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ANGLICANS DISAGREE ON VALUE OF CLASSROOM RELIGION

Two leading Anglicans have expressed widely differing opinions on the value, from a Christian viewpoint, of religious education in county schools. One of them, the Bishop of Wakefield (Dr Eric Treacy), says those who argue that the ending of religious education and worship in State schools would result in a collapse of morality had to face the fact that there had taken place an "appalling decline in moral standards", although religious education had been obligatory in schools for over thirty years.

Dr Treacy, writing in the March issue of his diocesan news sheet, contends that the abolition of compulsory religious education would not be an unmitigated disaster for Christianity. The bishop fears that he may be branded a heretic for his views. "But", he adds, "I am convinced that the effective presentation of the Christian faith can only, ought only, be undertaken by those who are themselves convinced of the truth they teach. Those who teach it as a duty, and who believe it not, can only do immense harm to the Christian cause."

Dr Treacy says he wishes to avoid the situation in schools in which the Christian faith is "distorted and badly taught by those who personally rejected it." The Bishop argues that religion cannot be induced by compulsion. He writes: "It is not something that can be effectively taught simply because an Act says it must be. It can only come from the mind of a man or woman to whom Christ is a reality."

"Relegated to the Shadows"

Prebendary Ronald Green spoke out in defence of religious education when he addressed a meeting of the London Diocesan Synod last month. Prebendary Green, a member of the diocesan education advisory committee, warned that religious education would be "relegated to the shadows" if the Church was complacent about the question. He told the meeting that religious education had to be seen in the setting of a society which is becoming in-

creasingly secular and in which Church influence was declining.

He warned his colleagues that if they "do not care enough to support, encourage and defend Christian education in general, then the next step is to witness the gradual eclipse of our own schools . . . Already the rumble of opposition to religious education can be heard. Sometimes the attacks are open and direct, more often they are quiet and subtle. Unless we are alert to the danger of this constant wearing away of our will, we shall find that we have lost our nerve to resist." Prebendary Green appealed to the "silent majority" to find their voice on the subject.

We would agree with Prebendary Green that it is time for the "silent majority" to find its voice on the subject of school religion. But the silent majority to whom we refer are pupils who have to attend the indoctrination sessions, and also the teachers who are forced to be hypocritical and dishonest, or else commit professional suicide by opting out of RI lessons and the daily act of worship.

Delinquency and Hypocrisy

For many years secularists have been making the same points which the Bishop of Wakefield advances in his article. If he is branded a heretic because he does not link social moral behaviour with religious education, Dr Treacy has facts and statistics on his side. Probably the most delinquent age for males in this country at the present time is when they are at school and absorbing Christian truths at compulsory RI lessons.

The religious clauses of the 1944 Education Act have done nothing to uphold morality, truth or sincere religious belief. They have been a useful weapon in the hands of unscrupulous elements inside and outside the schools who wish to impose orthodoxy and conformity on the young.

● "Save Education from Mary Whitehouse" — page 40.

Generous Response to Defence Appeal

In its final issue for 1975 the *Catholic Herald* commented on the silence of Michael Litchfield and Susan Kentish, authors of *Babies for Burning*, a horror comic which purported to expose the alleged wrongdoings of private abortion clinics. The *Catholic* weekly commented: "Serious questions raised on it have not yet been answered." To the best of our knowledge, Mr Litchfield and Mrs Kentish have not broken their silence, but we can inform the *Catholic Herald* and James White, MP, who relied heavily on the book when he was collecting information for his Abortion (Amendment) Bill, that the authors' threat of legal action against *The Freethinker* after we published an unfavourable review has not materialised.

We are also pleased to report that there was a very generous response to the Defence Appeal which was launched to pay legal expenses that were incurred by *The Freethinker*. Donations and messages of support were received from all over the country. A Walton-on-Thames reader wrote: "Most of us support to the best of our ability a variety of worthy causes, but none is to my mind more important than to maintain a vigorous Secularist and Humanist movement. Without that, most other progressive ideas would be much more subject to suppressive tactics by the established dogmatists."

A grand total of £523.69 was contributed. Legal and incidental expenses amounted to £200, and we are confident that our proposal to invest the surplus on behalf of the Freethinker Endowment Trust will meet with general approval. Our grateful thanks are extended to all contributors whose names are listed below.

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Another source of subsidies for religious organisations has been revealed by the dispute between the Department of Health and Social Security and the Guild of Catholic Doctors. The DHSS has refused to pay travelling expenses and subsistence allowance to those Guild members who are attending a conference in London on "The Doctor and Legislation". Similar conferences have been judged eligible for financial assistance, and Dr P. Linchan, head of the GCD, is complaining that the Guild has been "wrongly treated" on this occasion. He believes that unless the DHSS is prepared to award expenses, fewer members will attend the conference (which will be opened with a special Mass at Westminster Cathedral). Its committee of honour includes Archbishop Murphy of Cardiff, Archbishop Dwyer of Birmingham and Bishop Casey of Brentwood.

Freethinkers may regard chain-letters simply as an irritation, and consign them to the nearest rubbish bin where they belong. But gullible and superstitious people do not treat them so flippantly, and many fear that breaking the chain may have serious consequences.

If there is one thing worse than an ordinary chain-letter, it is a religious chain-letter. I have recently received one—probably sent by someone who saw my name and address in the correspondence column of a newspaper and, perhaps, noticed that my theme was religion!

Purporting to have originated with St Antoine de Sedi, a South American missionary, the letter contains several case-histories of former recipients who allegedly won huge lottery prizes and the like within a few days of receiving the chain-letter—only to lose them again if they had failed to pass on 20 more copies of it. Others are said to have met with sudden death for the same crime. ("General Walsh received the letter in the Philippines and received \$775,000.00, but six days later lost his life because he failed to circulate the chain.") The kernel of the letter reads: *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and all will acknowledge that he will light the way. This prayer has been sent to you for good luck."*

An elementary grasp of geometrical progression would save people from wasting time and postage on such absurdities. At the foot of the letter are listed the last 29 names in this particular chain. If each of the 20 people to whom the first of the 29 sent his copies had obeyed the peremptory injunction to do likewise, and their 20 had too, and theirs, and theirs, and theirs, then within a month every man, woman and child in the United Kingdom would have received copies, with no more than seven names on any one list. By the ninth name, everyone in the world would have received copies. Long before my particular copy, with its 29 names, had been reached, the enterprise would have used up all the paper in the world and all the trees, and would have employed all the world's population non-stop in the manufacture of paper, the copying of the letter, and attempts to deliver it to people already up to their necks in copies.

The letter does, however, contain one true statement: it says "This is not a joke." Unfortunately it is not. Many people are superstitious enough to spend their last few shillings on postage stamps to avoid breaking the chain, while some, physically incapable of copying the letter, will worry themselves to death over it. A few years ago, visiting a friend in hospital, I was horrified to see one of

these religious chain-letters on his bedside locker, and took it away in the hope he would forget about it. He was lying in a coma, caused by hypertension, and he died a few days later. He was superstitiously religious, and would certainly have worried about breaking the chain through being too ill to make copies of the letter. It is quite likely that this did in fact hasten his end. The perpetrators of the chain, had they known about his death, might well have claimed it as a consequential fulfilment of their prophecy. No joke, indeed.

OBITUARIES

MR J. BRETT

Joseph Brett, a lifelong freethinker, died recently in hospital at the age of 83. Mr Brett, a Londoner, was an ardent pacifist and had strong Left-wing sympathies. He refused to fight during the First World War, and suffered discrimination and persecution as a result.

There was a secular committal ceremony at Honor Oak Crematorium on 19 February.

MRS E. COLLINS

The death occurred on 3 February at Lewes, Sussex, of Elizabeth Collins, after a long illness. She was 85. The cremation, without ceremony, took place two days later.

Mrs Collins was a regular reader of *The Freethinker* for more than 40 years, and contributed a number of articles, mainly on historical subjects, to the paper. She was an active member of the National Secular Society, serving for some years on the Executive Committee. She wrote 103: *History of a House*, a pamphlet on the history of the Society's former premises at 103 Borough High Street, London. Her other interests included the Thomas Paine Society and a number of rationalist and local humanist organisations.

