two. His view is, if I represent it fairly, that, although worship and indoctrination may have been part of a general educational process in the Middle Ages, in the light of a developing understanding of the specific educational process they are no longer to be considered as educational at all.

RE has to a large extent become secularised. This strangely enough, is partly due to the 1944 Act itself, which freed the subject from inspection by the Churches. The National Union of Teachers had strongly opposed the presence in the school of examining clergy, and in 1944 the subject was put under the control of HM Inspectors. This did not worry the Churches unduly, since the Fifth Schedule of the Act gave them statutory representation on the Boards concerned with drawing up the syllabuses, and this brought them added prestige and influence over what was taught. The tendency today, however, is for teachers in every subject to resent the outside control of syllabuses. They write their own, whenever possible. Religion cannot be immune from a new approach which places a high value on individual research and enquiry.

A move among teachers of RE towards the study of world religions has meant that religion, instead of being the sponsor, has become the object of study. Another factor has of course been the presence in

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our schools of large numbers of adherents of other religions. Changes would probably have taken place anyway, but the coming of so many people from overseas not owning obedience to the Christian religion has added urgency to the problem. The old escape clauses are useless. Large numbers have to be provided for. They cannot just be ignored.

Many secularist humanists question the validity of RE as a school subject at all, particularly as it is in the hands of Christian teachers, who might find it difficult to take the objective view that Dr Hull calls for. But his point is that, even with these disadvantages, the changes that have taken place in classroom teaching have made the continuance of collective worship totally untenable. The old unity has been broken. Very few schools can now claim to be Christian communities, and real education and to worship are seen to have incompatible aims. He refutes claims such as the one in the Durham Report that worship is required for educational reasons and demands to know why it has been so immune to change.

The tenacity of the act of worship, he suggests, has nothing to do with religion, but a great deal to do with the way schools are organised. The assembly affords a unique opportunity for the school hierarchy, and in particular the head teacher, to demonstrate authority. The whole show is really a disciplinary exercise.

Theology is used to bolster up the authority of the head. "One man stands while 600 heads are bowed," as Dr Hull tersely observes. There is no questioning, no discussion. In short, school worship not only has nothing to do with education; in the opinion of this author it has nothing to do with religion either. Its aim is not to encourage people to think but to stop them thinking: "Compulsory school worship is the most objectionable example of compulsion which the school offers to pupils." It should be abandoned.

This biting attack on school worship is to be welcomed, coming as it does from a believing Christian. I find his treatment of the church school issue, however, rather less satisfactory. He does not advocate the closure of these schools, as in themselves divisive, nor does he consider the possible effects of comprehensive education on the whole set-up. He sees a place for religious worship in denominational schools—but worship on a voluntary basis in these schools hardly seems likely.

Interestingly, the author points out that the abolition of compulsory worship in the state schools

would not necessarily mean the end of school assemblies as such. If the religious element were removed, these occasions could be used for cultural, social and general educational activities of many kinds. This is likely to be reassuring for many teachers who feel that there is value in having all the school together sometimes.

As for the book's main argument, insofar as the demand for the abolition of worship is based on intrinsic educational principles, it is based on excellent and unassailable grounds. Part of the argument, however, is drawn from an improvement in RE classroom teaching, which has made worship seem, by contrast, a pitiable anachronism. Here I think the argument is less firmly based, partly because I suspect that the author rather exaggerates the improvement that has taken place over all, but also because the whole basis of instruction in religion in a secular community is itself open to question.

It is certain, however, that compulsory worship is the most objectionable aspect of the whole system—exploiting, as it does, the powerlessness of the child. It is probable that if the worship were abolished, the subject of RE would tend to lose its prestige, and in time would simply become part of the history syllabus, where it belongs. I hope this forthright and stimulating book will be widely read.

MERLE TOLFREE

THE TAMARISK TREE: My Quest for Liberty and Love, by Dora Russell. Elek/Pemberton, £5.95.

On a hot day in August last year my wife and I knocked gently on the back door of Carn Voel, hoping simply to pay a small tribute to one of our outstanding English educators. Within minutes, we were swept up in a flood of entrancing reminiscence by Dora Russell, who, at eighty, still has the warm magnanimity, the sensitive intelligence and the creative energy that made her one of those few women who helped to shape the first half of the twentieth century.

