

## NEW ORGANISATION FORMED TO COMBAT RELIGIOUS MOONSHINERS

An organisation named Family Action, Investigation and Rescue (FAIR) has been formed in London to combat the influence and activities of the Worldwide Unification Church. The Church and a network of associated organisations is controlled by the Reverend Sun Moon, and its policies are an unsavoury mixture of extreme Right-wing politics and fundamentalist Christianity. The WUC has built up an international business empire and has accumulated considerable wealth in Britain. The basis for its prosperity in this country appears to be the ease with which religious groups can become registered charities, the willingness of some people to hand over their money to the Church, and the virtual slave labour of Moonstruck young people who sell its products in the streets.

A. L. Segerdal writes: Paul Rose, Labour MP for Blackley, Manchester, and chairman of FAIR, warned the Commons last October of the Unification Church menace when he declared: "There are currently operating in this country a number of bogus and bizarre bodies purporting to be religious cults. They benefit from the laxity of the law relating to charities. Among them, and perhaps the most pernicious, is the body commonly known as the Unification Church, with its fraudulent fund raising, its dubious medical and psychological claims, its rather sinister political connections and the dangers which it holds in relation to the health of potential or actual recruits."

During the last ten years there has been an enormous proliferation of new cults and religious movements whose activities have brought them considerable publicity. It is not only the press and television that are interested in this phenomenon; professional journals have devoted much space to it and it is being studied in several university departments.

It is also likely that some of the major investigations into the cults are being carried out by the

data-collection areas of the various intelligence agencies. There are those who would go even further and say that some religious and quasi-religious organisations have been set up and funded as "front" organisations for such intelligence agencies. Without getting paranoiac on this, it is certain that at least one department at Intelligence or Ministerial level is collecting information on these fringe bodies. A new movement with religious overtones can lead to significant cultural changes, often as much as straight politico-economic movements or multi-national commercial ventures.

Reports of investigations into religious groups and cults make fascinating reading, and some of the better known of these, such as the Foster Report into Scientology, show only too clearly that from parental to government levels of approach it is not even known whether we are dealing with religion or psychotherapy. Viewpoints and questions appear that stretch beyond the realm of medical and psychiatric practice, across that often controversial bridge apparently linking medicine and religion, to therapies which almost defy pronunciation, let alone definition.

### Direct Action

The formation of FAIR is a determined attempt to do something about the activities of the Unification Church in Britain. Former members of the cult and parents of young people who are now in the Church, together with others who are disturbed by its growing influence, attended the initial meeting at the House of Commons. They discussed the apparent inability of government departments to take any action when there was no specific evidence of "harm", and the flaws in the charity laws which allow religious groups like the Unification Church to be officially registered as a charity.

Reference was made to the unwillingness of the

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press—for fear of libel proceedings—to publish complaints of parents, and the experiences of members who have defected from the Church. Frustration of this kind led to direct action by the father of one member who told the meeting how he “kidnapped” his daughter back from the Unification Church.

As a group, FAIR may have more success than disenchanted ex-members and upset parents in trying to deal with the press, government departments and other interested bodies. It will be able to co-ordinate the activities of individuals, issue statements, publish information and arrange deputations. There are now too many complaints to be fobbed off and ignored, and although these are early days yet for FAIR, it certainly looks like gathering momentum both as a pressure group and as a forum for parents and others who are concerned for the welfare of those who have been recruited by the Unification Church.

Further reasons for the inevitable formation of an organisation like FAIR can be seen from another passage from Paul Rose’s speech on the Unification Church last October: “In a letter . . . the Home Secretary expressed distress at the breaking up of families by the cult. The Director of Public Prosecutions is still considering a large file of documents I have sent along with further information sent from time to time. But it is lamentable that no action has been taken other than against the fringe—the pawns in the game. It needs more than my personal investigations and the voluminous files I have built up over the years. It needs Government and police action in order to extinguish the unlawful behaviour of this cult, and its harmful effects on young people in particular and on society in general. It also needs . . . action against the hazards to health involved in the employment of many of its techniques.”

However, we should not be too critical of the government departments concerned. They have put a lot of hard work and study into this problem, and have listened very carefully to the conflicting views of various professional bodies such as the British Medical Association. We are, after all, living in a democracy where the fundamental right of individuals to decide for themselves whom they should approach for enlightenment, be it religious or psychotherapeutic, must be considered and protected. In protecting the individual from harm by unorthodox techniques, we must not introduce legislation which might become the forerunner of social control.

### An International Problem

It is interesting to note that Britain is not alone in this dilemma. Various states in Australia have tried to control religious and psychotherapeutic groups with the setting up of Psychological Practice Acts and these have proved to be so unworkable that they either attempt to rewrite them or abolish them altogether.

In France and in America action groups have been set up by parents of young people who became involved with the Unification Church, and the sect has been front page news for some time now in France. Organisations similar to FAIR have also been set up in America. They allege brainwashing of young people by the Unification Church, and this has also been said of the Divine Light Mission and the Children of God.

FAIR will have to produce hard facts, evidence and really workable solutions. If it does so with the determination seen at its first meeting it should succeed in its aims.