Mrs Collins is survived by her husband, Jesse.

MR J. NICHOL

James Nichol, who has died at the age of 83, had a distinguished career in education, and played an active role in the political and social life of Welwyn Garden City. He first came to the new town in 1929 to take up the post of headmaster at Hand-side Senior School. Ten years later he was appointed headmaster of Welwyn Garden City Grammar School. Sir Frederic Osborn, a pioneer of the town,

(Continued on page 39)

Whatever Happened to the Universe?

JAMES M. ALEXANDER

The recent death of Professor Wernher Heisenberg renewed interest in his great contribution to science. Almost alone of the physicists at work during the last war, he played no part in the development of the atom bomb. Indeed there is some evidence that he may have deliberately directed German research away from such a project. It was remarkable that the BBC failed to mention in an obituary Heisenberg's one great piece of objective thinking which has added to our understanding of the universe. The author of this controversial article considers the Uncertainty Principle, with all its implications, to be one of the outstanding examples of original scientific advance of the 20th century. If the behaviour of sub-atomic particles is unpredictable, then causation is negated.

"Punch, sir," an eminent Victorian is alleged to have said, on buttonholing the editor of that illustrious journal in his club, "is not what it used to be." "No", replied the editor, adding *sotto voce*, "And it never was either." This could be said almost to apply to the picture of the universe as presented in the early twentieth century and accepted for so long by so many freethinkers. The late Victorians were great "tidy-uppers"; they liked everything in its proper place and accounted for. So an orderly little universe with just 92 elements neatly and mathematically positioned in the periodic table and with atoms like a miniature solar system composed of solid billiard-ball particles forever whirling around each other seemed to be an ideal representation of the universe. True, there were a few gaps, some unexplained phenomena, an unaccounted for energy source, and some of the sums didn't come out quite right; but never mind, all would be corrected, given time.

The fact that this orderly arranged concept of the cosmos, though materialistic and "scientifically" explained, was akin to the theological idea of a god-created universe seems to have escaped some atheists, with a corresponding inability to accept fresh knowledge that invalidates the old billiard-ball universe for fear of "letting God in by the back door." We too have our fundamentalists! Those who cling to a desire for over-simplified explanations and neatly ordered patterns yet reject the implications that this thought process can lead back to seeking a creator of this apparent order are similar to the religionists who postulate eternity—but only at one end.

This is not to say that all nineteenth-century scientific thinking was at fault. Within the limits imposed by the equipment and research materials then available, they achieved the first real break-through in

beginning to understand the nature of the universe for nearly two thousand years. This was not a triumph of science or of scientists but of the scientific method through empirical observation—a very different thing. Attacks on "science", in itself a vague abstraction as being responsible for the ills of present-day society, or the wholesale blaming of scientists for pollution or the H-bomb arise from a tendency to view them as the high priests of a new religion. To equate the often unwarranted dogmatic statements of individual scientists with Papal pronouncements, or to impose a blanketing condemnation of the scientific method because of the unethical use of technology, is very loose thinking indeed.

Re-Emergence of Scientific Thinking

Some criticism, however, can be made of those nineteenth-century writers who with enthusiastic over-optimism thought the solution to all problems would be achieved through science. They believed this, because for the first time in centuries objective thinking was back where it had been in the ancient world just prior to the Christian era. Before the intellectual black-out imposed by Christianity, the civilised world was beginning to have a rational, scientific understanding of the universe. More important still, it was on the threshold of a technological revolution. Lacking economic pressures or great energy needs this empirical approach existed largely in a cultural vacuum. The availability of abundant manpower through the system of slavery could satisfy to a great extent the needs of society, thereby inhibiting any desire for industrial development.

These early proto-scientists could only operate in a state of isolation. The experiments of men like Thales with electricity, of Hero with his steam engine, and attempts at industrial mass-production methods were not related to the prevailing economy, and therefore passed into oblivion. So too, did some surprisingly modern ideas about the evolution of life and speculations by Democritus on a theory of the atomic structure of matter. These early examples of true scientific enquiry were stillborn because it was mainly a case of a quest for knowledge for its own sake, entirely divorced from a society still dominated by king and priest. Lacking the dynamic urge to take them that one vital step further towards practical application, ideas were forgotten—only to re-emerge in the eighteenth century. But this time there were different pressures at work, the results of which remain with us to this day.

A *Daily Mail* headline in the summer of 1919 announced: "Hun Professor Catches Light Bending", and the universe of Newtonian physics with its solid

spherical atoms and 92 immutable elements vanished forever. With the advent of fresh facts, the neat little parcel became irretievably untied at last. The subsequent proving of the validity of Einstein's theories of relativity led directly on to the discovery of the positron, the meson, quanta, Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, the expanding universe, quasars, pulsars, "black holes"—and the H bomb.

The problem that all this poses for the rationalist is the extent to which this new not so solid view of the universe invalidates the materialist case. Have metaphysics superseded the physical world after all? In some respects we ourselves are at fault in not always accepting the logical conclusions of our ideology. If we really accept evolution, for instance, not as something that occurred in the remote past, but as a continuing process, why shouldn't it apply not only to living matter but to the universe itself? Surely an expanding universe, expanding into space and time is not metaphysical jargon but part of evolutionary change. There is nothing that smacks of the supernatural or theology in this, nor does it weaken the materialist position in any way.

Physics and Metaphysics

When Professor Heisenberg's work on the theory of indeterminacy (or uncertainty, or randomness) to explain the strange behaviour of sub-atomic particles in the nucleus of the atom was expounded, another scientist made an unfortunate observation. In an attempt to bring the idea down to the level of a lay public, the phrase was used that "... it would seem almost as if electrons were possessed of a free-will in the way they behave." This somewhat loose analogy was immediately seized upon by some free-thinkers to the effect that scientists were now talking about atoms having free-will. As a result the acceptance in secular circles of Heisenberg's quite rationalist proposition was damned—and by the very people who, in other fields, put forward randomness or chance patterns of occurrence to explain evolutionary principles in the universe!

Properly evaluated, every one of the recent discoveries in physics and cosmology only confirm the materialist case. The (so-called) Laws of Nature have not been repealed or even modified. In a very real sense they never existed—as laws. The term served a useful purpose merely as a working hypothesis in a limited space and time scale. Certain assumptions appear to work here and now according to observations man has made of his environment during a relatively short period. There is no indication that they apply universally or eternally. All we can assume is that some rules appear to operate in the universe at its present stage of evolution.

One of the difficulties we face is mankind's love of mysteries. If there isn't one, then somebody is sure to invent a few. So many philosophers, in attempting to interpret scientific facts try to find reasons for, or purpose behind them, forgetting that

the only purpose in the universe is that which we create in adapting and utilising the environment to our needs. It is this error about purpose that has led to many unwarrantable assumptions in attempting to give a mystical tinge to new ideas and fresh discoveries. This nostalgia for a supernatural explanation (like the mystical perambulations of Edington and Jeans—"God is a mathematician") and the mental gyrations of philosophers, were ably disposed of at the time by our own writers. Perhaps some of us should read again Chapman Cohen on *God and the Universe*, or Susan Stebbings' brilliant *Thinking to Some Purpose and Philosophy and the Philosophers*.

The Apple Still Falls to Earth

The so-called "crisis" in physics of recent years would appear upon due examination to be but a crisis in the mind. This manifests itself in a failure to comprehend the changes in thinking that new knowledge has brought with a resultant refuge in a mystical or supernatural solution as a substitute for a rational approach. In the attempt to reconcile both the old and the new views of the universe, much heart-searching has been caused some secularists by the "steady-state" or "big-bang" controversy. While neither proposition can be proved with finality, all the evidence that we have at present must lean towards accepting the latter as more probable. Why it should be thought that the idea of a changeless static cosmos continuing indefinitely is more acceptable than that a critical point is reached where a sudden change in structure occurs, escapes me. The steady-state theory has overtones of a supernatural order, a god-ordained and instituted system perfect and eternal.