This book, the first part of her autobiography, covers the period from her childhood in Thornton Heath in the last decade of the nineteenth century to the events leading up to the Second World War. Few men, and, in that period, certainly fewer women, can have met, conversed with, worked with, fought with and formed lifelong friendships with so many of the politicians, poets, artists, scholars and revolutionaries who were the midwives of a new era in Russia, China, America and Europe.

Her first love has always been the liberation—or, rather, since that word has attracted something of a waspish connotation—the emancipation of women and sexual reform, though this was never a narrow feminist preoccupation but part of her wider vision of how a socialist society would transform the relationships between men and women. Today's young

people, for whom sexual instruction in school has become at least possible, might marvel that the police in 1923 should seize for destruction a pamphlet setting out in simple terms techniques of contraception. They would find even more incomprehensible the fact that the matter that really exercised the magistrates was the question and answer given in the pamphlet, "Should a woman enjoy sexual intercourse? Yes, she should."

Dora Russell's second, and almost equally powerful, love was her devotion to children and education. A. S. Neill sometimes talked to me about his great admiration for Dora: "She is the only person who seems to know what education is really about" he once said to me. Certainly the quality of her thinking about children is shown in the brief chapter devoted to the school which she and Bertrand Russell ran jointly for five years and which she ran alone for a further eleven years. But her thinking in education is, again, an integral part of her understanding of the nature of a truly socialist society.

At this time the well-known progressive schools—Summerhill, Dartington, Monkton Wyld—were in their infancy, and having to endure all the absurd allegations of indecency and depravity that invariably accompany any venture into reason. Beacon Hill School became the target for similar attacks—some of them, sadly, and towards the end of Dora's life with Russell, coming with the connivance of Russell himself.

Woven into the fabric of the book is her deep love and admiration for Bertrand Russell; but as one reads, one finds confirmed—the more dramatically and poignantly because of the writer's loving concern—the impression, already formed from his own writings, that Bertrand Russell was the malformed, handicapped product of an elitist culture, distorted by an aristocratic and academic tradition almost totally divorced from the preoccupations of ordinary people. He is not, of course, the only victim of a way of life that, by the forms of its exploitation of people, creates a schizophrenic split between reason and love, between work and leisure, and between man and woman. The hospitals and prisons of capitalist society are full of human wrecks, sad witnesses to this crippling divisiveness.

The pursuit of excellence at whatever cost is the disease of the intelligentsia. Ambition, itself generated out of a sense of worthlessness and a life divorced from democratic interaction, drives them to be our leaders in politics, in education and in social life, and to perpetuate therein something of their own unloved frenzy.

Dora Russell, gifted as she was with so many talents, might have slipped into one or other area of pitiful myopia, but she retained a deep commitment to many causes rooted in the needs of the common people. In searching for the source of this wisdom, a wisdom that embodies the Greek ideal of

"moderation in all", one finds it, I believe, in the very opening chapter, "The Time of the Tamarisk Tree", where she describes her childhood. Here she depicts what can only be called an almost ideal childhood—parents who, devoted to each other and to their children, enthusiastically encouraged their children's pursuits, and a wide network of equally supportive and loving relations, set in an atmosphere of joyous freedom.

MICHAEL DUANE

PAMPHLET

CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIALISM, by Horace Jarvis.
Published privately, 30p.

Although Horace Jarvis does not use the imagery, every page of his *Christianity and Socialism* is redolent of the cut and thrust of the open-air platform. He knows every ruse of the Christian apologist, who claims to worship every dot and comma of the Good Book (notwithstanding that the original Hebrew Scriptures did not possess even one dot or comma), yet twists and perverts its meanings to suit his particular variety of social, ethical, anti-social, or unethical standpoint.

There is nothing abstruse in this work; the author does not seek the esoteric meanings that may, with tortuous contrivance, be winked out from the sorry mess of worthless platitudes expounded by the hero of the four gospels. He takes him at his word. If Jesus said "Blessed are ye who hunger now", he meant the hungry, not those who have worked up a healthy appetite and have a plate of roast beef and Yorkshire before them, as most Christians, many socialists, and some humanists would have Mr Jarvis accept. For, as he quotes Ingersoll, "No matter how unreasonable the Bible may appear to you, you must believe it. No matter how impossible the miracles may seem, you must believe. No matter how cruel the laws, you must approve them all. We read the Bible under the scowl of God. We read it with the glare of Hell".