## Humanist Protest

Professor Piet Thoenes, chairman of the International Humanist and Ethical Union, has sent an appeal to Mrs Indira Gandhi, the Indian premier, urging her to end the state of emergency. Professor Thoenes has informed Mrs Gandhi that the IHBU is “extremely disturbed by the suspension of fundamental freedoms as well as other rights relating to equality before the law, protection of life and personal liberty, and protection against arrest and detention in certain cases.

“We are particularly distressed to note the imposition of press censorship and the adoption of the Prevention of Publication of Objectionable Matter Bill as an Act of Parliament thereby making the restrictions imposed on freedom of thought and expression during the state of emergency a part of the normal law of the country.

“It may be true that freedom of speech and publication has produced a plethora of words and has contributed little to economic progress. But it need hardly be pointed out that the suppression of this vital freedom will render most intellectual activity politically and economically sterile; and what is worse, it could lead to apathetic conformity and cultural suffocation or violent reaction.”

Professor Thoenes concludes his appeal to Mrs Gandhi by appealing for the restoration of fundamental freedom in India, the release of those held without trial, and an end to “restrictions on freedom of information which is indeed the touchstone of all freedoms.”

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**Ray Burgess, American lay preacher and a member of the Alabama House of Representatives, always defended the “right” to bear arms. His life, he told his fellow legislators, was “a gift of God, and God gave me the ingenuity to protect that gift” with a revolver. Every member of his family, he boasted, carried a gun. A few months later, during a quarrel with his wife, the pistol they were struggling over whet off and he was shot in the head. He recently died of the wound.**

# Another Successful NSS Dinner

The National Secular Society's annual dinner in London last month was a very enjoyable affair attended by nearly a hundred guests from various parts of the country and representing a wide range of organisations. A toast to the guest of honour, Edward Blishen, was proposed by Nicholas Tucker. He described Mr Blishen as "one of the freest thinkers I have ever known", and paid a warm tribute to him as an educationist, writer and friend. He said that for years universities had been trying to snap Edward Blishen up for their education departments, and publishers have had their eye on him as a superb potential children's book editor.

"Instead, Edward has always remained independent; although this means that he stays a free man, it also entails that as a free-lance broadcaster and writer, he is forced to be an extremely busy one. Even so, he has still found time, between all the various short-time writing, reviewing and public speaking jobs he has always taken on, to produce certainly the best autobiographical books about teaching in schools that have as yet ever appeared.

"Writing well about teaching experience is not easy; it is so tempting to forget one's mistakes, and produce crude stereotypes of the pupils and staff around one. But Edward never does this; his two books about teaching in state schools, *Roaring Boys* and *This Right Soft Lot*, are utterly convincing descriptions of one man's battle, where victory is never easy, but where the contestants always remain memorable and very individual. I was re-reading both books the other day; they are so crammed with sharply though warmly observed detail, that another writer could easily have spun out such material into a major series, on the lines perhaps of 'It shouldn't happen to a teacher'. Not Edward, however; the result is a study of children whom he always takes seriously but never pompously, unparalleled in its richness and deft humour.

"I sometimes think he was born after his time; he would have been so happy and well-equipped as an Edwardian man of letters, with just enough private income to give him time to write his books without having to give over so much energy to the rest of a free-lance writer's activities. How he would have enjoyed conversations with some of the early Fabians of the time, and how they would have enjoyed him. On the other hand, however, we are very fortunate to have him at our own particular time—a writer who is totally independent, individual, honest, and unflinchingly skilful in all he ever does."

Edward Blishen responded with a delightfully witty speech in the course of which he related anecdotes and memories of a boyhood well spent as "a field marshal in the devil's service." Going to Sunday School in his early years was part of the pattern of

life, and later he joined the Crusaders "who were—and I think still are—a curious body who draw their victims from public and otherwise polite and elevated schools.

"At the Crusaders we sang rather peremptory evangelistic verses, brief and militant, and were addressed by our leader who happened to be a quite famous authority on railways, and drew all his images from that preoccupation. We were accustomed to talk of the shunting yards of apathy and indifference, the engine sheds where those who exhibited religious defects and whose spiritual wheels had given out the wrong sound when struck by the Great Wheeltapper's hammer, were overhauled and made fit again for the main line of faith and commitment.

"As a byproduct of all that, we were once taken to Kings Cross and allowed to stand on the footplate of the Flying Scotsman. That was the highlight of my religious experience, though I decided almost at once not to become an engine driver but to stick to my ambition of becoming the greatest writer the world had ever known.

"At school, as I drifted more and more into the common coarseness of being alive, I remember the religious strand of things as part of a general texture of reprobation, and somewhat sinister disapproval. All joy, all joyful naughtiness, all delight in the play of ideas, all amusement—it was possible to say, all enjoyable honesty—was equated with conformity in respect of religion."

Edward Blishen concluded: "I thank you, not only on my present behalf but on behalf of the adolescent I was. If I want to see, as you do, the religious load lifted from the shoulders of the schools and the children, it's partly because I think it's a perfectly insufferable anachronism, and makes it much more difficult in the schools to have serious discussion of serious things; but also because it casts its shadows, is the enemy of laughter and of vital scepticism and of delight in living, and the ally of docility and conformity."

