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## CAPITAL PUNISHMENT: CHRISTIANS DIVIDED ON "THE SANCTITY OF LIFE"

Last month the House of Commons divided along non-party lines when members voted on the motion "That this House demands capital punishment for terrorist offences causing death." Although some MPs, who had taken an abolitionist stand previously, switched their allegiance, a substantial majority of Labour, Conservative and Liberal MPs defied the public clamour which had been whipped up by Right-wing elements inside and outside Parliament. The most consistent and fervent supporters of capital punishment have been the "sanctity of life" opponents of the 1967 Abortion Act, so it was no surprise that John Biggs-Davison, Andrew Bowden and Jill Knight voted in favour of the motion. So did two clergymen; the Reverend Robert Bradford and the Reverend Ian Paisley, both Ulster Unionists.

The outrages perpetrated by bombers and assassins, culminating in the murder of Ross McWhirter, have aroused considerable indignation and encouraged the pro-hanging lobby to show their hand. One of their loudest claims was that the majority of the public favour capital punishment—and not only for "terrorist offences causing death." Fortunately such questions are not resolved by plebiscite, otherwise we should still have public executions for sheep-stealing.

No doubt there were many considerations, including the certainty of reprisals, that influenced some MPs—particularly Conservatives—to vote against the motion. Those who had not already made up their minds were unlikely to be influenced to any great extent by the hangers' rantings.

One of the clearest expositions of the abolitionist case was made in a statement by the Archbishop of Canterbury and eleven other Church leaders. *Freethinker* readers know our opinion of Dr Coggan's fatuous "call to the nation" last October; now we assert without reservation that the first part of the statement opposing capital punishment by the Archbishop and his colleagues deserved the support of Humanists and humanitarians.

They pointed out that for reasons that owe nothing to sentimentality, resorting to capital punishment would be a tragic mistake. It would be a victory for the terrorists who had forced Britain to return to this relic of a bygone age. They added: "There is not the slightest guarantee that by killing the killers the level of social violence would be decreased. The opposite is at least as likely."

It is a pity that the Church leaders lessened the impact of their case by adding a "commercial" for Christianity. As Barbara Smoker, president of the National Secular Society, commented: "We associate ourselves with the utilitarian and humanistic reasons for opposition to the death penalty given in the first part of the Church leaders' statement, but not with the theological arguments in the second.

"These constitute a superfluous addendum to the rational case, as well as betraying a complete *volte-face* of theology, not only from early centuries when the Church itself executed 'heretics' and 'witches', but even from a few decades ago when the Bench of Bishops resolutely opposed every attempt to abolish capital punishment."

### Religious Motivation

But whilst welcoming the Churchmen's forthright denunciation of acts of violence—including judicial killing—it should not be forgotten that religion, including Christianity, has motivated terrorist activities from Belfast to Beirut.

The recent series of bombings and shootings have been abhorred and rightly condemned by people across the whole political spectrum. Professor Hamilton Fairlie's death, following a bomb explosion near his home in London, was an irreparable loss to British medicine. Ross McWhirter was an able and gifted man who devoted much energy to the promotion of Right-wing causes, as he was perfectly entitled to do, and his murder was a despicable crime.

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# Hector Hawton Dies at 74

The death of Hector Hawton has deprived the Humanist movement in Britain of one of its most dedicated and versatile champions. Mr Hawton, who was 74, died in University College Hospital, London, where he underwent a major operation several weeks ago. He appeared to be recovering, but complications developed and the end came on 14 December.

Hector Hawton came from a non-conformist Devon family. His first serious reading was the bible, Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* and Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. He recalled: "Earnest-minded young people formed discussion groups and set about the task of improving their minds. No doubt some of our ideas were half-baked, but at least ideas were valued. We saved up for cheap editions of the classics and worked our way through them . . . By the age of 16 I was moved almost to tears by Keats and Shelly . . . I revelled in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, and had read *The Riddle of the Universe* twice. My friends in the chapel thought it was time for me to be converted. They were right, but things turned out unexpectedly."

He was profoundly influenced by a Roman Catholic friend, and many years later wrote of his first visit to a Catholic service: "My first glimpse of the pomp and ceremony, the candles, the incense, went to my impressionable young head. After the plain walls, and the still plainer faces of the choir ladies ranged in front of a mammoth organ, the painted images and the flower-decked altar had a beauty that was breathtaking." He was received into the Church, and had later to endure what he described as "the painful symptoms of withdrawal."

## The Helmsman

Hector Hawton became a convinced rationalist, and remained one until the end of his life. He was secretary of South Place Ethical Society (1948-54), managing director of the Rationalist Press Association from 1954 until his retirement in 1971, director of the International Humanist and Ethical Union, and Appointed Lecturer at South Place Ethical Society.

A prolific and incisive writer, Hector Hawton wrote scores of books and pamphlets including *Men Without Gods*, *The Flight From Reality*, *The Thinker's Handbook*, *The Feast of Unreason*, *Philosophy for Pleasure* and *The Humanist Revolution*. He was editor of *Question* (formerly *The Rationalist Annual*), writer of the "Personally Speaking" column in *New Humanist*, and an occasional contributor to *The Freethinker*.

Hector Hawton was always ready to encourage and assist other writers, and he was largely responsible for introducing the works of G. A. Wells to a wider public. Professor Wells told *The Freethinker*:

"H.H. was an able and devoted director of the Rationalist Press Association. He saw the Association through very difficult days in the mid-1950s, when post-war religious enthusiasm and fear of atheism as a potential ally of Communism were at their height. His counsel then—as in the almost equally difficult days upon us now—was firmly and quietly reasoned with abhorrence of anything that smacked of panic.

"His mature common sense and wordly wisdom has meant a great deal to us readers of his books and of his regular contribution to *New Humanist*. He was able to express himself lucidly, unpretentiously, and informatively on any topic on which he applied his powers. His criticism of irrational attitudes was the more effective for its reserve. His rationalism was thoroughly lived and expressed itself with calmness, even tranquility.

"Many of us will long remember his kindly manner, sensible advice, and ever ready help. When I first met him—apropos my first book on Christianity (the publication of which I owe to him)—I soon recognised him as a man of great warmth and genuine tolerance. His last words to me, when I left him at his hospital bed a week or so before his death, were that his work was done and that it was for a younger generation to continue it. May we be found worthy of the charge."

## Tribute at Golders Green

The funeral at Golders Green Crematorium on 19 December was attended by a large number of friends and colleagues from various sections of the Humanist movement including the British Humanist Association, National Secular Society, Rationalist Press Association, South Place Ethical Society and the local Muswell Hill Humanist Group of which Mr Hawton was chairman. The speakers were Peter Cadogan, secretary of South Place Ethical Society, and Christopher Macy, former editor of *New Humanist*.

• G. A. WELLS

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# The Church Bewildered

BARBARA SMOKER

Most dictionaries define "Tridentine" simply as "Roman Catholic", for until 1965 every Roman Catholic accepted the dictates of the Council of Trent and the liturgy that came out of it. There has been such a revolution in the Church that those who are still Tridentines are now regarded by the hierarchy as heretical. The Downham Market pantomime is here put in its wider context.

pied the Chair of Peter during the last three sessions of the Council.

Opening the door to the simplification of rites and the use of modern languages suddenly produced a plurality of rites, as in the much-despised Church of England. Some stability had to be restored quickly; so, after a very brief transition period, the old Tridentine rite was ruled out of order. What had been compulsory was now forbidden. The rite that had been binding for four centuries under the threat of eternal damnation was suddenly banned, its place being taken by something very like a Protestant service. The new Latin liturgy was quickly translated into modern languages for each language group, and use of the vernacular has now become the norm. For English-speaking Roman Catholics this has meant a banal, mid-Atlantic prose style that has probably been one of the chief causes of defection from the Church in this country, both among the clergy and the laity, in the past few years. Dissatisfaction with particular phrases has led to rapid changes, and though some improvements have been made in the prose, this has been at the cost of stability.