The author displays the depth of his interest and research into the subject by his numerous quotations from philosophers, poets, politicians, economists, and anthropologists. He writes in a bold style, and he knows his Bible—a rarity in these days of trifling with ideas in search of a new, more modern angle. The only possible angle is as old as the Old Testament—from the day when Jehovah instituted slavery, ordering a ring through an awl punch at the gatepost to enslave a "bondsmen" forever. It was continued by his Blessed Son's promising everlasting bliss to those prepared to suffer the indignity of poverty in this life; was ably supported by his Apostles Peter and Paul; and is perpetuated to this day by Christian priestcraft.

Mr Jarvis maintains that man can alter his con-

ditions so as to make life here pleasurable for all, and he demonstrates the logical inconsistency of the Christian Socialist's belief in a tyrannical almighty power controlling man's destiny here and in the hereafter, whilst hoping and working for a socialist society to come. Quoting Shelley, he says that if "Christianity was intended to reform the world, had an all-wise Being planned it, nothing is more impossible than that it should have failed."

If there is anyone who, after reading this work, remains a Christian Socialist, he must be purblind to logic and argument. A Christian he may remain, his soul being more important than his brains; but I hope that the reading of *Christianity and Socialism* will clear many a well-meaning head. We need clear thinking to bring about this better world that men like Horace Jarvis visualise. For, as Professor Clifford wrote to his friends, with lingering hopes of a Power Beyond, ". . . after all, such a helper of men, outside of humanity, the truth will not allow us to see. The dim and shadowy outlines of the superhuman deity fade slowly away from before us; and, as the mist of his presence floats aside, we perceive with greater and greater clearness the shape of a yet grander and nobler figure—of Him who made all Gods and shall unmake them. From the dim dawn of history, the face of our father Man looks out upon us with the fire of eternal youth in his eyes, and says, 'Before Jehovah was, I am'."

EVA EBURY

● "Christianity and Socialism" is obtainable from G. W. Foote & Company, 698 Holloway Road, London, N19 3NL, price 30p plus 8p postage.

THEATRE

CLARENCE DARROW. Piccadilly Theatre, London, until 20 September.

Lawyers are not renowned for their freethought, their generosity or their defence of Labour. Clarence Darrow is remembered for all these qualities. Henry Fonda, familiar to more than one generation of cinemagoers, is now enacting the life of this outstanding man in a one-man show at the Piccadilly Theatre. The show has been artfully composed from Irving Stone's biography *Clarence Darrow for the Defence*, and re-enacts some of the more crucial events in his career, in the form of an old man reminiscing about his life.

Darrow first gained fame by defending Eugene Debs who had been prosecuted for his part in the Pullman strike (1894). As a result of this he became famous as a rare lawyer prepared to defend organised labour. This continued until his career changed course after he was reviled for persuading the defendants to plead guilty in the McNamara

case; here he demonstrated his integrity and respect for the truth. He also showed remarkable courage and walked out publicly to face an angry crowd. Henry Fonda brings a quiet intensity to his description of this moment ("I walked out as I came in") which provides the climax to the first Act.

Henry Fonda's performance is low-key, but contains sufficient variety of pace and tone to hold our interest through what could have become a rather dry evening. It holds a conviction that stamps the performance as humane and deeply felt. Clarence Darrow is also seen as a man of warmth and good humour. Wit punctuates his reflections—"The only trouble with history is that it repeats itself"—together with some anecdotes to be treasured. For example, believing that freethinkers should examine the grounds of their disbelief, he visited Jerusalem, where he was, in company with other tourists, rowed across a lake. Also in common with many tourists he was asked an exorbitant price; when he objected he was told that this was the water which Jesus had walked over—"I'm not surprised", he expostulated, "at that price".

His part in the famous Monkey Trial (1925) will be familiar to many *Freethinker* readers. This trial saw a Tennessee schoolteacher prosecuted for teaching evolution. The depiction of his scathing, penetrating examination of the fundamentalist, tub-thumping William Jennings Bryan is a pleasure to watch.