Diane Munday, former general secretary of the Abortion Law Reform Association, proposed a toast to the National Secular Society. She said it is sad and ironic that in 1976, almost a hundred years after Charles Bradlaugh, founder of the NSS, stood trial for daring to publish a birth control pamphlet, *The Fruits of Philosophy*, women had to march through the streets of London in support of liberal abortion laws.

Mrs Munday went on to say that five years ago, "contraception almost toppled the 2,000 years old edifice of the Roman Catholic Church. Its hierarchy urgently needed camouflage to hide the cracks from the eyes of the faithful.

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# Blueprint for a Police State

JAMES M. ALEXANDER

The author of this challenging article thinks a very real danger of the imposition of a dictatorship directed by elements within the police may exist. He sees signs of an incipient police State in recent inroads on hard-won freedom of thought, action and civil liberties. J. M. Alexander sounds a warning and calls for united opposition to prevent further encroachment.

At the outbreak of war in 1939 Britain was flooded with government posters informing us that "Your Freedom is in Peril". I recall observing that some wag had immediately altered at least one of these posters to read, "Your Peril is in Freedom." Perhaps a similar reversal of meaning could be applied to an amazing seminar that took place in Emmanuel College, Cambridge over the weekend of April 10 to 11. This remarkable exercise in publicity and public relations was convened by the Police Federation for the ostensible and laudable reason of combating lawlessness and crime. But was it only for that, or were other motives behind it?

This was, I repeat, an amazing gathering for a number of reasons. First, the fortunate timing, coinciding with and as a newsworthy alternative to, the peculiar (to say the least) Peter Hain prosecution, and the long-delayed bringing of corruption charges against ex-Commander Drury, former chief of the Flying Squad and eleven senior Scotland Yard detectives. Next, the emotional build-up engendered by the almost hysterical media treatment of stories of juvenile crime, black "muggers", lawless strikers and renewed demands for capital and corporal punishment. Most interesting of all was the motley crowd assembled and the speeches made on this most suspicious occasion.

The speeches at Cambridge indicated that the art of misdirection is not the prerogative of the stage magician. Some most significant remarks were made by that authority on clear thinking and sound judgment, Mr Justice Melford Stevenson, who stated: "When you get an *alliance between the crooks and the high minded it is a very sinister alliance indeed. That is why we must make sure that they do not go further than they must.*" This surely comes dangerously near incitement to the police officers present. Was he suggesting that the "alliance" with crime included his fellow-members of the Establishment, those judges in the Court of Appeal, who recently reversed three of his more outrageous sentences? He also waffled on about "starry-eyed idealists" whose "... activities and the pursuit of their work are tremendously appealing to the criminal classes." One classic of Melford Stevenson was: "The whole country is suffering from a most terrible

breakdown of family life following from easy divorce which can be done by post now."

Enoch Powell, as always urbane, clever, and patently sincere, certainly gave encouragement to those police who seem determined to sabotage belated efforts of Sir Robert Mark to recruit coloured policemen. His provocative statement on mugging was: "To use a crude but effective word—it is racial." Who then, one may ask, was responsible for far worse street violence so vividly described by Dickens, Mayhew and the newspapers daily throughout the nineteenth century? But Powell will please those defenders of law and order who see "crime" whenever youths, black or white, gather in our streets, but are singularly unsuccessful in preventing daily armed raids on banks and security guards. This is all the more strange as the security companies employ many ex-detectives in senior posts, and it would be thought the identity of some of these gunmen would be known to them from their police days. There can be little doubt that the publicity value of people like Mr Powell is being exploited for sinister purposes which can only be guessed at. Personally I do not consider him as potential dictator material despite the attempts at manipulating him for their own ends by assorted reactionaries and extremists of the Right.

## Who are the Real Criminals?

What conclusions can reasonably be arrived at regarding a police seminar entitled "The Challenge of Crime" that by the tone of one speaker virtually invited racial attacks, deplored a Government bill to end the practice of police investigating and judging their own crimes, indulged in cheap sneers at "do-gooders" yet had not one word of the real criminal threat to our society. The same newspapers reporting this meeting, on the same days carried news of admissions by Shell Oil of bribes paid to foreign politicians, similar allegations against BP, and the scathing official indictment of V and G Insurance directors. And now a Lieutenant-Colonel is charged with taking bribes over the purchase of military equipment. Nothing was said about widespread tax frauds and evasions indulged in regularly by companies and individuals at the upper ends of the social strata. Inland Revenue officials have stated that over the years criminal tax "fiddles" have caused losses to the state of hundreds of millions. Silence on the Road Fund Licence-dodging by well-off pillars of society.

Is not this the real mugging of society and equally destructive of law and order? Not one word regarding what I assert is a major cause of youthful lawlessness—the example shown them by hundreds of police convicted in the last few years of every

conceivable crime. These range from murder to shoplifting and burglary and include poncing and rape of young schoolgirls. I am well aware of the "one rotten apple" excuse. The evidence available and before me as I write this, in the form of newspaper reports from all over Britain, indicates that there is a whole police orchard full of rotten apples.