If we presume a "big-bang" initiating the universe as it now exists this is in line with well-known phenomena like pressure building up in a boiler until it suddenly bursts, or mounting current in electrical equipment reaching the stage where it blows a fuse. Or, more significantly, in the world of physics the bombardment of sub-atomic particles reaching the critical point of a nuclear explosion. Similar sudden changes in the state of matter are *qualitative* as well as *quantitative*, as Heisenberg so brilliantly showed, but this change does not presuppose the introduction of any para-physical elements. It is merely an alteration in the structure of matter, wherein different rules operate. These natural occurrences do not presuppose a creator to press the button or throw a switch.

Similarly, there is nothing metaphysical in the concept of anti-matter, or of black holes in space. True, they are only theoretical; we do not know if they exist. But they do possibly account for the final disposal of the incredible amount of energy continually being produced in interstellar space. What

(Continued on page 45)

The prosecution of the publisher of "Inside Linda Lovelace", at a huge cost to tax payers, gave further credence to Mr Bumble's immortal words, "the law is a ass." But there are more serious considerations than waste of public money. The censorship lobby is a sinister political force. For, as the author of this article argues, books in the dock are ideas in the dock.

There must be something badly amiss with me. I don't care a fig what (or who) goes on inside Linda Lovelace—but I care intensely what goes on inside Ronald Butt, David Holbrook, Jill Knight MP, Lord Longford, Malcolm Muggeridge and Mary Whitehouse. And inside the aptly named Mr Brian Leary. Mr Leary, you ask? Well, he is the prosecuting barrister who pops up time and again in the more sensational obscenity trials, foaming at the mouth about SEX, which he apparently regards as "debasement" unless it is accompanied by love.

It can scarcely be denied that this is a distinctly contentious proposition. So for this reason alone (although there are many others) I strenuously object to the State, in the person of the Director of Public Prosecutions employing Mr Brian Leary, taking it upon itself to decide what you or I may or may not read, see, hear or do in the sexual sphere. Which is why I do not particularly rejoice at the acquittal of Heinrich Hanau for publishing *Inside Linda Lovelace*. I regard it as scandalous that he was ever prosecuted at all for doing so. And whether the cost to public funds was £200,000 or £20,000 (which the complainant, Mr Watts, considered would be cheap to the taxpayer if it started to "clean up Britain") or £13,000 as the Attorney-General has stated, I consider it a gross misuse of my and your taxes. Apart from all else it has provided a gratuitous selling boost for tawdry trash.

But even tawdry trash has a right to be published. I do not *want* to live in a censored society. I agree with John Milton's oft-misquoted statement in *Areopagitica* that liberty of speech, even if abused, is infinitely preferable to the licensing of printing. And with J. S. Mill that in the market place of ideas truth, logic and virtue have more to gain from a free than a fettered arena.

So I would defend smut? I would defend the portrayal of sado-masochistic violence? I would defend accounts of sickening torture? Yes, I would, *because these things happen in the world whether we are allowed to know it or not: and because we shall never overcome evil by being kept in ignorance of its existence.*

This is my answer to the splutterings of Ronald Butt, who concluded a lengthy *Times* article of 5

February ("Pornography: a Question of First Principles") with an exhortation to book burning worthy of Torquemada: "The exercise of debating skills is no longer relevant. It is time we let ourselves concentrate on what, with the accumulation of human wisdom, we *know* to be right and act accordingly" (my italics); and to those of David Holbrook, who in the following day's issue alleged in a letter to the Editor that the unfortunate exploited performers in pornographic films who compensated by public acting out for "their inability to understand what sex means" would in their mounting desperation progress to brutal viciousness, rape and even murder.

Even if one swallows (with genuflections to Linda Lovelace) the alarmist notion now being assiduously peddled by Holbrook, Butt and anonymous *Times* leader writers that all pornography is potentially an incitement to violence and murder—as valid a thesis, I would have thought, as that all pot smoking inevitably leads on to heroin addiction or that the imbibing of mothers' milk will surely bring you to chronic alcoholism—we are still left with the debatable question of whether pornography or the banning of books is the greater evil. And, with no apologies to Ronald Butt, I shall continue debating it until I am legally banned from doing so.

Holy Porn

Books in the dock are ideas in the dock. And ideas in the dock—even ideas which may deprave and corrupt—are the hallmark of the totalitarian State. (The Bible, incidentally, has probably corrupted and depraved more people into religious fanaticism, intolerance and cruelty than pornography has into sexual vice, violence or murder, while its highly subversive doctrines of loving one's neighbour and forgiving one's enemies have been widely ignored by professing Christians; so on balance it may well have done the world more harm than good. Messrs Butt and Muggeridge will doubtless be delighted to know that nonetheless I have no desire to ban it—and indeed, that I on occasion read it with enjoyment and profit, as I also do pornography.)

But in these so called "obscenity" trials, it is not only the published word or picture that is placed in the dock. The prosecution's customary conduct of these cases, from *Lady Chatterley's Lover* through *OZ*, *IT* and the *Little Red School Book* to *Inside Linda Lovelace*, endeavours to place "unorthodox" sexuality and "alternative" life styles in the dock. The grotesquely medieval and paternalistic notion that the Courts are the watchdogs of personal, private morals which was so unblushingly unearthed by the Law Lords in the *Ladies' Directory* case, and which—though it has been scotched by the Law Commission—is still not Parliamentarily dead, is

taken as read by Mr Leary and his prosecuting colleagues in each new trial.

Oral sex, for instance—known by most competent sexologists to be a widespread and harmless practice—was denounced by the Linda Lovelace Judge Rigg as “unnatural”, and by the omniscient Mr Leary as liable to cause death. (Perhaps the Registrar-General would kindly oblige with figures of the numbers of deaths caused through oral sex during each of the past 20 years?) And Judge Rigg—though hastily disclaiming any expertise when he got embroiled in a passage at arms with defence witness Marion Boyars about what constituted sado-masochism—announced at one point: “We all know what God created us to do.”

Do we? If only it were as simple as that! Once again, I resent my taxes being misspent to pay the stipends of people who are capable of making such asinine remarks.

Sexual Totalitarians

With variant sexuality in the dock, your and my privacy and freedom are in the dock. If you or I want to fuck, suck, bugger or masturbate with whom we like how we like, or to stimulate ourselves with “blue” films, books or photographs, what the hell business is it of Messrs Holroyd, Butt, Rigg and Leary, or of Mesdames Whitehouse, Knight or HM The Queen, so long as we don’t do it in the streets and frighten the horses? Yes, I agree, these people have a right to some protection from being offended by public displays of sexuality or its depiction—but they have no business at all to deny anyone else the freedom to do, see, hear or read whatever they want to in the company of other like-minded people. As the Sexual Law Reform Society’s working party has pointed out, it is high time that this was made clear by Parliament, once and for all.

Where the sexual totalitarians err is that by elevating sex from a natural, mundane activity into a “sacramental” one, they paradoxically defile it by making out that at least 85 per cent of what human beings actually *do* sexually is dirty and degrading. They are so threatened by other peoples’ free and spontaneous enjoyment of sexuality that they are impelled to ban not only its depiction or description, but also (wherever they can get away with it) sexual performance itself, on the far-fetched pretext that freeing sexuality leads to rape and murder—which are in fact far more likely to result from enforced sexual repression than from over-indulgence.

All this tells us far more about the morbid psychology of the prurient prudes than it reveals concerning those of us who enjoy watching—or creating—explicitly sexual books and films without feeling ourselves to be “corrupted or depraved” thereby.

Yes, love is beautiful and uplifting: so is human sexuality in all its varieties when mutually desired and sought—and the latter just as often inspires the former as vice versa. So provided that it is unforced

and freely responded to, let us reassert the positive, life-enhancing properties of LUST, and sweep aside the snivelling, canting purveyors of sexual guilt and deprivation with their humbug about a “morality” which is an insult even to the sub-standard brand of “Christianity” that they profess.

The annual dinner of the National Secular Society takes place in London on Saturday, 3 April. Edward Blishen, the educationist, writer and critic, will be guest of honour. Other speakers will be Nicholas Tucker, a lecturer at Sussex University, Diane Munday, a leading campaigner for safe and legal abortion, Nicolas Walter, editor of “New Humanist” and Barbara Smoker, president of the NSS. See display advertisement on back page for details.

Obituaries

said in a tribute that Mr Nichol “was a quite brilliant headmaster.”