Clarence Darrow was well ahead of time in his rational approach to criminology and his passionate hatred of capital punishment. He defended over a hundred accused murderers (the most famous of them being Leopold and Loeb who killed "for kicks") and none of them received the death sentence.

This is a remarkable portrait of a remarkable man. It makes demands of concentration on the audience, but they are worthwhile demands. And it is a tribute to Henry Fonda's performance that he could end with a quotation from Omar Khayyâm on the value of love with not a trace of cynicism or sentimentality.

JIM HERRICK

An Anglican View of Dying

doctors would be gravely weakened." On the contrary, their confidence might be strengthened if they knew their doctor could give euthanasia at their request. But it is true that some people are worried about going into hospital now, because they know some doctors do give euthanasia—secretly, because it is illegal. While it stays secret, and is done entirely at the doctor's discretion, people's worries are justified. The solution is to legalise it, under strict conditions known to all.

Exorcism is the Witchcraft of the Church, says Author

In her opening address to the public meeting held by the National Secular Society on 3 July at Caxton Hall, London, under the title "Why Exorcism Bedevils the Bishops", Barbara Smoker, the NSS president, sketched in the background to the meeting. It had been called, she said, in an attempt to balance the general debate on the topical issue of exorcism and on the particular debate on it that should have been taking place that week at the General Synod of the Church of England.

Exorcism had been made a topical issue by the horrific Taylor murder last October, following which the Archbishop of Canterbury and other C of E prelates, though embarrassed by the adverse publicity, had leapt to the defence of exorcism while attempting to regulate it. This reaction had been strongly criticised by the 65 theologians and other leading churchmen (who, significantly, included only one diocesan bishop—the Bishop of St Albans), in an open letter to the General Synod, pointing out that to regulate exorcism would be to increase its official status in the Church and that "it is very dangerous to give encouragement to the belief that there are evil occult powers which may possess men and deprive them of their wits and their normal responsibility".

"However", declared Miss Smoker, "this heretical plea against demonology in the Church could not possibly be permitted to succeed, since without demons there can be no God, and without God there can be no bishops. But, with the theologians' letter before the General Synod, how could dissension be avoided? In the event, an authoritative statement defending belief in demons and the practice of exorcism, made by the Archbishop of Canterbury in opening the General Synod, successfully suppressed any further discussion of the matter.

"Absolute Good cannot survive without absolute Evil, to account for the obvious fact that 'creation' is far from perfect. When the early Church adopted and adapted Plato's Absolutes and personified the Platonic Good, as God almighty, they had to personify Evil, as the Devil—almost almighty. These personifications derived from popular deities—the one true God and his ministering angels evolving from the tribal gods, the devil and his angels from the gods of hostile nomadic tribes. But devils always had a strong attraction for the mass of the people, to whom they symbolised liberty, in opposition to the legal authority symbolised by the tribal deity—hence the repeated biblical diatribes against the worship of 'false gods'.

"Religion explains human good and human evil

in terms of divine grace and demonic possession respectively. To explain them simply as relative human attributes, comparable perhaps with a sense of humour—all a matter of degree and viewpoint—is rationalism, materialism and secularism."

After reading out extracts from the Primate's statement to the General Synod, in which he specified five procedural conditions for the conduct of exorcism, Barbara Smoker concluded that the gospel Jesus would certainly have flouted them! She added: "In particular, the directive that exorcism should be carried out with the minimum of publicity hardly accords with the sensational reports in the best-selling synoptic gospels of the wholesale 'casting out of devils' by the eponymous founder of Christianity."

Responsibility of the Jesus Movement

Jim Herrick, a member of the NSS Executive Committee and a frequent contributor to *The Free-thinker*, dealt with the psychological factors that lead people to believe that they are possessed by demons. He also asked why the mass media are giving such wide coverage to occultism at the present time, and linked the return of exorcism with the rise of the "Jesus movement". Some religious fanatics could trigger off excessive emotionalism, and there was great emphasis on experience of the "holy spirit", particularly amongst those of them who belonged to the Pentecostal wing of the movement.