One minor improvement that has come to my notice is in the modern equivalent of the response "*Et cum spiritu tuo*" ("And with thy spirit"). This became, in the first post-conciliar English version of the Mass, "And with you." The almost irresistible effect of this blunt phrase on many churchgoers was to add mentally "with knobs on", till the liturgical authorities added the word "also" for the sake of euphony.

## Problems for the Traditionalists

Such niggling amendments and the frequent addition of new material during the past few years has meant that a missal is hardly off the printing presses before it is out of date. Consequently, few Catholics in this country now attend Mass with their own missals; most use unaesthetic Mass-cards given out in the church, and this is one of the minor irritations complained about.

The beautifully bound daily missal I received at my school prize-giving in 1939 for being top of the school in religious knowledge (yes, really!) was virtually identical with what had been laid down in 1570. It was then worth owning a missal that might last a lifetime. But even the latest suggestion (supported by the publishers of missals) to freeze the present liturgy for long enough to make it worthwhile to own a missal is for ten years only.

Add to these minor irritations the very real difficulty for middle-aged, and elderly people—especially priests—to unlearn old habits and acquire new ones, and the wonder is not that there are a few dissident

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It is just ten years since the end of the 21st ecumenical council, Vatican Council II (October 1962-December 1965) set up by the "stop-gap" pope, John XXIII, and in these ten years the face of Roman Catholicism has altered more than in any previous hundred. An unsophisticated peasant, Pope John knew not what he did in setting up this council "to open the windows of the Church and let in fresh air and light". The ensuing gale has wrenched the windows off their hinges and almost blown the roof off.

Ironically enough, the main outcome of Vatican Council II has been to unsettle the unifying and stabilising effects of the two preceding ecumenical councils—the Council of Trent (1545-63), which was the Roman response to the Reformation, and Vatican Council I (1869-70). The former achieved unity and stability by delimiting Catholic doctrine sharply from Protestant, by authoritatively defining what constituted essential elements of the faith, and by deciding to standardise the liturgy. The decisions were implemented by the publication in 1564 of a summary of the Tridentine faith (*Professio fidei Tridentina*) and the publication in 1570 of the reformed Roman Missal. Three centuries later, Vatican Council I completed the task by defining the primacy and infallibility of the Pope. Then, in one fell stroke, Vatican Council II reopened the Church to controversy, called for far-reaching liturgical changes, and even resulted in papal infallibility being disputed once more within the Church.

Those who had supported Pope John in calling the second Vatican Council were mostly sanguine enough to suppose that a wider unity, embracing the major Protestant Churches and the Oriental Christians, could be achieved without sacrificing the stability enjoyed by the Roman Church for the past four centuries. However, there were some warning voices in the College of Cardinals, as is indicated in the speech made by Pope John at the first session of the Council, when he castigated "those prophets of gloom who are always forecasting disaster." He did not live to see them proved right. That trauma was the heritage of the present Pope, who already occu-

How far is there common ground between secular humanism and religion? Some Christians consider themselves to be humanist; some humanists profess themselves concerned with religious experience. Christopher Morey's article examining "The Case for Religious Humanism" in the June issue of "The Freethinker" provoked an interesting correspondence. Peter Cadogan, general secretary of South Place Ethical Society, continues the debate by considering some of the replies to his own letter, and urges a respect for "the sacred."

The religious humanist case has been given the *sotto voce* treatment for too long. Now that someone has presumed to voice it clearly and put it in print perhaps the real debate about Humanism can begin. (Of course it has all been done before, by the late Sir Julian Huxley in his *Religion without Revelation*, and published by the Rationalist Press Association twice; but he was not a man who entered this kind of arena, and with classical English hypocrisy it was possible for organised humanists to pretend that the book did not exist.) In any case the English don't read. What happens is that we look at print and find there what we want to find. And if added proof of that is wanted it is all there in the various responses to my original letter which was published in the August issue of *The Freethinker*.

Geoffrey Webster uses quotation marks to identify the idea of the sacred with the "miraculous, mysteriousness, uncanniness of life", and the reader might be excused for thinking that he was quoting me, since no other source is indicated. Nothing of the sort! On this point I happen to agree with my critic, therefore what he says is not a criticism. I reject the revealed supernaturalism of a personal God and the superstitious mumbo-jumbo of which the miraculous, the mysterious and the uncanny are part.

At the same time I have some sense of human ignorance—and of my own—and am vaguely aware that there are or must be (if only on the historical precedent) great areas of knowledge and understanding yet to be opened up. Thus I am not willing to be dogmatic, and not willing to bow down to the God of science. I accept that we face a great deal that remains inscrutable to date. This does not send me off down the road of mysticism, but nor does it require me wholly to reject it.

I am persuaded that poets and artists generally (William Blake for instance) and religious prophets too, have been often proved to be right, and the strictly "rational" people wrong. There is nothing to lead one to suppose that this situation has

changed. At any given time only a tiny handful of people ever get to the bottom of things. That is not an eliteist assertion, it is simply how the record reads. It is time we took the artist and the religious person seriously.

So far as I am concerned the foundation document of humanism in this country is Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*. More was a religious man and a good Catholic who, like Socrates, chose death rather than submission to the state. There was no contradiction between his religion and his humanism—they were substantially the same thing. But how was that?

Humanism has always been of religious substance and was endemic in early Christianity (see Rudolf Bultman's *Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting*). The extraordinary promise of primitive Christianity, after the passage of 50 years had exploded the myth of an imminent Second Coming, lay in its belief in universal brotherhood, charity, forgiveness, holding all things in common, egalitarian self-government and hostility to Rome. Primitive Christianity was later either destroyed or driven underground by a Roman Church which restored the authority of an Emperor in ecclesiastical form and invented the Trinity and the doctrine of Original Sin as instruments for commanding obedience and extirpating opposition as heresy. (For neither of these notions was there any authority in the Old Testament or the New.)

This appalling situation put a stop to higher thinking for over a thousand years, from the time of the Council of Nicea in 325 AD to the time of the Renaissance. It was the Arabs who rescued and built on Hellenic culture.

## Humanism in the Churches

Humanism centres on faith in the autonomous power of human beings to realise themselves and their potentialities. It does not rule out God as such. It does rule out the kind of God who negates human autonomy. When Pelagius the British monk got to Rome about the year 400 AD, he found there a condition of complete moral decadence with everything and everybody for sale. He put the case for the personal moral responsibility of the individual as the only way to save Rome from itself. But what price the power of the priesthood and the all-powerful nature of God if man is morally autonomous? Augustine saw to it that Pelagius was denounced as a heretic.

But simply to utter the word "autonomy" is not enough. The later Puritans debased it until it meant total white male supremacy over women, children and blacks. The founders of modern science misinterpreted it to mean the worship of cause and effect. Whitehead put them right in his book *Science*

and the Modern World and twentieth-century science today knows better, but the new truth percolates through slowly. This is it: that the future is as important to process as the past; potentiality (of its nature unobservable because it hasn't happened yet) is as consequential as identifiable cause.

The upshot of these views is that wherever and whenever people, who acknowledge some creed or other, nevertheless put their ultimate reliance on themselves and not on some deity or priesthood then they are humanists, religious humanists, and part of the oldest and deepest tradition of humanism. Once we understand this we can locate our roots in the whole of human history and not merely in the special needs of nineteenth-century England wherein our particular organisations were born. Our humanism will only have depth and significance if it is the same humanism that moved Socrates and Erasmus.

Geoffrey Webster concludes: "May non-existent God forbid we shall ever see humanist 'vicars' conducting 'services' in which a secularised 'sacred' is worshipped." Does he now know that exactly that has been happening for years in the Unitarian-Universalist churches of the United States and Canada? And has he never been to a South Place Ethical Society meeting? May I also commend to him the Unitarians of Newport (Isle of Wight) and of Golders Green? Scores of clerics, especially in the Church of England, have long been moving in the same direction. Some people should get their heads out of the sand.

Things are not as they were 50 years ago. By all means let us maintain the campaign against superstitious clericalism, even step it up (this I take to be the special contribution of *The Freethinker* and the National Secular Society). But can we at the same time recognise that there have been changes and that we have many friends and allies within both organised and unorganised religion?