### The Police and the Community

Leslie Male, the Police Federation chairman, stated that during the campaign on law and order, its members will try to talk to the public about the challenge of crime and its "grave potential" for society. Will he answer these questions: How much has public confidence in the police been eroded and how much teenage crime caused through the many senior CID officers convicted of corruption in the last ten years after being commended and promoted for their police activities? How many of the several hundred resignations from the Metropolitan force since 1970 has resulted from the practice of allowing them to resign to prevent prosecution? Is the path to promotion in the CID still via the planting of evidence on innocent victims, as alleged by Detective Sergeant Grant Smith after he "found God" and confessed to rigging evidence against a falsely convicted anti-apartheid demonstrator? These are just a few of the questions that must be answered if Mr Male and the Federation are to be taken seriously.

Divide your opponents, cause dissension, create a political vacuum and proceed to power, is an ancient maxim. So too is the arranging of a smoke-screen to distract attention from the real intent. Of course there is a serious crime situation—and it has been brought about to some extent by years of public complacency over police integrity. The belief that only the accused and his friends lie in the witness-box, never professional police witnesses who know every trick, dies hard. So does the concept that it is right for only police to enquire into their own crimes. But the crime situation is only a symptom of the ills within urban civilisation, not the cause.

### Everybody's Freedom in Peril

No doubt some readers of this journal think there should be stricter penalties imposed on coloured lawbreakers, football holligans, vandals, demonstrators and striking workers. That may be so, but always remember that laws introduced for one popularly supported purpose have a habit of being used to suppress something quite different. Consider how the Official Secrets Act is invoked to prevent legitimate exposure of grievances of even governmental malpractice. Or how the Criminal Justice Amendment Act, introduced to deal with prostitution, was used for many years to persecute and blackmail homosexuals.

Nor does it stop with action against people you don't like personally—such as immigrants, Jews, Reds or believers in civil liberty and the "permissive" society. It is not only someone else's freedom in peril—it may well be yours next. We must never forget the lesson that Thomas Paine nearly learnt with his life; the path which starts with the exclusion of the Girondists becomes the broad highway leading inevitably to Thermidor! More than one Jewish industrialist in Germany during the 1920s who secretly aided the new party that was going to discipline the unions and deal with the Left, very quickly learnt what it was really all about. Battles for civil liberty that we have considered won long ago may soon have to be fought over again. There is nothing sacred or god-ordained about our democratic system that ensures a built-in immunity from erosion. Indeed, by its very structure and historical development, it is extremely vulnerable to assault.

It is significant that warnings of the imminent collapse of democratic government together with undertones implying a threatened take-over by Communist-controlled unions and snide attacks on "Tribunites" also call for vigilantes, street patrols and strikebreakers. The appeal to the "silent majority"—whoever they are—to "stand up and be counted" is an emotive one, but has little meaning apart from usefulness as a rabble-rousing appeal. The real danger to democracy, as I see it, could come from a highly organised, centralised body that already exists almost as a State within a State. We are so used to reading of the army taking over in other countries that we automatically assume that a military dictatorship is the most probable alternative once a democracy is assailed—possibly even here. For historical reasons which are too complex to discuss in this article I do not think the British Army has political ambitions. Their very loyalty to the Crown prevents serving officers from participation in the political scene. There has often been extreme reluctance even by some reactionary governments to use troops in industrial disputes here or against civilians generally. This has often been because of fears regarding their reliability in such circumstances.

An effective assumption of political power is more likely to come from elements within the police. We already have our political police in the shape of the Special Branch. This is no longer the comic-opera outfit it was in the days of Sir Basil Thomson of Hyde Park fame. The experiences of the General Strike changed all that. To all intent and purpose it is now a national body only nominally centred at Scotland Yard. Its exact strength is difficult to ascertain, because of continual interchange with, and seconding from other branches of the CID, but from their well observed ubiquity, they could account for a large proportion of the supposed shortage of police—of the uniformed variety.

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# Redundant Religion

DAVID TRIBE

David Tribe's "The Rise of the Mediocracy" is the latest and most controversial book by the former president of the National Secular Society and "Freethinker" editor. He contends that a type of worldwide exploitation is going on: "This is the exploitation of the industrious by the lazy, the provident by the feckless, the childless by the fecund and, above all, the able by the mediocre. This article is an extract from the chapter entitled "Redundant Religion".

Declining standards, social disruption and militant ugliness force themselves on our attention till they can no longer be ignored. Unless one believes in black magic or the "last days" beloved of overheated hotgospellers, one looks for antecedents and influences behind modern trends. Then the social causes of our present situation become apparent. Though masked, for a time, by contrary factors, they turn out to have been active for a considerable period. Their study is an interesting one; but we return to practical issues as more obtrusive and, for some—if only a dwindling minority—more vexatious.

Religion is a suitable starting-point, not because it is central in the lives of many people today but because it was once central in their lives and in society, has drifted to a psychological extremity, yet retains prominence in the legal system, privilege in the fiscal system and power in the educational system. Its redundancy is clearly not a social one but an intellectual one, not a political one in a pressure-group sense but a political one in an architectural sense. There is, briefly, no need to invoke religion to explain first and last causes or uphold law, order and morality.