Mr Herrick continued: "The inherent dangers of this movement and the various fundamentalist groups which have proliferated is being recognised increasingly. Theologians claimed that Pentecostal beliefs in the supernatural were exaggerated. In my opinion, all belief in the supernatural is exaggerated. The orthodox Churches have warned of the dangers of exorcism ceremonies being conducted by unqualified people. This is rather hypocritical in view of the Churches' encouragement of belief in a structure which endorses the supernatural."

The Devil Reinstated

Eric Maple, the author and broadcaster, said that human psychology has changed very little over the centuries, and the wonder is not that we are now seeing a return to occultism after a gap of 200 years but that it should ever have gone away in the first place. It is the interval of comparative rationality, from the mid-eighteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, after thousands of years of credulity, that is the surprising phenomenon.

LETTERS

ZIONIST VIOLENCE

I was amused to read that the Herut General Secretary, Mr George Evnine, firmly dissociates himself and his movement from attempts to "encourage violence at any pro-Arab meetings" as reported in *The Freethinker*, May 1975.

I would like to state that to the best of my knowledge the report in the May issue of *The Freethinker* is accurate, and I must frankly admit that I do not believe Mr George Evnine's categorical denial. I stand firmly by my assertions on this matter published in *Peace News*, 7 March 1975, under the title "Zionist Stormtroops in Britain"—which to my knowledge has not been challenged nor denied by Mr Evnine, or any other Herut official. Had such a denial been forthcoming, I would have similarly challenged the basis for it, since I have every reason to believe, and first-hand evidence to support the belief, that such denials are not truthful.

URI DAVIS

RELIGIOUS HUMANISM

Christopher Morey wrote at length ("Magnum Mysterium: the Case of Religious Humanism", *The Freethinker*, June) about the differences between religious humanism and secular humanism. There is considerable discussion on this subject at the present time, and I would like to express my viewpoint.

The use and meaning of words in the field of religion change continuously. Look up the word "humanist" in three different dictionaries and you will get three totally different answers. It is therefore essential to define our words before embarking on a verbal duel on who is the better humanist.

To me, the word humanist means a person who rejects creation and bases his beliefs on the theory of evolution, i.e. evolution by means of a process of chance. I understand the word "religious" to be an adjective denoting a certain attitude of mind. I myself contrast the religious humanist with the political humanist. Both can be militant in their particular ways, but they see the ultimate aim of humanism differently. A religious humanist tries to establish a humanist religion; a political humanist has no time for religion.

All this brings me back to my dictionary, because we must now establish what we mean by the word "religion". To many people, the word religion is synonymous with the word Christianity; to others, synonymous with the belief in god(s). My definition of religion is wider, and includes atheistic religions such as Buddhism, Confucianism and Humanism. As far as I am concerned, the word religion is derived from the latin word *religare*, meaning "to bind together". It is that which binds a group of people together and gives them a basis on which to build a philosophy of life; a basic set of beliefs which leads to sets of rules for behaviour, which leads to ceremonies for celebrating such important events as the start of spring and winter solstice, and which results in ceremonies and customs for such occasions as weddings and funerals.

Religious humanism has hardly begun. We are still busily trying to clear away the rubble of our previous religions. Yet, as in so many other fields, the Americans have made a start. The most left-wing of all Christian Churches, the American Unitarian Church, has gone almost completely over to humanism. Their services are still very exploratory, but they have had the courage to follow their convictions. The English

Unitarian churches, on the other hand, are far less outspoken. True, they welcome humanists with open arms, but they cannot completely forget their past. Tradition and history probably mean more in England than in America. Few English Unitarian services are completely humanistic; many still try to accommodate relics of the Christian past. And there is a great shortage of humanistic religious ceremony and ritual.

PHILIP BUTTINGER

IT DEPENDS ON WHAT YOU MEAN

I believe there are good grounds for thinking that Christopher Morey is wrong in declaring that "there is an intellectual chasm separating religionists and humanists". It clearly depends upon what one means by religion and humanism.

Quite why humanists have ignored Durkheim and Cassirer and others who have changed the face of this subject in our time I don't know. What I do know is that it is high time we got down to the books and did some real work. Shallow empiricism is as lethal to organised humanism as it is to the rest of the life of this country.

The conclusion that emerges is that religion is a combination of beliefs and rituals concerned with the sacred. The sacred is what is held to be set apart, different to the profane, venerated. This definition fits all religions and it does not mention the supernatural or the revealed personal deity.