Consider also the physical and financial side of the same problem. The churches of England really belong to the countless millions who have built and sustained them since the year 597 AD (earlier if we include the Celtic Church). They are a peoples' inheritance. The right and proper function of a church is to be the spiritual and social centre of the community, and we need such centres today. The denominational nonsense has to go and with it the residual heresy-hunting of religious humanism. We need, and can have, an entirely new vision of the future based on "the ultimate honesty" that Bonhoeffer wrote about just before they put him up against a wall and shot him.

I am not "extending the meaning of the word 'religion'" as Christopher Morey alleges. He is contracting it. If he will take a look at any modern anthropological study of religion, e.g. I. M. Lewis's *Estatic Religion* (Penguin), or come to hear him at SPES in January, he will see that the religious

phenomenon is endemic in the most elementary forms of human cultures that we know, just as it is in our own society. Religion will not fit into some tiny twentieth-century pigeon-hole to suit the convenience of well-meaning secularists.

And no one, least of all me, has suggested that we "fall on our knees" before the secular sacred. We are, of course, on dangerous territory, that is partly why it is interesting. It is quite possible that religious humanism might slip into irrational religiosity. That is a risk we have to take. What is happening to Humanism (with the capital H) at the moment is worse—it is in serious danger of slipping into nothingness. Unless we get somewhere in this debate, and get ourselves new objectives, new readers and new members, then in a very few years the bailiffs will move in on the NSS, the Rationalist Press Association and the British Humanist Association. Students of their annual accounts have already seen plenty of writing on the wall. If we don't break new ground and back our hunches we shall get the oblivion we deserve. Religious humanism will not suffer unduly. There are always others to take the torch from the inert hands of those who fail.

Sacred objects come in all shapes and sizes, national, regional, local, communal, craft, professional, industrial, familial, individual and class. They are the basic instruments of self-identification. For present purposes I am not concerned with what Nicolas Walter thinks Durkheim really believed. I am interested in what he said about the subject under discussion.

#### Clarity—not Clichés

Of course the notion of the secular sacred is not "a revealed truth." To think otherwise would be to posit a personal God. The word "sacred" is simply the right name for a phenomenon that cannot be discounted. And of course it is "society that makes some things sacred". Who else? We are continually making and unmaking sacralities. Consider how a few of not-so-long-ago have passed away (the Empire, the flag, the national anthem) and even short-back-and-sides! Consider how our taboos, the equal and the opposites of our sacralities, have changed as well: skirt lengths, sex, homosexuality, class deference, Sunday observance and the rest.

I don't think clarity is helped by appalling clichés like "the dominant class" and "bourgeois ideology". It is time to ditch labels and get through to realities. It is of course true that in any society the rulers try to impose their view of the sacred on the ruled. Sometimes they get away with it and sometimes they don't. The *laissez faire* of the Victorian entrepreneur is now the blind faith of the trade union leader.

About a hundred yards from SPES's Conway Hall, at 20 Rugby Street, there is a rather decayed

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# Religious Opposition to Family Planning in Ireland

MALCOLM POTTS

In this article, the director of the International Pregnancy Advisory Services, examines the attitudes towards contraception in the Irish Republic. The situation is riddled with contradiction and confusion, and behind it lies the implacable and obscurantist opposition of the Catholic Church.

The Irish have many problems, and the rational and humane control of human fertility is one of them. The display and sale of contraceptives is illegal under the Indecent Advertisement Acts (1889 and 1929) and the 1935 Criminal Law Amendment Act which decrees: "It shall not be lawful for any person to sell, or expose, offer, advertise or keep for sale or to import or attempt to import . . . any contraceptive."

The Dublin fortnightly review *Hibernia* has twice polled public opinion on whether the sale of contraceptives should be permitted by law through chemists. In 1974 just over half the adult population (54 per cent) approved of a change in the law, but this year the number had fallen to 47 per cent. The number of people opposing change has also declined (43 per cent to 37 per cent); only the "don't knows" have risen (3 per cent to 16 per cent). Are the Irish becoming even more confused over family planning or shall the "don't knows" be in the ascendancy?

Certainly a passage across the Irish Sea takes one to a country that is more out of tune with the rest of the world than a flight to Brazil or a journey to Manila. Anti-contraceptive laws have been declared unconstitutional in Italy, abandoned in the Philippines—the government now spends millions on promoting the pill and condoms to its Catholic population—and Austria which is 90 per cent Roman Catholic has even introduced a liberal abortion law. Eire, ostrich-like, buries its head.

Eire has a modest birth rate (23 per thousand in 1972 compared with 15 per thousand at that time in the United Kingdom). This is largely achieved by late marriage, the export of premaritally pregnant girls to Britain for legal abortions (1,450 such abortions were performed in the first nine months of 1974), the illicit import of condoms and intra-uterine devices, and a veritable epidemic of menstrual irregularities for which oral contraceptives may be prescribed. Coitus interruptus, the rhythm method and abstinence also play a role.

The ordinary man and woman in the Irish street is caught in a tangle of prejudice and injustice. It is not surprising that they are becoming confused.

This is a situation where the "don't knows" may have the right answer.

In 1969 the first Family Planning Clinic was opened and in 1971 the Irish Family Planning Association was formed. In 1972 Family Planning Services started distributing condoms to customers through the post. The sale of such articles was illegal, but by a remarkable coincidence customers sent donations which happened to equal the cost of supplies. All these activities were, and still are, illegal. Indeed in 1973 the IFPA and FPS were summoned under the 1935 law. (A Roman Catholic made his young daughter copy a letter requesting contraceptives and then he complained to the authorities when they arrived.) A year later the case was dismissed, but in such a way as not to set a liberal legal precedent. The Irish judiciary also has its "don't knows."

Three years ago Mrs Mary McGee, a poor but brave woman, brought an action against the Attorney General and the Revenue Commissioners for seizing her supply of contraceptives which had been sent from England. I have been privileged to meet Mrs McGee. She has a desperate obstetric history and is one of the few cases in the modern world where the doctor would say another pregnancy would endanger life. Again, in an Irish way, the Court judged that the existing laws were unconstitutional, but ruled in such a way as to leave the ban on the sale and display intact. So today it is legal to use contraceptives in Irish bedrooms, but not to sell them in a shop.

## "Attack on Society"

The Irish government, like the people in the street, also has its share of "don't knows." Senator Mary Robinson introduced a Bill to liberalise the sale of contraceptives, but the government tried to pre-empt it with a Bill of its own. It proposed the sale of contraceptives by licensed chemists to married people only. However, when it came to a vote some members of the Cabinet voted against their own Bill which was defeated by 75 votes to 47. Oliver J. Flanagan described the Bill in the Dail as "an attack on society. It means to smash the family to its very foundation." Another Deputy called it a "red herring . . . to cloud the issue . . . and the thin edge of the wedge." This was a remarkable list of achievements for a condom.

Currently contraception obsesses the Irish, consuming kilometers of newspaper columns and being an issue guaranteed to fill any debating chamber three times over. The inability of the Southern Irish to solve this problem is one reason why the few

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# Vatican-CIA Operations in South America

American taxpayers discovered recently that huge sums of their money have been used to finance Roman Catholic Church operations in foreign countries during the last 25 years. More news stories have been breaking in Washington about the CIA's association with religious groups, and it has been revealed that the Reverend Roger Vekemans, a Belgian Jesuit assigned to Chile, got five million dollars for Church work following a visit to President Kennedy in 1963.

The new disclosures about CIA-Church connections expose only the tip of a very large iceberg. It is known that not just the American, but also the Belgian, Dutch and West German governments have channelled funds to missions, mainly Catholic, in Chile, Colombia, Brazil, Argentina and Mexico.

The major American operation has been in Chile, where, in 1956, the Catholic bishops became very worried by the success of the Marxist leader, Salvador Allende. They requested the Reverend John J. Jannens, general of the Jesuits in Rome, to organise political forces to block Allende. Vekemans was sent to Chile and received massive US support until Allende came to power. He was then transferred to Colombia.