Once the clergy functioned as more than priests. However imperfectly or insufficiently, they were society's fortune-tellers and whoremasters, clerks and lawyers, social workers and administrators, educators and doctors. If their ministrations had little impact on society they had a big impact on themselves. In things both spiritual and temporal priests had status befitting their supposed powers. The priesthood was regarded as a learned profession, its studies the "queen of the sciences."

It is a very different situation today. Now "the intellectual and pastoral abilities of the bishops reflect pretty fairly the age of mediocrity in which we live" (Michael De-la-Noy, *A Day in the Life of God*). If the bishop is a good business manager everyone in the diocese is more than content. And if the parish priest can manage on his stipend", not seek too many faculties from the church courts and not live in open and notorious sin with the local

headmistress, his parishioners think they have a treasure. The reason is that the second-oldest profession is not what it used to be. Its jargon grows increasingly arcane and increasingly incredible, its fancy-dress looks weirder the more people forget its symbolism, its social status is inferior to that of the more "practical" professions and—save at the top—its earning potential has declined accordingly. Statutory bodies have taken over its bureaucratic functions and the universities its academic functions. Even its priestly functions are suffering stiff competition from do-it-yourself alternatives. Despite the decline and fall of the intellectual, it is possible for organisations to suffer an intellectual crisis. At bottom, this is what has overtaken the Church.

Religious debate is increasingly denatured. Save in the broadest terms, few clerics would now care to challenge atheists to disputation on theology and biblical scholarship (and few atheists would care to accept the challenge). Debate has been replaced by "dialogue", where protagonists take few beliefs into, and incomprehension out of, bland and lengthy discussions. So attenuated has genuine belief become that we now have, for example, Zen Catholicism, Catholic Marxism and Catholic Humanism. Reconciling the irreconcilable in this area has been hailed as a manifestation of divine grace when it should have been dismissed as a compromise of the shallowly committed. Saints and martyrs, heretics and apostates have been rescued from burning faggots by the extinction of burning beliefs. Philosophical religion and irreligion are so dead that no one could frame a convincing charge or mount a coherent defence at any inquisition. Intolerance has been replaced by insouciance. The rise of democracy has reduced overt persecution less by undermining bigotry than by undermining conviction.

## Mediocre Message and Ministry

Though its Pontiff continues to pontificate on "faith and morals"—and whatever politics he feels disposed to support or denounce—Roman Catholicism is becoming as irrelevant in most Catholic countries as Protestantism is in Protestant countries. The faithful will follow their priests when it means securing financial and other privileges at the expense of taxpaying majorities or devotional minorities, not when it interferes with their own sexual or social convenience. While it has little to say to the mind, the sacrifice of the mass (unless it is a "rock" mass) has less to say to the heart. With catarrhal celebrants facing the congregation, accelerated responses taking as little time as possible out of the fun-loving observance of the Lord's Day, and Gregorian chants designed for the flowing measures of Latin now twisted and tortured into the vernacu-

lar, the eucharist has as much magic and majesty as Saturday night at the local *discotheque*. Few laymen confess more often than strict formalism demands, and if they want counselling are far more likely to go to a lawyer or psychiatrist, marriage guidance counsellor or social worker, than to their parish priest. With no obligation on its professionals to be scholars or actors, or on its amateurs to be faithful or abstemious, Catholicism is becoming as much of a charade as its old enemy, Freemasonry. Mediocre in both its message and its ministry, stripped of the most charismatic and lucrative of its saints (who are now accused of doubtful historicity), berated for its sexual hangups, exposed in its business dealings, and finding even the bleeding heart of Jesus and the immaculate heart of Mary less productive in tears and contributions, the Hierarchy can claim to be little but the richest, greediest, surliest and stupidest mediocracy in the world.

### The Growth of Fanaticism

Seeds of intellectual decay and organisational disarray were present in the Reformation, and brought an early harvest of religious "enthusiasm" and fanaticism to Europe. The twentieth century has provided a particularly favourable climate for this growth, which has spread throughout the world. Reason has yielded to revelation, fact to faith, works of worship of increasing incoherence, verbal testimony to glossolalia. Where Christianity is deemed not to be "religionless" its religion is described as "experimental". Anarchic intuition and mysticism have ceased to be an "optional extra" and become the chief commodity. "Jesus freaks" is no longer a term of abuse but a chosen denomination. Trendy Protestantism is an extension of hippie subculture, whose neophilia is as likely to produce a new sectarian position as a new sexual position.

Not surprisingly, searching spirits in the West have, since nineteenth-century comparative studies brought them to notice, turned to other religions. At neither its ideological nor its organisational level has Judaism proved particularly inviting (and it is only recently that converts have, in modern circumstances, been accepted at all) though the radical chic have made Zionism and vacations of *kibbutzim* eminently fashionable. Idiosyncratic Islam has gained a great hold on westernised Negroes and Sufism a certain following among whites who have tried everything else. But the occult and the East have been chief beneficiaries of the decline of Christianity, and rich are the offerings of antique and eastern bazaars.