Christianity, by this reading, is just one transient religious form now manifestly on the way out and one which has derived much of its considerable strength from qualities it inherited from elsewhere, from Judaism, from pagan society and from the Greco-Roman tradition. Professor G. A. Wells has, I think, demonstrated this quite conclusively.

One can probably assert, without fear of contradiction, that the most militant freethinker reading this would admit (more easily in the privacy of his own company) that there are for him certain beliefs, forms, people and objects that he holds to be sacred, i.e. personally inalienable. And this follows from the fact that the human being is a religious animal in the sense defined above.

The trouble is that civilisation, a mere 10,000 years old, gave rise to monotheism, revelation and the idea of incarnation. But that monotheism was but the supernatural projection of earthly empires and it is only now when empires are drawing in that we have, at last, the conditions that make it possible for us to escape from millenia of religious distortion.

We are now able to rediscover the proper nature of religion, a phenomenon as old as man himself and a causal factor in his evolution. It is in that sense that religion and humanism will eventually turn out to be the same thing.

PETER CADOGAN

Freethinker Fund

We have received donations from the readers listed below, and offer our thanks. W. A. Alexander, 30p; W. Armstrong, £2.80; Anonymous, £1; Anonymous, £1; J. H. Charles, £3; W. R. Gray, £2.20; D. Harper, £5; E. J. Hughes, £1.20; E. Lewis, 30p; W. G. Lock, 25p; J. H. Morten, 60p; Miss W. C. Peters, £1; K. C. Rudd, 60p; N. J. Severs, 30p; P. Somers, £2.60; J. Sykes, 60p. Total: £23.75.

EVENTS

Brentwood Humanist Society. Old House Arts Centre, Main Road, Brentwood. Thursday 14 August, 8 p.m. Review of BHA Annual General Meeting.

Capital Radio London (194m). Sunday, 17 August, 9 p.m. to 10 p.m. Phone-In Programme on Secular Humanism. Barbara Smoker.

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.)

Rationalist Press Association. Annual Conference, Churchill College, Cambridge, Friday 12 September until Sunday 14 September. Antony Flew, Christopher Evans, John Taylor, Trevor Hall, David Berglas: "Science and the Paranormal". Detailed programme from the RPA, 88 Islington High Street, London N1, telephone: 01-226 7251.

The Great War

arrive in large enough numbers to put an end to the slaughter. With the eastern front now still, and the Austrians on the point of collapse, the time had come for one last push.

Loss of life on both sides reached levels not known since the terrible battles of 1916 as the Germans smashed their way into France. And then the momentum gave out; the allied forces rallied, and drove the Germans back. By September 1918 the German military situation was appalling; Ludendorff advised the German government that he could not protect the fatherland from invasion—the war would have to stop.

Despite the clearly adverse military situation, the myth was born of the "stab in the back," which attributed Germany's defeat not to her generals but to Jew-dominated politicians; and the seed was sown for the rise of Hitler, almost as soon as the guns had stopped firing at 11 a.m. on November 11, 1918. The great war was over. But a mere 21 years later, with the question of Germany still unresolved, it was to break out all over again.

THE FREETHINKER

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Witchcraft of the Church

Mr Maple said: "Until 15 years ago, anyone going to a clergyman with a request for the exorcism of a demon was likely to be diplomatically sent away or referred to a doctor. But now many of the parishioners have been caught up in the wave of religious emotion, and those clergymen trying to handle the situation are sometimes placed in an embarrassing situation. They do not wish to repudiate official Christian teaching on exorcism, but in my opinion, as private individuals, they do not agree with it.

"In the early 1960s there was a discussion in the Church of England as to whether the Devil should be excluded from the catechism, so low had he fallen in status among the clergy. It was decided to postpone a decision, and the Devil was put on probation for ten years. Now, with official sanction he is fully at liberty.

"But the Devil is an embarrassing liability, and I am quite sure that many clergymen would like to see him swept under the carpet again. Like some of those they condemn for dabbling in the supernatural, they have come unstuck. Exorcism, whether they like it or not, is the witchcraft of the Church."

G. N. Deodhekar was in the chair.

National Secular Society

Sunday, 7 September (amended date)

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