## Family Planning in Ireland

remaining moderates in Ulster shrink from unity with Dublin. Hundreds of thousands of adults suffer the anxiety and fear of having further, and unplanned, children.

The cruelty and indignity that Roman Catholics have imposed upon themselves and others in Eire is relieved by one comic and useful exception. The Church and State has been so busy berating and banning contraceptives that they have forgotten to outlaw voluntary sterilisation. While the hospitals—run mostly by nuns—will not countenance female sterilisation, doctors are legally permitted to offer vasectomy to anyone who wants it—if necessary on his kitchen table. Caroline Deys, a London doctor, taught and performed vasectomy in Dublin.

In nineteenth-century Ireland the population fell by almost two million after the 1845 potato famine and a further six million fled overseas by the end of the century. Undoubtedly social injustice and political maladministration contributed much to this suffering among the Irish. But it is poignant that the first Malthusian casualty should remain the last European symbol of destructive and pitiless Catholic opposition to family planning. This opposition by the Church has done much to spark off the global population explosion. This is a true obscenity against which the Irish government has yet to draft a law.

It is estimated that United States government grants to the Jesuits and other Catholic agencies alone amounted to several million dollars annually. In addition, Washington is known to have allocated large sums of money to Protestant missionaries who, in turn, passed on information about nationalist and trade union leaders to CIA agents.

Following the American involvement in the downfall of the Allende government, and in his murder, missionary societies have become worried about the possible affects of their CIA associations. Some of them have now given specific directions to their personnel to avoid any relationship with CIA agents.

## Capital Punishment

Mr McWhirter's memory was not honoured, nor was his reputation enhanced, by the letter by O. R. Johnston, director of the Nationwide Festival of Light, which appeared in the *Church Times*. A large section of Mr Johnson's tribute was reminiscent of a Festival of Light propaganda leaflet. He also revealed that Mr McWhirter was one of those Christians who made asses of themselves over the play *Council of Love*. This play, which had a short run at the Criterion Theatre, London, during 1970, had been seen—against the advice of her religious friends—by a crusader for purity. She then organised a demonstration during which, O. R. Johnson records: "Ross McWhirter was one of those twelve Christians who rose and sang 'At the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow' while a simple gilded cross was held before the audience."

Directors Eleanor Fazan and Jack Gold were in court to face the charge "that they did ribaldly vilify, ridicule and scoff at the Christian religion and did in like manner impugn its doctrines." It was an unsuccessful prosecution, but it indicated the lengths to which censorious Christians will go to impose their wishes and tastes on others. It also demonstrated how some of those people who are the most vociferous defenders of law and order are ready, when it suits them, to take action which may result in a breach of the peace.

BARBARA SMOKER

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## ABORTION: PLAIN SPEAKING BY METHODISTS

The Methodist Church's latest contribution to the discussion on the abortion issue takes the form of a consultative document entitled *Abortion: the Issues Involved*. This document was prepared by the Division of Social Responsibility which will draft the official statement on the Methodist attitude to abortion due to be discussed by the Methodist Conference next June. If this present document is a reliable guideline to Methodist thinking on the question, then it is likely that the Conference will adopt a more realistic and rational attitude towards abortion than most other Christian bodies.

There has been a continuing debate within the Methodist Church on this question. The 1961 Conference decided that Christians should condemn abortion. Five years later this decision was reversed by the 1966 Conference. The same Conference passed a resolution affirming "that human misery could be alleviated by a more resolute attempt, by educational means, to reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies and to improve the general attitude of the community to parenthood and childbirth." In evidence to the Lane Committee (1971) the Methodists pointed out "the marked disparity in the availability of abortion in different NHS hospitals."

Methodists have been consistently more radical than their Anglican colleagues on the question of abortion. There is a reference in the new document to a joint working party set up by the two churches in 1974. It prepared a report which the Methodists regarded as "a fair and sensitive document likely to be of use to many people." But the Anglicans would not agree to its publication and the Methodist Church undertook not to release the working party's report on its own authority.

The split between the Anglicans and the Methodists is dealt with tactfully, but the report adopts an unmistakably caustic tone when it discusses the policy of the Roman Catholic Church and other anti-abortion crusaders (although it does not mention them by name). But there can be little doubt as to who the authors had in mind when they wrote: "Those who oppose abortion are often motivated by a desire to uphold the sanctity of life (although the extreme anti-abortion view which always prefers the interest of the fetus even when the mother's life is jeopardized makes a confusing witness to the sanctity principle)."

There is a section on the importance of counselling, and the report comes down firmly against the idea of "abortion referees." This is one of the main planks in SPUC's platform.

Roman Catholics and others have argued that legal abortion on a wide scale would lead to all manner of "abuses" and "crimes" such as euthanasia. But the Methodists write: "It would be wrong to refuse to

# NEWS

make responsible laws because it was feared that some people would use them irresponsibly. Such an argument would oppose any Abortion Act. The Act should be precise enough to exclude what is totally unacceptable. If a proper revision of law in one area leads to more dangerous legislation in another, the latter must be seen for what it is and resisted at that point."

Those who have been endeavouring to wreck the 1967 Abortion Act have resorted to bogus, emotive appeals in order to gain public sympathy. They have wept buckets over those gynaecologists and medical workers whose careers are allegedly in jeopardy because of their objection, on grounds of conscience, to participating in abortion operations. But, as the Methodist report states, "The Secretary of State for the Social Services revealed in the House of Commons on 21 October 1975 that in only nine out of 70 appointments made since the previous March in obstetrics, gynaecology and anaesthetics had there been any specification of the need of agreement to do abortion."

The Methodists submit that no member of the medical or nursing profession should be required to take part in an abortion against his or her conscience, nor should their career suffer because of their abstention. They add: "Equally a woman must have the right to have her application for an abortion considered by a medical practitioner not fundamentally opposed to it in principle." And she should be given the name and address of a doctor who does not oppose abortion.

*Abortion: the Issues Involved* is a humane, compassionate and reasoned document. It is in marked contrast to the misleading and scurrilous propaganda that emanates from the Roman Catholic Church and its "front" organisations.

Harry Stopes-Roe, chairman of the British Humanist Association, has written a reply to the criticism of the BHA's new pamphlet, "Objective, Fair and Balanced", which appeared in our last issue. Unfortunately Dr Stopes-Roe's letter was too late for publication, and it will now appear in the February "Freethinker". Copies of "Objective, Fair and Balanced" are obtainable from G. W. Foote & Company, 698 Holloway Road, London N19 3NL, price 40p plus 11p postage.



# AND NOTES

## LOSS OF FAITH

A report published recently has revealed that young Roman Catholics in England and Wales are lapsing at an amazing rate. The report, based on information provided by 250 Catholic organisations, seminaries and university chaplaincies, was commissioned by the Vatican Secretariat for Non-Believers. Fr John Gaine, who presented the report at a meeting of the Secretariat in Rome, said that replies he had received indicated strongly that many people were dissatisfied with Church services and found the Mass boring. He added: "We face a missionary situation on our own doorstep."

The results of two surveys in Catholic schools will cause the Church particular concern. Of 11,000 boys and girls attending Catholic secondary schools in the Southwark diocese, nearly 50 per cent are lapsing by the age of 15. And a survey of pupils at three Catholic comprehensive schools in the south of England showed "a general absence of deep religious commitment . . . a highly critical valuation of the institutional Church on the part of a large majority of these Catholic adolescents."

A Gallop Poll early in 1975 found that 32 per cent of people describing themselves as Catholics, aged over 16, had attended Mass during the previous fortnight, and 41 per cent had not attended for over six months.