Freemasonry and Rosicrucianism have been joined by demonology, witchcraft, black and white magic, Druidism and Satanism in preserving our pre-Christian heritage. In the most respectable suburbs one may find spiritualistic seances, faith-healing

clinics and witches' covens, together with astrologers, clairvoyants, tea-cup readers and tarot-card interpreters. Space programmes are said to include telepathy for extraterrestrial communication, and unidentified flying objects play the same role today as comets did in the Middle Ages. Only the creature's rarity and conservationist pressure prevent divination by studying the flight or the entrails of an eagle.

The Orient is the strongest rival of the occult. On its exotic shores one may derive inspiration from the "collection of amiable platitudes" that constitute Bahai and the "adolescent rituals" of Zen Buddhism (Alan Watts, *In My Own Way*). Above all, one may stroll happily from *guru* to *guru* absorbing "Krishna-consciousness" and Transcendental Meditation and all this nonsense that is going on" (Krishnamurti, *The Awakening of Intelligence*). That is, if one can track them down and afford space at their feet. For these spiritual beacons jet around the world lauding the virtues of quietude, put up at five-star hotels to extol the simple life, and speak and write copiously of the inadequacy of language. Everywhere they are accompanied by disciples who explain their cat-naps as trances and their physiological processes as *maya*. Everything we value—especially our money—is illusory, and they are happy to take our illusions from us. Truly, "all *gurus* are phoney, you can take that for granted right from the beginning, whether they are Tibetan Lamas or Catholics, or Hindus" (*Ibid*). Outside their native habitat they are not yet numerous enough to form a mediocracy, but they have become the intimates of mediocrats, and established cults of verbiage, unreason, social apathy and parasitism which have greatly aided the rise of the mediocracy.

DAVID TRIBE

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## THE BISHOP AND THE MINISTER

Dr Conor Cruise O'Brien, a Minister in the Irish Government, upset the Catholic hierarchy when he addressed the fifth annual conference organised by Belfast Humanist Group in co-operation with the Dublin-based Irish Humanist Association. The theme of the conference, held at Newcastle, Co Down, was "Let's Humanise Ireland".

Dr O'Brien said that sectarianism in the South may not correspond with the more aggressive forms found in Ulster. But it existed none the less, and the defeat of the Contraception Bill two years ago was a setback to progress towards non-sectarianism. He declared that in the Republic various forms of sectarianism "have tended to be conducted not in a roar but in a form of pervasive whisper, interspersed with pregnant silences and occasional carefully-worded admonitions. The organised religious minorities in the Republic when they look for change in the sectarian parts of our laws are rebuffed courteously, but adamantly". The Minister went on to say that "as Humanists we are all committed to the idea of a secular State, leaving religion to the private conscience."

All this was too much for Dr Jeremiah Newman, the Roman Catholic bishop of Limerick, who issued a statement denouncing Dr O'Brien's speech. He said that such views had "implications" for the Irish and their families. Dr O'Brien's remarks indicated that he was coming to the idea of a secular State which would not concern itself with the moral standards of the majority of its citizens. Dr O'Brien was an agnostic who believed that sectarianism existed wherever people had definite religious convictions and were prepared to stand by them.

It is understandable that Conor Cruise O'Brien's moderate speech has upset the Catholic hierarchy. His remarks fell like pinches of salt on the open wounds that have been inflicted on the Roman Catholic Church in what theologians describe as the post-Christian era. Church leaders, Catholic and Protestant, who have managed to keep generations of their gulls in a state of mental stupor, are losing their influence and credibility.

Educated Catholics, particularly the young, now frequently ignore the commands of elderly celibates on sexual and family matters. Many Southern Irish politicians are no longer spineless and acquiescent creatures of the bishops. There has been a marked change in the status and influence of Irish women who are now, as Dr O'Brien put it, "less and less inclined to allow the most intimate details of their lives to be regulated by unmarried men who, however eminent, do not share their experience or their problems."

The Bishop of Limerick no doubt approves of people having strong religious convictions which they are prepared to stand by. This eminent fol-

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lower of the alleged Prince of Peace ignores the fact that religious convictions have been the cause of social divisions, hatred and bloodshed, often on a catastrophic scale. This lesson of history is being repeated today in many parts of the world, including Ireland.

Conor Cruise O'Brien's religious critics can huff and puff holy hot air from now until Kingdom Come. But they will be unable to withstand the winds of change which are now blowing across "the island of saints and scholars."

## UNSCRUPULOUS

Those of us who are familiar with the techniques of Catholic front organisations which are the mainstay of the anti-abortion lobby are well aware how they exploit children for propaganda purposes. Very young girls and boys, carrying posters denouncing an operation of which they know nothing, are much in evidence at marches and meetings. But perhaps the most appalling example of their unscrupulous tactics we know of comes from Preston, Lancashire. In that town, if you will believe it, religious ghoul's recently concluded a special week of anti-abortion activity by organising a party for handicapped children.

Invitations which were given out at Elms School led to a storm of protests by parents. The father of one handicapped girl said he did not realise who the organisers were until he read an announcement in the local newspaper. He added: "I do not feel inclined to allow my child to attend a function at which she will be carrying the banner of a group which she knows nothing about." A Lancashire representative of the Abortion Law Reform Association said: "To hide behind a child is cowardly; to accentuate their disability is disgusting."