Mr Nichol was an active worker for the Labour Party, and was a former county councillor. His wife, Muriel, was Labour MP for North Bradford from 1945 until 1950. He was a founder member of Welwyn Garden City Humanist Group, and an active member of the local United Nations Association. He did much to revive the work of the theatre in his locality. Mr Nichol was a keen member of the National Secular Society and a reader of *The Freethinker*.

Charles Wilshaw conducted a secular committal ceremony at West Herts Crematorium, Watford, and there was a large attendance at a memorial meeting which took place in Welwyn Garden City on 14 February.

MR. C. SCHILLER

Christian Schiller, whose death occurred at the age of 80 after a short illness, made an outstanding contribution to primary education in this country. As an Inspector of schools in pre-war Liverpool he had first-hand experience of the conditions under which working-class children lived, and the problems with which their teachers had to contend.

His work and ideas were much valued in educational circles, and after retirement Mr Schiller was in constant demand as a lecturer at the University of London Institute of Education and elsewhere. He had no religious beliefs, and there was a secular committal ceremony at the Breakspear Crematorium, Ruislip, on 18 February.

SAVE EDUCATION FROM MARY WHITEHOUSE

Mary Whitehouse's latest campaign has been mounted in defence of religious indoctrination in the nation's schools, and to compel pupils to participate in acts of worship. The campaign, known as Save Religious Education, will take the form of a national petition. Its supporters include Raymond Johnston (director of the Nationwide Festival of Light), Lady Lothian (chairman of the Order of Christian Unity), Sir William Gladstone (the Chief Scout) and John Boyd (a trade union leader and Salvation Army bandsman).

Speaking at a press conference in London, Mrs Whitehouse described Save Religious Education as "probably the most important campaign in which any of us has ever become involved." The campaign certainly demonstrates Mrs Whitehouse's arrogance. For, as National Secular Society president Barbara Smoker pointed out in a letter to *The Times*, "it rests on the assumption that she is competent to decide for others that a personal God exists."

Mrs Whitehouse endeavoured to make her hearers' flesh creep with a dire warning that "if the Humanists and Left-wing dogmatists get their way and Christian religious education is removed from schools, then all other campaigns will be lost as a matter of course." (It is to Mrs Whitehouse's credit that she does not indulge in ecumenical cant about non-Christian faiths; *Christian* religious education alone is the sure defence against Humanist machinations.) She added darkly that the campaign against school religion had "very deep political implications."

Her condemnation of "dedicated and vociferous minority groups . . . often with political motives" is a classic example of the pot calling the kettle black. For more than a decade Mrs Whitehouse and her friends have been shouting their heads off every time they imagine that their narrow, Right-wing Christian beliefs are being questioned. They have bombarded Parliament, the newspapers, radio and television stations with protests on the most piffling issues. It is ironic that Fleet Street and the broadcasters—chief targets and potential victims of these busybodies—should have elevated a censorious schoolmarm like Mary Whitehouse to the status of her virginal namesake in Christian mythology.

It has been claimed that Save Religious Education was launched as a reaction to the announcement that Geoffrey Edge, Labour MP for Aldridge and Brownhills, is planning to introduce into Parliament a private member's Bill which the British Humanist Association played a significant part in drafting. No doubt there is an element of truth in this report, but it is very likely that Mrs Whitehouse is worried by other, more ominous, developments.

For instance there is little doubt that the religious clauses of the 1944 Education Act are fast becoming a dead letter, and that many head teachers sim-

NEWS

ply ignore them. A layer of chalk dust has settled on bibles and hymn-books. Social education has replaced RI, and a completely secular form of assembly takes place in hundreds of schools.

This is contrary to the law. But a law which has fallen into disrepute, is deliberately evaded by responsible and dedicated teachers, and is no longer in accord with contemporary social attitudes, does not merit respect. Head teachers who value educational principles and regard honesty as being more important than paying lip service to clapped-out Christianity deserve support, and should be encouraged to evade the religious requirements of the 1944 Act. They should be made aware of publications which will provide them with ideas for secular assemblies. (Two booklets, *Humanism*, 40p, and *Wider Horizons*, 30p, are obtainable from *The Free-thinker* office.)

Teachers can opt out of school religion in accordance with the "conscience clause" of the Education Act. But if parents refuse to request—either through ignorance of their legal rights or because of religious motivation—their son's or daughter's withdrawal from RI and acts of worship, the unfortunate pupil must often submit to this daily dose of Christian superstition. It may soon be possible for pupils in certain schools to organise demonstrations and refuse to attend RI classes if their parents will not request their withdrawal.

Another reason why Christian indoctrinators like Mary Whitehouse are determined to "save religious education" and hold on to captive audiences may be found in the latest *Church of England Year Book*. It records a further decline in the number of baptisms, confirmations and Easter communicants in Anglican churches during the period 1970-73. Infant baptisms fell by 14.3 per cent, confirmations by 11.3 per cent and Easter communicants by 7.2 per cent. The figure for "persons usually attending Sunday services" decreased by 8.5 per cent.

No doubt there will be an impressive number of signatures on the Save Religious Education petition. But it would be interesting to know how many of the adult signatories themselves attend a collective act of worship five times a week or even once in five weeks.

The Humanist movement must retaliate against the Whitehouse campaign, and for a start it should revive the Humanist Teachers Association to spearhead the campaign against religious indoctrination in county schools and against State subsidies for Church schools.

AND NOTES

A PLEA FOR DIVERSITY

Last month our contemporary, *New Humanist*, published an article entitled "A Plea for Unity", in which the author wrote "... to make the voice of Humanism heard more clearly in our society, I would plead with the major organisations to join forces and form one 'parent' organisation." He was moved into making this appeal by a dinner-table encounter with a third-year medical student, aged 21 (nearly), who confessed that she had never heard of the British Humanist Association, National Secular Society, Rationalist Press Association or South Place Ethical Society. Whether or not she would have heard of a Humanist movement that consisted of only one organisation is a moot point, but some Humanists will respond now to any prompting, or endorse any proposal for merging the various groups into one, "united" organisation.

We use the word "now" deliberately, for it was not always thus. In the heady, Swinging 60s, when Humanism was the "in" word, fashionable with Fleet Street and the broadcasters, there was little talk of unity (with the secular wing of the movement at any rate). The National Secular Society was dismissed as an interloping splinter-group of old-fashioned Victorian rationalists, bishop bashers and working-class types. It was traduced by Professor (later Sir Alfred) Ayer, the then high priest of Humanism, and by his sycophantic admirers. People who had been in the movement for all of a month were wont to hold forth on the "narrowness" and "intolerance" of the NSS.

In fact the NSS had a century of work and campaigning on a wide range of issues to its credit. During the 1960s it shared its platform with speakers representing a wide spectrum of religious belief—from the Lord's Day Observance Society to the Society of Jesus. But some people found its insistence on plain speaking, and a refusal to obscure basic principles, rather uncomfortable. Its warnings against the temptation to over-sell the movement, the fickleness of the media, and readiness to compromise at all times, were not conducive to cosy chit-chat at ecumenical tea-parties. The warnings were ignored; if the Humanist movement is not now making an impact on society its failure to do so does not arise from the absence of one "parent" organisation at national level, but from a lack of purpose and a will to fight. A large section of the movement is suffering from intellectual and organisational castration.

During the last ten years law reforms relating to abortion, divorce, stage censorship, male homosexuality and Sunday observance have been achieved, many of them as a result of decades of struggle and sacrifice by a dedicated minority. Now they are being attacked by religious pressure groups, and there is scarcely a squeak of protest from the Humanist movement. Many Humanists are so anxious not to offend religionists that they will not raise voice or pen against those who are endeavouring to impose their views and standards on the rest of the community. According to such Humanists, Christians who agitate for more censorship, classroom indoctrination and religious privilege are "sincere". Secularists who speak out against religious superstition and social divisiveness are "intolerant". Tolerance is most commendable, but if not tempered by realism it soon degenerates into the mealy-mouthed wetness which is all too prevalent in the Humanist movement today.