Sir Henry Fisher, a former High Court judge, told the Bar Association for Commerce, Finance and Industry that enforcement of sexual morality was not a proper function for the law and lawyers in modern society. In the first lecture to the Association, of which he is vice-president, Sir Henry said: "While it may have seemed possible in the high noon of Victorian certainty to enforce a moral code in sexual matters, it is anachronistic to seek to do so in an age where there is a healthy difference of views and standards about what is permissible in the sexual field." He called for the maintenance of clarity and certainty in the law, and criticised the growing practice by some judges to enter the legislative arena by reforming and developing the law through judicial decisions. Sir Henry Fisher is the son of a former Archbishop of Canterbury.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY  
1866 1976

## 110th ANNIVERSARY DINNER

Speakers:

EDWARD BLISHEN  
DIANE MUNDAY  
NICHOLAS TUCKER  
NICOLAS WALTER

Chair:

BARBARA SMOKER

The Pavours Arms, Page Street,  
London SW1

Saturday 3 April, 6 pm for 6.30 pm

Vegetarians catered for

Price of tickets to be announced  
next month

Report from the Department of Christian Love. "The Protestant Telegraph", published by the Reverend Ian Paisley's outfit, declared in a recent issue: "The demise of Cardinal Heenan has met with predictable lamentations from the ecumenicals and Romanists. The BBC commented that he was a man of 'warm personality.' It is without doubt that his experience is now of an even warmer disposition."

## Freethinker Fund

Our thanks are expressed to readers who have contributed to the Fund during 1975. The following donations were received 25 November to 16 December. P Barbour, £3.50; W. J. Bickle, £1.50; S. Birkin, 50p; Mrs F. Campbell, 50p; R. J. Condon, £20; Mrs P. A. Forrest, £1.95; E. Henry, 50p; Mrs N. Henson, £5; E. W. Hewett, 50p; J. Hudson, 50p; E. J. Hughes, £1.50; C. Inkpen, 50p; E. A. Napper, £1.30; R. G. Peterson, £2.50; S. H. Rice, 70p; E. Royle, 50p; W. Shuttleworth, £3.50; G. B. Stowell, £5.50; L. F. Stupart, £3.50; G. Swan, £1.50; A. Vogel, £1.50. Total: £36.95.

Freethinker Defence Appeal. The Appeal will remain open until 31 January and a list of subscribers will be published in the February issue. Donations should be sent to the editor of "The Freethinker", 698 Holloway Road, London N19 3NL.

## BOOKS

**WOMEN AT CAMBRIDGE** by Rita McWilliams-Tullberg. Gollancz £4.80.

This book has the rather unusual merit of being both based on extensive and detailed research and also remarkably well-written and readable. Indeed it is a model of what such a study should be.

To the author nearly all the story is history, but to the present reviewer the later chapters cover personal experience and many of the principal characters are well remembered. That story begins, not inside the university, but with the local examinations organised in schools by both Oxford and Cambridge, which were the predecessors of to-day's O and A levels. In 1862 Emily Davies (who later founded Girton College and still presided over it in my first year as a student) made informal enquiries as to whether girls might not be eligible to sit for these examinations. With Oxford she drew a blank, but Cambridge was slightly more encouraging. Since, however, these examinations were held at centres scattered over the country, one of the main obstacles was thought to be "the indelicacy" of bringing the candidates together, away from the supervision of their parents. Nevertheless undaunted, Miss Davies persisted, and eventually Cambridge agreed that the examiners should be asked to mark the girls' papers in their private capacity (though not until after Miss Davies had firmly rejected a suggestion that the girls and boys should have different examiners). Subsequently, however, as so often happens, the informal private approach led to a formal concession, and in 1867 Cambridge agreed that girls should be officially and permanently eligible to enter for these examinations. Meanwhile Oxford remained obdurate, influenced apparently by the suggestion that if the examinations were open to girls, they would be shunned by boys anxious to avoid the "emasculated institution" that Cambridge would become. Such indeed was the hysterical attitude adopted in presumably responsible circles that speakers at a meeting of the Social Science Association addressed by Emily Davies in 1864 expressed fears that if girls were encouraged to use their brains, the excitement might bring on insanity.

The next step was to establish a college for the higher education of women, in the hope that this might in due course lead to their admission to the university itself. In 1869 Miss Davies established such a college at Hitchin, near enough to Cambridge for a handful of sympathetic lecturers to come out and tutor the five original students who were determined to follow exactly the same courses, and hoped eventually to take the same examinations, as the male undergraduate members of the university. Once more, however, the authorities felt unable to give official permission for women to enter for the ex-

## FREETHINKER

aminations, but raised no objection to private arrangements being made with the examiners.

This unofficial concession continued for many years, but always under a cloud of uncertainty that it might be withdrawn. Before long, however, the lecturers found it tiresome to have to repeat their lectures at both Cambridge and Hitchin, and decided that the burden of travel had better be carried by the women students themselves. So in 1873 the college was transferred to Girton, a village "felt to be distant enough to deter casual visitors", and to avoid the limelight which Miss Davies always feared would be dangerous. Meanwhile, largely owing to the initiative of Professor Sidgwick within the university a second women's college, Newnham, was established in Cambridge itself. At first, however, relations between the two were far from happy, owing to Miss Davies' disapproval of Newnham's less rigid insistence that every student must comply with every detail of the regulations governing the courses, examinations and residence requirements prescribed for undergraduates.

Triumph came, however, when in 1880 a Girton student distinguished herself in a most unfeminine subject by being (informally, of course) bracketed in the eighth place in order of merit in the Mathematical Tripos (i.e. the final degree examination); and in 1887 another Girtonian, Agatha Ramsay (later Mrs. Montagu Butler) went one better, by shining in solitary glory as the sole candidate in the first class of the Classical Tripos. Then three years later the triple crown was completed by Philippa Fawcett, who stood at the top of the list in the Mathematical Tripos, but could not be rewarded with the title of "Senior Wrangler", which had therefore to pass to the man below her.

None of these women, of course, were allowed to take the degrees which were automatically conferred upon the men whose achievements they had surpassed; and it seems hardly credible that nearly thirty years afterwards, the same was true in my own time, when I was the only candidate ever to be awarded a mark of distinction in the first class of the Economics Tripos. (Incidentally, the power to award this mark was shortly afterwards abolished by new regulations, so my position remains unique for ever). Not until 1923 were Cambridge women even admitted to titular degrees allowing us to write the sacred letters BA or MA (according to seniority) after our names, but without any of the attendant privileges such as the right to share in the government of the university, or to exercise the vote for university representatives in Parliament which was the privilege

# REVIEWS

of every graduate at that time. Nor were we eligible for university appointments. Indeed I myself became involved in a fresh absurdity when the (relatively progressive) University Board of Studies in Economics invited me to give a course of lectures to undergraduates on a compulsory subject in their degree examination. These lectures, it appeared, could not be advertised in the official university journal, because I was not (and could not be) a member of the university. Only when a gallant colleague (the late Sir Hubert Henderson) lent his name to a course of lectures which he had not the slightest intention of giving was an inconspicuous footnote allowed to betray the horrid fact that they would be delivered by myself.

Eventually in 1948 the last barriers were lowered and the door at which women had been knocking for over 70 years finally opened wide, with the grant of full participation in every sphere of the university's activities—twenty years after Oxford had made amends for its original backwardness by taking a similar step. Since then things have moved fast. Several of the Cambridge colleges have even admitted the majority sex to their hitherto exclusive masculine communities—a far cry indeed from the days in the first world war when I had to ask official permission every time that I wished to invite my fiancé to tea unchaperoned in my rooms at Girton!

One of the saddest features of this whole story is its revelation of the depths of sexual fear and suspicion voiced by men holding high academic office which might have been supposed to guarantee their intellectual quality and judgement. Thus Professor Alfred Marshall (the "father" of Cambridge economics), who had himself married one of the original Hitchin students, expressed the view that, if women took part in its government, the university of Cambridge would cease to be adapted to the needs of men and would in consequence "degenerate". Professor W. R. Sorley was convinced that the women were simply out for power; and most virulent of all (though admittedly an eccentric), Professor James Mayo went on record that "A University course is an incident in and a part of certain professions (and of those only) which are, and by appointment of Divine Providence must always be, exclusively virile." Against these attacks one can but look back with pride on the quiet and dignified persistence of the women themselves, and particularly perhaps of Emily Davies who, when I knew her in old age, presented a remarkable image of Victorian modesty and gentleness.