It is appalling that handicapped children were invited to a propaganda bun-fight and that the invitations were issued before all the parents knew about the "party". This episode is yet another illustration of the devious and unprincipled tactics adopted by the Roman Catholic anti-abortionists and their allies. Lies, distortion and emotional blackmail are the chief part of their stock-in-trade. They are the successors to those nineteenth-century clerics, evangelists and authors of penny tracts whose rantings about the terrors of hellfire and eternal punishment inflicted incalculable suffering and psychological damage upon generations of Victorian children.



# AND NOTES

## DARK DETECTION

With a piece of detection almost worthy of Miss Marples, Barbara Smoker, in a letter to *The South London Press*, has exposed a rather juvenile but nasty attempt at public deception by some Christians living in the posher areas of South East London. The paper had been running a long correspondence on religion, to which Denis Cobell of the Lewisham Humanist Group drew her attention when some of the published letters began to look a bit fishy. The rest of the story is outlined in the following extract from Miss Smoker's letter to the paper.

You have apparently been "taken for a ride" by some of the recent contributors to your letters page.

First, the letter quoting Nietzsche (26 March), signed "J. R. R. Sauron, Chairman, Borough Humanists Association, 32 Trinity Church Square, Southwark", was brought to my attention by the Secretary of the Lewisham Humanist Group, who had never heard of the "Borough Humanists Association". Nor had I—though I have been an active member of the Humanist movement for 26 years. Moreover, the purport of the letter was far from humanistic: it objected to your "allowing people to defend religion"—whereas it is, of course, one of the basic tenets of Humanism that every genuine viewpoint, however irrational, should have free expression.

Worried about this, I checked with the four main Humanist organisations in this country (the British Humanist Association, the National Secular Society, the Rationalist Press Association, and South Place Ethical Society), none of which could trace either Mr Sauron or the Borough Humanists Association in their records. Next, I checked the electoral roll, and found that not only was Mr Sauron not on it, nor was 32 Trinity Square. Finally, the agents of the freehold owners of the Square confirmed that there is no longer a number 32.

As for the name Sauron, I find that this exists only as the fictional Lord of Dark (a variant of Satan, presumably) created by the late J. R. R. Tolkien. (Note the coincidence of the initials.)

But that is not all. The defamatory letter from Christopher Meakin that appeared on the same page as the Sauron letter had obviously been written with prior knowledge of it, for it predicted that "one of the better-trained Humanists" would write to you quoting Nietzsche—an amaz-

ing feat of telepathy had there been no collusion, for Humanists are not generally given to quoting Nietzsche.

I therefore checked out the address given as Mr Meakin's—26 Desenfans Road, West Dulwich—and that, too, according to the electoral roll, turned out to be a non-existent address, though it happens to be next-door to the actual address of another of your pious Christian correspondents, whose fanatical letter appeared in the issue of 12 March. As for the name Christopher Meakin—a most uncommon one—this happens to be the name of one of the residents of the exclusive Trinity Church Square.

Which brings us full circle, embracing what appears to be quite a widespread conspiracy to discredit the Humanist movement, from the sanctuary of false addresses. I knew that Christianity was on its last legs, but had not realised quite to what depths it had fallen.

Not only was the complete letter published (in bold type, in a "box") in the *South London Press* weekend edition on 9 April, but the *exposé* was also dealt with in the main editorial of the previous midweek edition, 6 April. We trust the hoaxers did not miss this repercussion.

## OBITUARIES

### MRS O. BLACKHAM

Olga Blackham, whose death occurred in hospital, was actively involved in the Humanist movement until illness forced her to give up participation in its work. She served for some years on the management committee of the Humanist Housing Association and on the Association's Blackham House committee in London. She was the wife of H. J. Blackham, former director of the British Humanist Association.

### MR J. CHALLAND

Jim Challand, who died recently after a short illness, was a well known Nottingham freethinker. He was a member of the National Secular Society for many years, and served as secretary to the Nottingham and Notts Humanist Group.

### MR C. METHAM

Charles Metham, who has died in a London hospital at the age of 93, was an Australian who came to Britain many years ago. He was a supporter of this journal and of the freethought movement. Mr Metham and his wife (who survives him) were professional singers.

**ETHICS AND THE NEW TESTAMENT** by J. L. Houlden. Mowbrays £1.75.

This book, by the Principal of Cuddesdon Theological College, will be of value primarily to teachers and students of theology; its 138 closely-packed pages contain ample material for a year's course of lectures. It requires concentrated reading, and those whose interest in some of the issues raised is no more than marginal may pardonably do a little skipping. But it is undoubtedly an outstanding book of its kind—scholarly, objective, and refreshingly free from jargon and double-think. Furthermore, and more surprisingly, it is so Humanist in tone and outlook that it sent me to *Who's Who* to discover whether the author is indeed, as his office implies, a Reverend (he is).