It should be remembered that organised Humanism does not consist only of national bodies. There is a network of Humanist groups in cities and towns all over Britain. They meet fairly regularly, but—with a few notable exceptions—their *raison d'être* appears to be providing a platform for other organisations. There is little discussion and even less action on issues which should be of prime concern to Humanists. Few groups even attempt to establish contact with the local press, radio or elected representatives. They give virtually no support to the movement's publications; there has not been a weekly Humanist journal since 1972 and present trends indicate that there will not be a monthly one either by 1980.

There are plenty of opportunities for the Humanist movement to make an impact at national and local level. But the opportunities are being lost because of a genteel aversion to criticism of religion, failure to use fully the resources at our disposal, and by wasting time peering into the entrails of the BHA, NSS, RPA and SPES.

Even if a complete merger of the national bodies were legally possible the ethics of such an operation would be highly dubious. The National Secular Society's assets have been acquired over the years through gifts and legacies bequeathed by those who wanted their money to be used by an organisation working for the advancement of secularism, and which prefers combatting religious superstition rather than playing at churches and chapels.

Those well-intentioned people who argue that a monolithic national organisation will put Humanism on the crest of the wave are deluding themselves. It would result only in further contraction, and insularity. We cannot prosper simply by taking in one another's washing; there are no short cuts to success.

BOOKS

KRISHNAMURTI: THE YEARS OF AWAKENING by Mary Lutyens. John Murray £6.

"Cult of Star Awaits Glory of the Coming Lord", "New Gospel Told by Annie Besant", "A New Messiah in Tennis Flannels", "New Deity Comes in Plus-Fours": these were some of the headlines when Krishnamurti arrived from New York in Southampton on 26 August, 1926. Here he was, an Indian youth, proclaimed by Annie Besant and the Theosophical Society, as a new world teacher. During the following few years he spoke at meetings in India, the USA (where he addressed an audience of 16,000 at Hollywood Bowl) and Europe. An estimated two million listeners heard his broadcast on "The Search for Happiness" from the Eiffel Tower Radio Station.

In September last year, I heard the same man, now in his eighties, speaking at Brockwood Park, where a school, based on his ideas has been founded. After he had alertly and vigorously thought aloud before his audience on the subject of man's psychological submission to fear, he answered questions. When asked if it was not true that his teaching was comparable to that of Jesus Christ, he replied: "In no way. I'm not a leader, not a teacher, not a guru. And anyway there's reason to doubt the existence of Christ at all . . ." The vehemence with which he disclaimed his role as a leader or teacher was slightly belied by the followers surrounding him, but it is very clear that his thought has progressed considerably since the 1920s.

Much of the explanation for the unmaking of this messiah is found in Mary Lutyens' new biography of his early years. She and her family were very much involved in the events described; she seems a little naively uncritical of the Theosophical Society and clearly retains a great admiration for Krishnamurti. The book is written coolly and has the feel of emotion recollected in tranquillity. She tries to emphasise objectivity by speaking of herself in the third person and has the advantage of writing with intimate memory of the events and of the Theosophical Society.

This movement, which was founded in 1875, was a weird mixture of aspirations towards a universal brotherhood and world religion combined with an accumulation of as much occult claptrap as you could fear to find anywhere. Madame Blavatsky, one of the founders, latched on to the Eastern idea of the wheel of Karma from which the soul or ego, through a series of progressive reincarnations, may ultimately be released. This release was to be obtained with the assistance of Masters and Adepts and a whole hocus of Discipleship and Initiation. It was believed that the Lord Maitreya manifested himself on earth as Buddha and Christ and was soon to re-appear as a world teacher in human form.

FREETHINKER

(Maitreya or Budhha-to-be comes from Tibetan Buddhism). This news was made particularly clear by two Masters, to be found in their human form in Tibet; fortunately, in these pre-aeroplane days, they frequently assumed "etheric form" and could convey their information without fear of either geographical delay or contradiction.

The book provides, incidentally, an interesting sidelight on Annie Besant, as energetic in old age in her pursuit of the ideals of Theosophy and Indian independence as she had once been as vice-president of the National Secular Society and champion of rationalist issues. She emerges as a woman of great personal loyalty and enthusiasm, becoming somewhat bewildered at the end of her life by conflicting loyalties. Also in the leadership was Charles Leadbetter, adept at surviving scandals relating to his alleged sexual relations with young boys and always on the look out for new messiahs. (Mary Lutyens seems to be rather credulous in accepting so totally Leadbetter's self-justification that he taught young boys masturbation as a healthy prophylactic). It was at the centre at Adyar in India that he spotted Krishnamurti as a boy on the beach, and was immediately aware by his wonderful aura that this was someone whose previous lives had led him high on the path. Krishnamurti was taken up by the Theosophical movement and regarded as a potential future world teacher. Though Krishnamurti was educated and nurtured for future messiahship, Leadbetter hedged his bets by occasionally discovering other youths as potential candidates, but since their eventual destination was as Buddhas on Mercury, there would presumably have been room for them all.

As a young man, Krishnamurti was unhappy with his future role and was as interested in motorbikes and mechanics as he was in spiritual quests. However, after being initiated in "the Path," in due course "the Process" began and he underwent a long phase of extreme pain and suffering, which, given a different structure of behaviour explanation, would have been called mental illness. This regular pain and prostration was accounted for as "the Process" by which his body was being prepared for its ultimate goal as a vehicle for the manifestation of the Lord Maitreya.

I would speculate that this anguish was a consequence of extreme conflict between his own feelings of distaste for his role and his loyalties towards those who had brought him up, and between sexual desires for one or two young women around him and the need for purity in "the Path". Increasingly, he came to express dissatisfaction with the ideas of the

REVIEWS

Theosophical Society, and surprised audiences by telling them that they should look for truth and happiness within themselves. This particularly disturbed members of the Theosophical hierarchy, whose role as initiators was thus undercut. Eventually he publicly disclaimed his role and dissolved the Order of the Star, declaring: "There is no understanding in the worship of personalities."

A speech on the Dutch radio clearly revealed his new position: "I maintain that Truth is a pathless land, and you cannot approach it by any path whatsoever, by any religion, by any sect. That is my point of view, and I adhere to that absolutely and unconditionally. Truth, being limitless, unconditioned, unapproachable by any path whatsoever, cannot be organised: nor should any organisation be formed to lead or coerce people along any particular path. If you first understand that, then you will see how impossible it is to organise belief. A belief is purely an individual matter, and you cannot and must not organise it. If you do, it becomes dead, crystallised; it becomes a creed, a sect, a religion, to be imposed on others."

This is a position which he has since maintained throughout 45 years of lecturing and writing. He has elaborated a core of ideas which are quite unsystematic and undogmatic, fundamental to which is an opposition to beliefs and creeds and, particularly, institutionalised religion. ("Christianity," he said at the Brockwood meeting, "invented sin and then claimed the credit for being able to save you from it.") Paradoxically his followers seem to be searching for a teacher and hungering for a message; and are thus least able to appreciate what he says.

Some of Krishnamurti's writings seem unclear and repetitive to me. (The First and Second Krishnamurti Readers, published by Penguin, gave a good sample of his ideas.) But in his examination of issues such as conflict, fear, anxiety, time and belief, his reflections might be worth attending to by those concerned with thinking about an ethic without a metaphysic.

JIM HERRICK

THE HOT-HOUSE PLANT: AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A YOUNG GIRL by Yvonne Stevenson. Elek/Pemberton. £6 and £3.

The young face of Yvonne Stevenson, strong and defiant, yet wistful, looks out from the cover of this remarkable book about her youth, which she wrote at white heat when she was 25, but has published only now, 30 years later. This story should be of intense interest to every rationalist who has personally experienced, or observed in others, the struggle towards liberation from a strict Christian upbringing and family life. Women also will find here the harsh trials of a female mind asserting, against all odds, its right to recognition and education.

Daughter of a sincere, Christian, Church of England vicar, Yvonne was born with the logical mind of a scientist in search of objective truth. Even severe physical punishment could not induce her to promise never again to bite her younger sister, the laws of probability insisted that, given provocation, she would. With total acceptance of the teachings of her religion, she went through agonies of guilt over her sins, and steeled herself to endure pain that she might share in the sufferings of Christ. At the same time, that logical mind in a child only eight years old, was absorbed in playing with numbers and, before she was much older, fascinated with the concept of infinity, which she expressed in mathematical terms. Yvonne set herself to live on a spiritual plane of unselfish service to others, but, taking Christianity literally in every detail, demanded to have everything explained.