In this book the author has told her story so well

that she may even overcome the natural antipathy of each generation to tales of its predecessors' battles. If only for the fascinating psychological aspects of her study, she does indeed deserve to be read and appreciated by a much wider public than the diminishing company of those who were concerned in the events that she has recorded.

BARBARA WOOTTON

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FOR CHRIST'S SAKE by Hugh J. Schonfield. MacDonald & Jane's, £2.95.

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The argument of this book is as follows. Jesus being a Jew, could not have thought of himself as divine, nor could his original Jewish followers have so regarded him. They saw him only as the promised Messianic king of Israel. A religion centred on Jesus is thus a perversion, and ascription of divinity to him resulted from the spread of Christianity from Jews to gentiles infected with idolatrous pagan ideas. Gentile Christians, who believed that God had become incarnate to redeem them, nevertheless wanted to anchor their faith not in a mythical God-man, such as Osiris, but in a truly historical personage. So they committed the absurdity of making a historical Jew into the incarnation of the Old Testament God, who is in truth without form or substance.

Another factor contributing to this distortion was Christian musing on esoteric Jewish literature, e.g. on the later Wisdom literature in which Wisdom figures as God's only-begotten. It was a small step to identify the Messiah with Wisdom, and thus to make of him a supernatural being. The truly historical Jesus, however, was a man who tried to bring about the kingdom of God on earth heralded by the Hebrew prophets. This kingdom did not involve destruction of the heathen (although many Jews in Jesus' day thought the contrary, and hoped that the Messiah would liberate them from Rome), but rather the moral reform of the Jewish nation. And Jesus believed that he must suffer on the cross at the hands of the Romans in order to shock his people into the repentance which was essential to their deliverance.

His Messianic mission did not embrace non-Jews, but when Christians did begin to evangelise other nations he came to be credited with having inculcated this development, and documents which embodied genuine reminiscences of him were manipulated so as to make him advocate a mission to gentiles.

Schonfield has some difficulty in explaining how, according to the Old Testament, the Messiah is to treat gentile nations. He argues that the expectation was that the Messiah of the redeemed and purified Israel should "exercise a hegemony" over them, perhaps even destroy them; so that he was, after all, expected to bring war and bloodshed. Neverthe-

less, Schonfield thinks that the ancient Jews, and Jesus with them, supposed that, just as the Messiah would redeem Israel, so Israel would redeem mankind—by setting a moral example. He even thinks that such a view represents God's plan for mankind and thus embodies a truth which is valid today, which, however, has strangely entered but little into the imagination of current political theorists (p.72).

The whole argument is based on the author's claim to distinguish original and authentic Christian teaching on Jesus from later distortions. The "adoptionist" Christology (Jesus was born a man and adopted by God as Messiah at his baptism) of Luke (the latest of the three synoptic gospels) is accepted as primitive: and the Pauline Christology (which existed 50 years before Luke-Acts) is set aside. For Schonfield, Paul was a hypocrite; at any rate he deliberately failed to make mention of what he knew to be Jesus' true teaching because it contradicted his own (p.54). This does not prevent Schonfield from arguing elsewhere (p.44) that the silence of Paul about a particular doctrine is evidence that it is *post*-Pauline.

Again, Jesus was a descendant of David because Paul, among others, says so (p.22). But he was not originally regarded as a supernatural being wearing a human disguise, even though Paul, among other New Testament writers, alleges precisely this.

Everywhere in this book the superiority of Jewish religious teaching to pagan and Christian "idolatry" (worship of a God-man) is axiomatic. But is this Jewish God "without form or substance" (whose posterior was glimpsed by Moses, Exodus 33:23) really so venerable? If Zeus was over-preoccupied with sex, Yahweh indulged in a good deal more violence.

G. A. WELLS

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**HOW TO AVOID THE FUTURE** by Gordon Rattray Taylor. Secker & Warburg, £4.90.

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As an admirer of Gordon Rattray Taylor's book, *The Biological Time-Bomb* (1968), I was anxious to read his latest assessment of our social and moral state. It would be easy to review *How to Avoid the Future* a little impatiently, as a "doomsday handbook", since after some 300 pages, mainly concerned with the ever-increasing anarchy of our times, there is the feeling that he "does go on so." But, Mr Taylor has himself written a book called *The Doomsday Book*, and this latest contribution is an important work rather than a "catalogue of doom" as another reviewer has dismissingly called it. The title is rather fatuous, since there is no way of avoiding the future except by suicide; the real title of the book should be *How to Avoid Disaster*, and it was in what the author calls the "bold hope of triggering a response" to that end that he wrote the book.

Gordon Rattray Taylor forsees the future as "more

violent than anything we can remember, more unstable socially, and more insecure," but he has sufficient faith in humanity to believe that, given a full awareness of the dangers, the dire consequences might be prevented, or at least minimised. In effect he hopes that they *could* be, though at the end of the book he admits that "mankind being what it is" it seems "unlikely . . . that we shall achieve very much." The basis of his pessimism is "not the external threat but the internal weakness." But, as he adds, a truly pessimistic person would not have troubled to write a book about it all.

Since Mr Taylor sees clearly that "society" is composed of people, and that it is they who make "the times" and determine the future, it is surprising that he does not see pornography as cultural pollution and contributory to violence, but has only two brief references to it, the second of which refers to "the pornography which so upsets the sexually inhibited in our society." That remark is irritating and silly as is his statement that revolution is "the assertion of independence which is the sole objective." He foresees "an age of revolutions" as "probably very near." More realistically, to my mind, he fears "a phase of anarchy resolving into dictatorship", with totalitarianism as the end of the process. He cites Willy Brandt as giving Europe only another 20 years of democracy.

Gordon Rattray Taylor draws the parallel between the social condition of decadence and violence of the late 20th century and that of the end of the Roman civilisation, and this is perhaps the most interesting and valuable part of the book. In this section he writes of the increasing violence in Roman society and of the desperation of ordinary people turning to religion as an escape hatch: "They looked for a Saviour or Liberator. Some looked for a happier life beyond the grave. New-fangled faiths—Persian Mithraism, Zoroastrianism, Gnosticism, Christianity—began to replace the older Graeco-Roman beliefs. Oriental and mystical religions flourished. So did astrology, futurology and fortune-telling. Emperors sought to cash in on this demand by declaring themselves divine." He adds: "But religious tolerance is even more bitter than political intolerance: the Christians urged the state to persecute its rivals. A farmer who looked at the sun would be executed for Mithraism."

Mr Rattray Taylor seems to believe in the necessity for religion, although I find him somewhat ambiguous on the subject. He writes of a new, matrist religion, with a permissive morality and a high status for women. He considers that in the West we are "clearly advanced in a swing away from Victorian patriism—perhaps almost due for a reversal of the trend." I would have thought there is strong evidence of a general swing away from religion altogether—and a good thing too.

I am most in sympathy with the chapter on "Social Suggestions" in which the author declares that a

society is no better than its citizens, and asks how far it is possible to improve people. This he regards as "the most crucial of all our problems, the most urgent of all our tasks."

It can be achieved only, one supposes, by encouraging people to become aware of the problems, and by rejecting the despairing attitude of "there's nothing we can do about it." I agree with the writer when he says that "our society is approaching old age; that it is suffering from a hardening of the arteries which nothing will really reverse." Where I part company from him is that I regard this as a desirable state of affairs, in the hope that a new and more rational society will emerge from the ashes of the old.

Many *Freethinker* readers will disagree with Gordon Rattray Taylor as often—even more often, perhaps—as I have. Nevertheless I recommend this stimulating and absorbing book as a valuable contribution to the analysis of our contemporary condition, even though the blueprint for survival is less clearly defined.

ETHEL MANNIN

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**UNDERSTANDING PHILOSOPHY** by J. K. Feibleman.  
Souvenir Press £4.

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What role has philosophy today? Among the ancient Greeks philosophy covered every possible field of enquiry. Aristotle's powerful mind ranged over the domain of physics, biology, logic and politics. But, as scientific enquiry became more specific, more dependent on research rather than brilliant speculations, separate sciences detached themselves in their own rights. The most recent departure from the philosophical field is psychology. What remains for philosophy, Bertrand Russell once observed, are those questions which are not yet ready for scientific handling. Philosophers today seem to have retreated into little corners where they can discuss technical problems relating to logic and language. The wide sweep of philosophical thinking has largely ended. An austere professionalism seems to have replaced the questing spirit of the past.