Inevitably she became one of those irrepressible, bright children who perpetually ask inconvenient questions and get dusty answers. What were souls like after death? Could the soul of a lunatic learn to distinguish between right and wrong? What about the poor? She swallowed perforce the hypocrisy of her time and class—the poor do not feel cold and hunger as we do; servants must learn to refer to the Master and the Mistress, Miss Yvonne, and so on. There was a fine distinction between individuals who were addressed on envelopes as "Mr" or "Esq", as also between which visitors to the vicarage were shown into which room. The vicar's daughters must always appear in church in their Sunday best. How well those who are old enough can recall that comfortable, churchy environment—the smug cocoon, the hot-house that enclosed this lonely rebellious girl. With what courage she later defied her father in his own pulpit by turning up on Sunday in her shabbiest clothes—symbol of true Christian humility.

The loneliness of such an "odd one out" is terrifying. The child finds no one to whom she dares confide her fears, all those evil thoughts: "surely no one can be as sinful as me." All around are these right-thinking people who know themselves

The 1976 "Catholic Directory for England and Wales" shows that the number of baptisms has declined by over five thousand during the year. Marriages (including mixed marriages), and conversions have also fallen, and the estimated Catholic population of England and Wales has dropped by 3,500.

to be good, whatever they may say on their knees in the general confession on a Sunday.

Schools brought no release for Yvonne from her bondage. They did not differ from the home atmosphere. They gave her, as she says an "English, Christian, public school education—the most expensive education that England has to offer" bestowing on her the "English heritage." By the end of 20 years she "was within a hair's breadth of losing (her) reason." At this point one should reflect that, despite some degree of public enlightenment, countless delicate young minds here and now are enduring the same indoctrination and frustration.

The escape route for Yvonne, as it has been for others, was the University. She wanted to study science, but this was not lady-like enough; a compromise on mathematics with two languages was found. In a short space of time she discovered that there were actually two people in the College in London University who did not believe in God. A woman fellow student who was even a Marxist and a member of the Independent Labour Party, was astounded that Yvonne had never heard of Lenin. Education in the realities of the world outside her home proceeded apace. Through her socialist friend she became aware that she was ashamed of her own body, and, with characteristic thoroughness, began, when alone, to practice nudity. Overwork and the strain of so much introspection caused her to fail the Intermediate Examination. And then came the strange hallucinatory experience which she describes vividly, in which the perfectionist God outside nature disappeared and she felt herself bound by nature's laws which she had, she felt, been disobeying.

"I have been born again!" she writes, "I am part of nature now. A human animal. That means I must join myself up to my body. There must be no longer a division at the neck . . . I will entrust myself to the laws of nature, since I am part of nature. And the laws of nature will guide me through my body: they will send me their messages, up through my neck to my head, and I will no longer use my head alone—my reason—and neglect the feelings in my body." "Born again—a human animal", and with that feeling of unity within herself came also a reassuring sense of oneness with all life on the planet, no longer a floating above it as a superior being in search of a soul without sin.

The trials of the "new" Yvonne were not over. In the face of her father's objections she was not able to return to the College in London University to do science, as she hoped. She was over-persuaded to try a domestic science college in the West country, but stubbornly insisted on leaving, when she found it could not satisfy her hunger for the pursuit of pure academic knowledge. At long last, with her father's consent, she entered the red-

brick University in her then home town, to take mathematics and physics. She writes of this rather shabby place and its far from affluent students (but, to her, fine teachers), with joy.

A graduate in 1939, Yvonne Stevenson spent four years in war work, followed after the war by research in psychology at Cambridge University, and later with the Medical Research Council. She emerges as professionally, intellectually and emotionally concerned with the findings of present day advanced psychiatry and sociology.

I have found this human document—the passionate out-pourings of a young being "hot for certainties in this our life" deeply moving. For the reason that it repeats what was for me an almost identical course of emancipation and self-realisation. For me also the University was an escape into the freedom to use my mind untrammelled by dogma. The *splendour* of that moment of a mind set free! And I also resolved my dilemmas by identification with the organic world and a return to what I called biological values. I wrote: "Animals we are and animals we remain and the path to our regeneration . . . lies through our animal nature." Yvonne Stevenson stresses that for her, though she was troubled by ignorance about sex, this did not cause neurosis or trauma. Her search was, like my own, rather a crusade of the mind and spirit. In a way we were both a part of what has become the movement towards humanist thought and aspirations of the present time.

DORA RUSSELL

CHRIST THE LORD: A STUDY IN THE PURPOSE AND THEOLOGY OF LUKE—ACTS by Eric Franklin. SPCK, £8.95.

This book is another serious blow to those who would take the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles (both, of course, written by the same author) as sources of accurate information about the historical Jesus and the early Church. Luke's gospel has often been more acceptable than the other three in the Canon because it serves as an easier basis for liberal-humanitarian interpretations of Jesus which seem plausible even to the uncommitted; and as for Acts, it has so often been argued that this work shows such accurate knowledge of details of Roman administration (distinguishing for instance, correctly between senatorial and imperial provinces) that it must be accepted as a well-informed account from a meticulous historian.

But, as Mr Franklin points out (p.216), from the fact that the author knew some history, it does not in the least follow that he would be unwilling to manipulate his material when to do so suited his theological ends. And Franklin shows that what the Canonical author has given us is in fact an adaptation of earlier material about Jesus—a re-interpretation guided by his desire to reassure

Christians of his own day who were perplexed because Jesus' second coming had not occurred and because the Jews had become fiercely hostile to Christian claims. Franklin's case can naturally be argued most cogently apropos of the gospel, for here (as is not the case with Acts) the prime source (the gospel of Mark) is extant, and Luke's use of it "shows that he was no slave to his sources" (p.34).

Franklin rightly stresses the significance of the Ascension for Luke's Christology. This is not something he took from an earlier gospel. It is unmentioned in Mark and Matthew, and the brief reference to it in the appendix to Mark was clearly written by someone familiar with Luke. Luke may, of course, have drawn it from some tradition or other, but, as Franklin says (p.192), it is likely that he himself was responsible for it. Luke relates the event twice—once at the end of his gospel and once at the beginning of Acts. The two narratives serve somewhat different purposes and are, for that reason, to some extent in contradiction. Their implications are also not completely to be harmonised with those of other—more traditional—Christological statements in Luke-Acts. Franklin says: "all this points to the conclusion that Luke's scheme is an artificial one and is most likely to have been of his own making" (p.33). At his Ascension Jesus rises to the right hand of God, i.e. shares in his sovereignty, receives from him the spirit, which he then immediately (at the first Whitsuntide) imparts to the apostles. The point of such narrative is to convince the reader that "Jesus was no hero of the past, but the Lord of the present" (p.174) whose second coming can be confidently expected in spite of its delay.

The whole book is closely reasoned and thoroughly worthy of the standard commentaries by Conzelmann and Haenchen, on which it is based and which it attempts on points of detail to correct. Mr Franklin teaches at a theological college. The next generation of parsons can hardly be fundamentalists.

G. A. WELLS

The Universe

happens to it? We just don't know, but the idea of it being transformed under conditions where both matter and energy cease to exist (as we understand these terms in the universe as it appears to us here and now) seems to me a perfectly rational explanation.

Let us have no fears about the truth of our atheistic position. Nothing in the latest scientific thought on the nature of the universe should lead us to suppose there is any danger of god hovering about somewhere, trying to creep back into the scheme of things via the back-door. The universe remains a thoroughly material structure, but some of our notions about it have to be amended.

LETTERS

What is important about Ethel Mannin's letter in the January "Freethinker" is not so much that it might result in her being stood in the corner with Lord Longford, but that like him she has demonstrated that she deserves to be for her confusion of fact with opinion and scant regard for the laws of logic.

Her example of the Moors murderers committing their atrocities after reading de Sade would serve as a text-book example of the fallacy known to logicians as "post hoc ergo propter hoc"—the assumption that, because one event follows another, it must therefore have been caused by it. For all we know, it is at least as probable that work such as de Sade's was responsible for sublimating their desires, thus preventing them from inflicting them sooner on members of the public. Until investigations are conducted with something approaching scientific rigour, we simply do not know either way, and silence on the matter would be both a more rational and a more prudent course.