In this book Professor Feibleman surveys philosophical thinking from the ancient Greeks to the present day. His book is designed for beginners in philosophy, who ask "What is it all about? Why philosophy?" His style is crisp and easy to follow, but in the brief space of 227 pages I think he has attempted too much. Moreover, he lards his account with comments and asides which seem to me to distort, even to caricature the philosophical views he is outlining. For example, Hume's famous recommendation to commit to the flames any book which does not deal with matters of fact or abstract reasoning is treated far too seriously. Hume is presented as the prototype book-burner rather than the sometimes jocund philosopher who could turn from the vexing problems he had raised to a friendly game of

backgammon. His irony and wit seem to have eluded Professor Feibleman completely. Marx's philosophical views are telescoped into the statement: "Philosophy and social science are one and the same thing." This is surely a gross over-simplification of Marx's view.

I would not recommend this book to a beginner in philosophy but for anyone who already has some grounding in the subject it presents an interesting and challenging viewpoint.

REUBEN OSBORN

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### *The Church Bewildered*

priests, with a considerable lay following, refusing to give up the Tridentine Mass in defiance of their bishops, but that there are not more of them. There would certainly be many more if it were not that the people who most resent change are generally the very people who are also the most obedient to authoritative discipline. But many a priest has gone into premature retirement, and some have probably died broken-hearted.

On top of the official innovations, some unofficial extensions of them have crept in, causing even more disquiet. For instance, the old "kiss of peace", when the priests and altar-servers used to exchange a chaste greeting, their faces several inches apart, was officially extended to participation by the congregation, who were encouraged to shake hands with one another. Those on kissing terms outside the church felt it was rather ridiculous to shake hands in church, so some people began to kiss, and this has apparently led to real snogging sessions, I hear, among the teenagers in some churches.

### **The Forbidden Mass**

Father Oswald Baker of Downham Market, who has been the focus of most of the media publicity, is actually only one of a number of priests persisting with the Tridentine Mass in Britain, as in other countries. But his refusal to give up St Dominic's Church and presbytery brought his conflict with the Bishop of Northampton to a head. Most of the Tridentine priests are not in charge of parishes, but say their Mass in unofficial centres, generally on the move from week to week. Their leader is Fr Peter Morgan, a comparatively young priest who was trained at the "wildcat" Econe seminary in Switzerland, which the Pope stripped of canonical status last year after it had issued a manifesto describing some of the ecclesiastical and liturgical reform as heretical.

Fr Morgan, when interviewed by a press reporter, conceded that he is breaking the ecclesiastical law in this country, but explained: "It is rather difficult . . . When someone robs you of your money, you go

(Continued on page 14)

to the police—but what happens when it is the police who are robbing you?"

The itinerant priests see themselves as following in the footsteps of the 16th-century priests who travelled about the country saying Mass secretly at the risk of their lives. This romantic analogy is ridiculed by the more progressive and more conformist priests—who, however, occasionally give it some semblance of credibility by warning their congregations from the pulpit, when a Tridentine Mass is being said in the area, that attendance at such a Mass no longer fulfills the Sunday obligation, which still has the sanction of eternal punishment.

A Catholic friend of mine, whom I had always regarded as one of the most steadfast sons of the Church, told me recently that he no longer went to church because there was no Tridentine Mass in the vicinity. So he has simply lapsed. Others who keep up their church attendance are campaigning at the same time for a plurality of rites to be recognised.

Here is a selection of readers' letters on the subject from recent issues of the *Catholic Herald*.

*"But our Catholic ecumeniacs avert their eyes from these facts of life. In their euphoria for diluting Catholic doctrine and liturgy in order to achieve 'unity' with other Christians, they appear to have lost all faith in the divinely appointed and unique mission of the Catholic Church; they seem determined to sell the Church's birthright of a glorious liturgy for a mess of ecumenical pottage."*

*"The traditional Mass was considered primarily as an obstacle to ecumenism. There could have been no unity with Protestants while it continued as the official worship of the Roman rite, embodying as it did prayers which expressed so unambiguously the doctrines of the Real Sacrifice and the Real Presence which they abhor and reject."*

*"We have all, I suspect, become used to the passive acceptance by the Catholic Press of every innovation inflicted upon the laity by experimentally-minded committees and liturgists."*

*"Should not the bishops listen to the many anguished souls among their flock who yearn for a period of peace and tranquility in matters liturgical?"*

*"Many people are advising one to go to the Anglo-Catholic Church to hear Mass beautifully and reverently offered."*

That last extract shows just how much Catholics have changed since I left the Church in 1949. Cradle Catholics had been inculcated with the belief that the great religious divide was not so much between Christianity and other religions as between the one, true, apostolic Church on the one hand and every other creed, from the Anglo-Catholic to the Zoroastrian, all in their melting-pot of error, on the other.

So simplistic a view could not possibly have survived. The Church was forced to come to terms with the spirit of the times. But its rapid revolution may well prove to be its death throes.

## LETTERS

At the grave risk of being charged with being a "reactionary" and a "puritan", and being stood in a corner with Mary Whitehouse and Lord Longford—a fate worse than death, it would seem, in the contemporary intellectual scene—I obey Antony Grey's injunction ("Pornography and Rape," "The Freethinker", November 1975) to stand up and be counted. Although I have defended both heterosexual and homosexual liberation throughout 50 years of professional authorship, I hereby declare and affirm that I regard all forms of pornography to be as much "moral pollution" as the diesel fumes let loose on our roads constitute pollution of the air. I am sorry to cross swords with Mr Grey, for I admire him for his work to secure legal and social justice for homosexuals (he may recall that I made my modest contribution to the organisation which campaigned for reform of the law).

But Mr Grey seems to write almost regretfully that the Cambridge rapist is "safely locked away", and refers to the "tidal waves of emotion" regarding rape, which he declares, is "in the news just now." Rape is, of course, an "emotional" subject, since it is a form of violence, and outrages human concern for the individual. No rational person is going to suggest that seeing a pornographic film or reading a pornographic novel or magazine is necessarily going to induce the viewer or reader to go out and commit rape. But that it does incite pathological cases such as the Cambridge rapist and the Moors murderers—who read the Marquis de Sade—cannot be disputed.

Even for normally adjusted people pornography constitutes a mental pollution; without even seeing a pornographic stage or film production, or reading a pornographic novel, even the description of it, as retailed in a review, the scenes and incidents described stay in the mind. And the mind is to that extent polluted. I write as one now old, but, if I had read in my youth, some of the things I have read in this "anything goes" decade, I wonder what moral effect it might have had on me. And I wonder what effect this pornographic revolution—in which Antony Grey apparently finds no harm—is having on the young people "attacked" on all sides by it. The pornographic approach to sex is surely the negation of the good life—of sexual relationships as enhancements of life, and as such surely constitutes "moral pollution".

ETHEL MANNIN

### UNCLASSIFIABLE

I am obliged to S. E. Parker for his sympathetic letter ("The Freethinker", December 1975) suggesting (if I am not mistaken) that Paterson's description of Max Stirner as a "nihilistic egoist" is both one-sided and rather melodramatic. Nevertheless, my personal impressions of Stirner (after repeated "dips" into *The Ego and His Own*) is that it is also a little inappropriate to describe someone like him as an "individualist-anarchist."

Stirner's whole outlook is based on one inescapable fact—his recognition that there is only one of each of us in the universe. On this experiential (not philosophical and purely conceptual) basis, he writes his book, seeing the universe as simply a great number of things, events and beings, related to him, the "Unique One." Obviously he is not concerned with ideas of "equality" with others, because that which is utterly singular (himself) cannot be identified with anything else, since it is different from everything else. Therefore, although he freely admits that the world and all therein is "out there" (i.e., he is a realist, epistemologically), he can-

not forget that he is "all-in-all" to himself. So, to say that Stirner can be seen as any kind of "anarchist" is a mistaken notion; in his rejection of "absolutes" (be they moral, religious, philosophical, social), he is not an "anarchist", because anarchists are concerned with "sacred human values" like love, freedom, reason and brotherhood. Stirner advocates the "Association of Egoists"; but this is clearly poles apart from an "anarchist" group, with their pathetic belief in the fundamental rationality and altruism of the human animal.

Whilst "individualist-anarchists" may have derived guidance and encouragement from Stirner, I think that he is, in the final analysis, quite unclassifiable. To use a colloquial phrase, he is a "one off", and the wisest thing to do is to read his book slowly and calmly, neither dismissing him because he offends our cherished prejudices nor putting him on a pedestal and claiming he was the most perceptive thinker who ever lived. If there were an afterlife, I am sure Stirner would laugh himself sick at all the characterizations of him (often mutually exclusive) that are available.

GEOFFREY WEBSTER

### ONE WORLD

Geoffrey Webster seems unable to believe that any government can be anything but tyrannical ("The Free-thinker", December 1975). But we have to face up to the problem of organising government, otherwise dictators will grab power. National governments have a good reason for being "monolithic and authoritarian"; they have to keep up armies to defend themselves from other nations. This would not apply with a world government.

The "Moloch" of world government would end war and make a better economic organisation possible. It would introduce a new concept of government—man thinking about his future.

Cheerfully disregarding a whole host of political, military, economic and psychologic problems, Mr Webster says we only need to "acknowledge that we all inhabit the same world," and somewhat obscurely adds: "I relate to you simply as . . . you. If this is done where is the need for a world government?" The simple answer is that if there's no world government "this" won't be done; the national sovereign governments will see to that!

I. S. LOW

### PEACE ON EARTH

I suppose fewer cards were sent at Christmas because of the increased cost of postage and of the cards themselves. We've got inflation in a big way and being world-wide it can hardly lead to peace on earth. With inflation, many young people leaving school are unable to get a start in their chosen careers, some hard-won careers are brought to a sudden end and national leaders cannot go ahead with development plans.

Much can be said about the disastrous effects of inflation. One of its main causes is increased expenditure on defence, a word which has lost its meaning with the ever-growing power of sophisticated weapons of war.

A common mistake in the quest for peace is to confine attention to one's immediate environment. Two world wars in this century have shown the power of national leaders to shatter peace by sanctioning wars which destroy or maim large numbers of human beings, including non-combatants, and other living creatures which look to man for their protection.

Our parliamentary representatives are not chosen for their ability to establish and maintain peace, so we cannot rely on their initiatives. In every country the

people themselves must act to establish world peace and in our everyday contacts we must try to make others aware of the danger of the arms race. This, far from ensuring world peace as the militarists would have us believe, breeds fear and suspicion, especially between nations whose political systems are opposed to each other.

The United Nations should be urged to give even more consideration to their long-standing goal of disarmament which, after all, is the only real defence of all nations, and we must have confidence in them to secure general and complete disarmament.

A useful step in this direction is a proposal made at the UN to hold a World Disarmament Conference, although the date for this has not yet been fixed. At a meeting of non-governmental organisations in Bradford last year guide-lines for such a conference were drawn up. These were published in several languages and are circulating around the world.

An international conference on disarmament will be held early this year at the University of York when the call for a Disarmament Conference will be reinforced. Once world disarmament is achieved the natural resources and the manpower of the whole world will be released for the benefit of all its peoples.

KATHLEEN TACCHI-MORRIS

Founder-President, Women for World Disarmament

### *Our Sense of the Sacred*

but interesting-looking entrance to what is now the premises of a builder. From Victorian times to the time of the Second World War it was London's Comtist Church. It is a standing witness to a brave but failed endeavour to apply "reason", as the method of natural science, to the affairs of human beings. Not far away, off Fleet Street, is (or was) Frederick Harrison's Newton Hall, once committed to the same enterprise, and likewise extinct.

The same fate will attend all who try to treat human beings in the rational way we can treat things and animals. As someone has observed, the difference between ourselves and the rest of the animal kingdom is that animals think, but we think we think. Thinking about thinking has involved us in the invention of language and all the related symbolic forms of mathematics, music, colour and design. It is wholly beyond measurement in any scientific sense. Nicolas Walter could take my weight, my height, my temperature, my pulse and even my photograph, but that's about it. What goes on inside my head, and his, is something else. It is all bound up with custom, need, aspiration, myth, talent, experience, hope and fear. The rational is important, but it does not run the show. The non-rational (as against the irrational) is as important and like responds to like. We are held together by our sense of what is important to us, i.e. by our sense of the sacred.

### NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES to the General Secretary,  
698 Holloway Road, London N19 3NL

## BPAS HAT-TRICK

The British Pregnancy Advisory Service has just won its third legal victory by obtaining apologies from two women who published letters in the *Wigan Evening Post and Chronicle* last February. One of their remarks, about the BPAS, was "... it would appear from alleged established facts that this so-called 'charity' has certain interests in some private clinics where 'abortion on demand' (illegal under the Abortion Act 1967) is easily arranged providing you can pay up." One of the letters was signed by a lady describing herself as President, Wigan SPUC.

BPAS lawyers first wrote on 11 March 1975, and only after a final order from the High Court was nearly out of time was an acceptable apology forthcoming.

Legal costs incurred by the BPAS in obtaining the apologies amounted to £250, and these are to be paid by the women concerned. In addition, they will pay £50 to help defray internal administrative costs.

Earlier in 1975 the British Pregnancy Advisory Service obtained apologies from two religious publications—the Roman Catholic *Universe* and the World Unification Church's *Rising Tide*.

## THE FREETHINKER

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A reader's letter in the pensioner's welfare paper, "Yours", gives an innocent insight into a minor source of ecclesiastical revenue. "Recently we have formed a keep-fit class. We all enjoy it very much—if anyone gains any weight, we have to give 10p towards the Church. I am pleased to say I haven't yet had to pay."

## THE FREETHINKER

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## EVENTS

**Brighton and Hove Humanist Group.** Imperial Hotel, First Avenue, Hove. Sunday, 1 February, 5.30 pm. Ronald Dingwall: "Drugs and Drug Traffic."

**Havering Humanist Society.** Harold Wood Social Centre, Tuesday, 20 January, 8 pm. Bill Bynner: "The Poet and Poetry."

**Leicester Secular Society.** The Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate, Leicester. Sunday meetings at 6.30 pm. 11 January, A. Jolland: "The Work of Leicester Woman's Aid." 18 January, Debate: R. W. Morrell and David Jewell, "That Christianity Has Been of no Value to Humanity." 25 January, Film Show. 1 February, M. Raveh: "Peace in the Middle East?" 8 February, F. A. Ridley: "The End of the Borgia Era."

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

**Merseyside Humanist Group.** Lecture Room, 16 Hamilton Square, Birkenhead. Meetings held on the third Wednesday of the Month, 7.45 pm.

**Muswell Hill Humanist Group.** 46 Windermere Road, London N10. Thursday, 15 January, 8 pm. I. G. Murray: "The History of Muswell Hill."

**South Place Ethical Society.** Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Sunday meetings at 11 am. 11 January, Denis Welland: "Moncure Conway and Anglo-American Relations." 18 January, T. F. Evans: "Church and State." 25 January, James Robertson: "Exorcising the Institutional Imperative." 1 February, I. M. Lewis: "Learning from Primitive Religions. Tuesday evening discussions at 7 pm. 13 January, David Ashforth: "The Case for the Archbishop." 20 January, I. Pritchard: "A Personal Unitarian View." 27 January, Debate: "The Archbishop of Canterbury is on the Side of the Angels."

**Surrey Humanist Groups.** Reigate, Sunday 18 January. Seminar on non-religious funeral ceremonies. Details from Mrs M. Mephram, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey. Telephone 01-642 8796.

**Worthing Humanist Group.** Burlington Hotel, Marine Parade, Worthing. Sunday, 25 January, 5.30 pm. James Hemming: "Freud's Psychoanalytical Theory."