If Miss Mannin feels that her mind has been, by her criterion, "polluted" by descriptions of pornography, that is sad. But unless she is prepared to accept that others are equally entitled to hold different criteria without having their freedom of action restrained, she will be contributing to a climate of opinion in which demagogues can attract the unwary with claims that we are being corrupted by tolerating homosexuals, Jews, or even Ethel Mannin.

A. J. LOWRY

I am sorry that I misunderstood Antony Grey when he wrote about the Cambridge rapist, and agree with him that the sentence passed on this wretched psychopath is no cause for rejoicing, our prison system being what it is. Nevertheless psychopaths have to be restrained for the protection of society, and I don't know what the solution to such a problem is (nor, I expect, does Mr Grey).

The comment in my review of Gordon Rattray Taylor's "How to Avoid the Future" that he had only two brief references to pornography in it is indeed "significant". He was dealing with various forms of physical pollution damaging and dooming our planet; I had hoped that he would also show the moral and cultural pollution caused by all forms of pornography. For, like it or not, pornography is doing just that.

On this I stand, but have no more to say.

ETHEL MANNIN

This correspondence is now closed—Editor.

SCHOOL RELIGION

So: Harry Stopes-Roe rules ("The Freethinker", February) that fascism, flat-earthism and astrology "are not stances for living at all" and present small problem because they are "marginal cases". He doesn't say by what standard he judges marginalness. I can think of two standards that are likely to be used by which astrology, at least, is "not" marginal. If the pop press is any guide, astrology might well claim to be the most widely consulted system of supernatural belief in the country. It could also claim, quite plausibly, to be the most ancient.

If the British Humanist Association Bill became law, it wouldn't be Harry Stopes-Roe who issued the rulings. It would be for Parliament to say what is or isn't a "stance for living" and what is or isn't a balanced treatment of it in the classroom, though the Bill would oblige Parliament to judge by "proper educational principles". When I ask who is to judge what "proper educational principles" are, Dr Stopes-Roe replies "The concensus of those concerned with edu-

cation." Right. And who are they? Pupils? Voters? Students of educational theory? Civil servants at the DES? Parents? It's hard to think of anyone who isn't, as pupil or as tax and rate payer, "concerned with education." To whom does the BHA mean to give the "effective" power to judge?

Dr Stopes-Roe is strong on accusing his critics of not having read the BHA pamphlet thoroughly. "Our central clause", he says, "requires that if a school discusses religious or non-religious belief systems, then it must discuss both, fairly and in balance." I, he maintains, seem to have read only the first half of the clause and therefore commit a "bad boob". The boob is his. I think he should read page 47 of the BHA pamphlet. "Any education", it says, "given . . . with respect to religious or non-religious outlooks or systems of belief shall be objective and (taken overall) fair and balanced over the range of such outlooks and systems of belief." For the second time I invite the BHA to scrutinise that first "or". I think it would permit a school to ignore non-religious systems of belief and teach only religious systems, provided its teaching gave a balanced account of the range of such (i.e. religious) systems.

Dr Stopes-Roe conjectures that I ridicule the words "stance for living" because I have no coherent thought on the "actual matter". True, I have no coherent thought on it; what the "actual matter" consists of hasn't been made clear. But my motive in ridiculing the phrase is simpler: I'm fond of the English language. The BHA pamphlet prates about "an education in stances for living that really is educationally valid." To my mind, you cast doubt on your qualifications as arbiter of what is "educationally valid" if in your own practice you accept a phrase like "stance for living" as linguistically and semantically valid and if you haven't noticed the difference between "and" and "or".

BRIGID BROPHY

The controversy over the BHA religious education booklet "Objective, Fair and Balanced" is just one more stage in the old argument which has always divided our movement—whether we should fight against all our opponents in order to destroy their unacceptable system of religious education (or religious broadcasting, or religious censorship, or whatever), or should try to work with the best of our opponents in order to develop a mutually acceptable system.

The BHA seems to believe that we should not abolish the religious education system but should improve it in association with liberal Christians, on the pragmatic grounds that this kind of reform is more likely than the radical reform we really want, and that this kind of tactic will divide the opposition. I suggest that their position is wrong, both on the moral grounds that we should say what we really want and should not pretend that we are in favour of any kind of education which suggests that religion is true, and on the practical grounds that when we think we are using our opponents for our own ends they are in fact using us for theirs.

For example, the "Times Educational Supplement" annual feature on religious education last December contained an article by Howard Marratt, chairman of the British Council of Churches Education Committee, arguing not only the trivial general point that "Christians and humanists . . . educationally have much in common" but a much more serious particular point: "Fifteen years ago leading humanists opposed religious education as a doctrinal and conditioning activity, so that many Christians were averse even to dialogue with such modern humanists. Now many humanists are committed to the need for educating pupils in 'stances for living', which include re-

ligion and a concern for ultimate questions." The feature also contained an article by John Hull, Lecturer in Religious Education at Birmingham University, praising the new Birmingham Agreed Syllabus for including humanism "as a secular alternative" to religion, but insisting that "in a syllabus of religious education it is proper that the central concern should be religion" and that "it is perfectly proper in religious education to make excursions into non-religious areas, provided these are related to the religious in such a way as to advance knowledge and understanding of religion."

Do the BHA educational advisers realise what they are getting involved in? If not, why don't they try to find out? If so, why don't they do something about it?

W. H. PEMBERTON

I don't blame Harry Stopes-Roe for wanting to make his defence as hard-hitting as possible, and if some of his swipes at the alleged shortcomings of his critics seemed to be aimed spitefully low, then his dig at what he unkindly calls Brigid Brophy's "one bad boob" was at least aimed above the belt.

The RE lessons which are forced on the children in our schools are used to indoctrinate them with religion, and the BHA's proposals would give the RE teachers perfect freedom to continue this propaganda work. There would be no shortage of those ready to testify that the old Christian syllabuses, with a few token modifications, were "objective, fair and balanced", and even the most flagrant attempts at indoctrination would have no difficulty in slipping through the giant-sized loopholes in the proposals.

These objections make nonsense of Harry Stopes-Roe's claim to be demolishing the front of religious prejudice, presumably in a single-handed assault. Secular Humanists are likely to be more realistic in their assessment of the realities of the situation in schools and to be extremely wary of supporting any proposals which could actually reinforce the same "front of religious prejudice" which they claim to be assailing.

MICHAEL LLOYD-JONES

NEW HUMANISM

Nicolas Walter seems to have written the non-reply of the century ("The Freethinker", February). He lists 16 statements made by me in the course of my article and writes them all off as "absurd". This is name-calling and doesn't merit an answer.

J. M. Alexander's letter is more interesting, and suggests that a full-dress treatment of the experience of the Positivist churches might be very worthwhile. (I happen to know that a massive biography of Fred-eric Harrison has been written by an American historian and is currently in search of a publisher.) But why spoil the letter with unpleasant, inaccurate personal asides?

Barbara Smoker gives a classic example on how to quote out of context "in a very few years the bailiffs will move in on" the NSS, the BHA and the RPA, but leaves out the first part of the sentence that reads as follows: "Unless we get somewhere in this debate, and get ourselves new objectives, new readers and new members then in a very few years . . ." It makes all the difference.

My worst fears are confirmed by the exchange to date. All the letters end up in the sad point-scoring bracket of third-rate dialectics. Perhaps if people will read my original article we can start again?

Humanism centres on the critique of religion. At present that critique seems to have had at least four different end-products (1) the religious humanism of South Place Ethical Society, (2) the rationalist, scientific humanism of the Rationalist Press Association, (3) some kind of political humanism in the British

Humanist Association, (4) the militant secularism, largely political, of the National Secular Society.

The fortunes of the four associations over the last ten years suggest to me that this condition is transient and unsatisfactory. It is rooted in the past and is not even interesting any more. The challenge of the future is not being faced.

We need a new humanism that is multi-dimensional. Huxley has, I think, expounded its religious dimension clearly enough. Whitehead has done its history and much of its philosophy. Cassirer in his "Essay on Man" and other works, has delineated the picture overall. We are weak on humanist political and economic ideas, aims and objects, and my essay on "Direct Democracy" is a move towards a remedy in that direction. As John Rawls has shown, truth is serial. Propositions can be different and still true, if we take them in sequence rather than in contradiction.

PETER CADOGAN

"THE GOLDEN RULE"

In his article "Reciprocity and Neighbourliness in Jesus' Teaching" ("The Freethinker", February), G. A. Wells seems to credit Jesus with initiating the positive form of the Golden Rule (in modern parlance, "Do as you would be done by"); but in fact it appears in many pre-Christian philosophies. Indeed, even the words of Jesus quoted in the article (Matthew 7:12) continue "for this is the law and the prophets", which seems to disclaim it as something new; while Jesus' second formulation of it, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 19:19), is a direct quotation from Leviticus (19:18).

In any case, however, is the busy-body positive form really morally superior to the live-and-let-live negative form? I tend to agree with Bernard Shaw: "Do not do unto others as you would that they do unto you. Their tastes may not be the same."

I also question Wells's dismissal of reciprocity as a worthy incentive for morality. As long as its application is general, and not confined to those individuals likely to be in a position to reciprocate, it is in fact the basis of humanist utilitarian ethics. I do agree with Professor Wells, however, that morality for the sake of a vastly inflationary reward in a future life smacks of big business.

BARBARA SMOKER

G. A. Wells' view of the three parables attributed to Jesus he discusses in his "Reciprocity and Neighbourliness in Jesus' Teaching" is doubtless very scholarly. But to my mind he misses the point each time.

In the good Samaritan surely it is the unexpected that happens. The hearers would think the priest and the Levite would help, but no, it is the despised foreigner. He is your neighbour; you are his. This one is for yelling out whenever you meet a Christian racistist.

The Prodigal Son is a beautiful story of family life. I have two children just grown up. Which do I love more? At any given moment the one that needs extra love. If one is sick or unhappy for any reason, or has behaved—in my opinion—badly and is sorry, that is the one my heart goes out to. (I hope the Prodigal's father went on to give a feast for his other son later, because now he is the one to need a boost). This is a story about the Fatherhood of God—and good fatherhood rates above legalistically measured out justice, as in our personal lives we hope to live in our families and steer clear of the courts.

Nor do I see how the parable of the vineyard shows God as having favourites, or leads logically to the doctrine of predestination. Everyone gets a full day's pay, whether or not he did a full day's work. (We are not told why some labourers did not start first

thing.) Well if you try to argue predestination from this, it would have to be on the basis that everyone is predestined to Heaven. In our own society where problems of differentials bedevil industrial relations it shouldn't be too hard to find a useful moral here.

Of course Christian claims about the uniqueness and priority in time of Jesus' teaching are ignorant and annoying. But the great parables are a part both of our moral and our literary heritage, which I for one hate to see undervalued.

MARGARET McILROY

FUNERALS

In the February issue of "The Ethical Record" a document entitled "Humanist Funerals" is reprinted, bearing the names and addresses of the four main Humanist organisations, thus giving the impression of a joint official statement. But it seemingly emanates from Peter Cadogan, general secretary of South Place Ethical Society.

I am disturbed by the statement that the fee for conducting funerals is £10 and that "... we can from South Place provide both the text of the ceremony and a briefing document on how to conduct it. . . ." I always understood that the National Secular Society and Rationalist Press Association did not stipulate a charge for secular committal ceremonies, and that the British Humanist Association fee is about half that stated in "The Ethical Record". They also have their own texts and briefing documents.

Mr Cadogan apparently considers SPES to be a business as well as a religious charity. He wrote in "The Ethical Record" of February 1973: "We have just joined the Holborn Chamber of Commerce since we do function in the area as a business. . . ." Is he now attempting to commercialise the conducting of non-religious funerals on the same lofty ethical plane? I always thought this was a last service the organisations were always prepared to render to members and non-members, rich or poor, not as a publicised gimmick on a business basis.

JAMES M. ALEXANDER

THE SAYINGS OF JESUS

Affection for the figure of Jesus, combined with dislike of St Paul, is a common emotional stance among Christians and others. Certainly, the sayings attributed to Jesus in the gospels have a rough-and-ready charm which is lacking in the epistles. The fact that these sayings appear to be mutually contradictory, and often seem to be inspired by blind hatred of opponents, does not diminish their popularity. But it is going too far to say, as does Caroline Deys in your February issue, that Christ's teaching is "crystal clear". Not many Christian scholars would support this view. Further, it is gross injustice when she saddles Paul with a particularly foolish remark attributed by Matthew (5:28) to Jesus.

D. R. OPPENHEIMER

BERTRAND RUSSELL

Dora Russell indulges in yet further speculation in her note published in your February issue below Lady Russell's letter.

The facts are as follows: (1) The commercial granting of copyright facilities is the only connection, financial or otherwise, between the Estate and Mr Ronald Clark. At no time did the possibility of the Estate knowing or interfering with the content of the book arise. Mr Clark always retained complete editorial independence precisely because he was writing an independent biography.

(2) By arrangement with Bertrand Russell and his Estate, copyrights in unpublished writings only passed to McMaster University. Copyright in the published works remained with the Bertrand Russell Estate and the various publishers.

ANTON FELTON

EVENTS

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY
1866 1976

110th ANNIVERSARY DINNER

Speakers:

EDWARD BLISHEN
DIANE MUNDAY
NICHOLAS TUCKER
NICOLAS WALTER

Chair:

BARBARA SMOKER

The Pavious Arms, Page Street,
London SW1

Saturday 3 April, 6 pm for 6.30 pm
Vegetarians catered for

Tickets, £2.95 each, must be obtained
from the NSS, 698 Holloway Road,
London N19 3NL, not later than
Thursday, 1 April

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group. Imperial Hotel,
First Avenue, Hove. Sunday, 4 April, 5.30 pm. Richard
Clements: "Humanism and the Current Social Crisis".

Havering Humanist Society. Harold Wood Social Centre,
Tuesday, 6 April, 8 pm. Susan Fey: "Conservation
for Survival".

Humanist Holidays. Easter, 15-20 April at Worthing.
Summer, 7-21 August at Weston-super-Mare. Details
from Mrs M. Mepham, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey;
telephone 01-642 8796.

Leicester Secular Society. Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate,
Leicester. Sunday meetings at 6.30 pm. 14 March, Shelia M. Cybulnyk: "The Brontes—Realists
not Romantics". 21 March, Andre Dray: "Ukrainian Political Prisoners in Russia". 28 March, Robert Budd: "UFOs—Fact or Fiction?"

London Secular Group (outdoor meetings). Thursday, 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, 46 Hamilton Square, Birkenhead. Meetings held on the third Wednesday of the month, 7.45 pm.

Muswell Hill Humanist Group. 15 Woodberry Crescent, London N10. Thursday, 25 March, 8 pm. Hugh Gee: "Jungian Psychology".

Sutton Humanist Group. Sunday, 28 March. Seminar on non-religious funeral ceremonies. Enquiries: Mrs M. Mepham; telephone 01-642 8796.

South Place Ethical Society. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Sunday meetings at 11 am. 14 March, Cyril Barnett: "The Dangers and Evils of Truth". 21 March, Peter Cronin: "Whitehead, Russell and Romanticism". 28 March, Peter Seltman: "Early 19th-Century French Utopians (Babeuf)". 4 April, Audrey Williamson: "William Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites". Tuesday meetings at 7 pm.

Waltham Forest Humanist Group. Wood Street Library, Forest Road, Walthamstow. Tuesday, 23 March, 8 pm. Jim Herrick: "Sense and Nonsense from the East".

Welwyn Garden City Humanist Group. Public Library, WGC. Wednesday, 31 March, 8 pm. Discussion: "Education and Indoctrination".

West Glamorgan Humanist Group. Friends Meeting House Annexe, Page Street, Swansea. Friday, 26 March, 8 pm. Professor Leopold Kohr: "The Breakdown of Great Britain".

Worthing Humanist Group. Burlington Hotel, Marine Parade, Worthing. Sunday, 28 March, 5.30 pm. Malcolm Cornwall: "Religion and the Renaissance".

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