Houlden's main thesis is based on two not wholly uncontroversial premises: first, that the Gospels reflect primarily the thought of the late first-century Church; and second, that is misleading to talk of "the ethic"—or, indeed "the" anything else—of the New Testament. The New Testament, he points out, is a collection of books, written by men of widely differing personality, experience and background, who had no sense of being involved in a collective project but who, as he says, "in so far as any of them were aware of any of the rest, [were concerned] to correct and supersede them rather than to complement them" (p3).

Houlden does, none the less, allow himself certain broad generalisations about the ethic of the New Testament. He makes the indisputable point that it is not an "autonomous" ethic; a respect in which it differs fundamentally from the ethic of, for example, Aristotle's *Politics*—or, one would wish to add, of present-day Humanism—both of which regard goodness as "whatever leads to the smooth working of happy personal and social life", and vice as "whatever spoils or impedes it" (p7). But "theology always threatens the autonomy of ethics" (p19). "New Testament writers enjoin the following of certain lines of conduct or the acquiring of certain qualities, not on the grounds of their intrinsic worth or rightness, but on the grounds that they are characteristics of God or of Jesus and are therefore to be imitated as part of a life of discipleship" (p13).

And it is not only regarding the basis of morals that New Testament writers differ from Aristotle: they differ also in the relative esteem given to particular moral qualities. The virtues chiefly extolled by Aristotle were justice, temperance, fortitude and prudence. But "in the New Testament a quite different set of qualities comes to the fore; lowliness, meekness, long-suffering, gentleness—not at all the virtues by which purposeful and practical social

life is built up" (p18). This change of emphasis, Houlden says, was due primarily to the early Christians' disparagement of the material world and of everyday life, and to their conviction that the world as they knew it was about to end. Up to this point, there seems to be a quite startling parallel between Houlden's position and that of my own book *Honest to Man!*

The author's generalisations may seem inconsistent with his previously-expressed view that one cannot usefully talk of "the" New Testament ethic. But he qualifies his general statements by saying that, though the New Testament writers are alike in that they all claim to derive their ethic from Jesus, the resemblance goes little further: they do not speak with one voice about Jesus' ethical teaching, any more than about the facts of his life and death. "Their presentations of his teaching differ and are often incompatible, both in detail and in total concept" (p101). These differences in presentation, Houlden says, derive mainly from the writers' differing views on two crucial points: first, about the value of the everyday world ("Pessimism about the world of ordinary experience leads people to abandon serious concern with the problems of everyday life" (p39); and second, about the imminence of the Second Coming ("The further away a writer thinks the End to be, or the less, in a particular context, he has his eye on it, the more autonomous his ethics" (p66).

Having laid down this framework, Houlden proceeds to a detailed scrutiny and comparison of the moral attitudes expressed in the Epistles and Gospels. Paul, he suggests, was not wholly consistent: "Sometimes he saw the moral obligations of the present age as so close to being superseded that they could already be thrown to the winds; sometimes he saw the obligations as to be upheld as long as that age persisted" (p28). John, by contrast, was almost Gnostic in his rejection of "the world": "For John, the believer has no duties towards 'the world', but only towards those who like himself are saved from it. The new commandment is not that the neighbour is to be loved . . . still less the enemy . . . but rather the fellow-Christian. Love stiffens the Christian group, and is a defence against 'the world'—the transient, evil, dark entity which lies beyond the frontiers of the Christian community, where the Antichrist rules" (pp 36, 39). Mark had comparatively little to say about Jesus' moral teaching—not, it would appear, because he shared John's Gnostic belief that the world was intrinsically evil, but because he believed that it might end at any moment. Matthew and Luke, by contrast, appeared to feel that the world had still

# REVIEWS

some time to go; the End would undoubtedly come eventually, but meanwhile it was not inappropriate to devote some attention to the conduct and duties of ordinary life.

These comparisons are pursued in great detail, and occupy the largest single section of the book. Humanists will probably find this part of the book less interesting than the rest, but it should provide ideal material for theological students to get their teeth into.

In his final chapter Houlden considers how present-day Christians can use the ethical teaching contained in the New Testament, and here again he writes like a Humanist: "Even if the diversity of New Testament teaching is pulped into a plausible uniformity . . . circumstances often make its straightforward following well-nigh impossible . . . or pose new questions on which the New Testament offers no direct guidance" (p115). "Centuries of Christian and non-Christian experience, including the emergence of techniques in the human sciences, enable us to deal more christianly and effectively with questions which early Christians either did not face, had no need to face, or else faced only in crude and from our point of view hopelessly oversimplified terms" (p120).

After all this enlightenment, the conclusion of the book may appear to Humanists as something of a let-down; "We may end where we began: the New Testament leads one to question the usefulness of ethics as an object of independent interest. Morality will only be for man's health when placed in the wider context of his standing in relation to God" (p125). It would appear from this final sentence that Houlden shares the New Testament view; but if this is so, he certainly does not obtrude the fact in the rest of the book.

MARGARET KNIGHT

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**MARY WHITEHOUSE** by Max Caulfield. Mowbrays, £4.50.

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Mary Whitehouse has herself written two books—*Cleaning Up TV* (1967) and *Who Does She Think She Is?* (1971). They are rather better written than Max Caulfield's "intimate portrait", which covers little fresh ground save for a few cursory assessments of Mrs Whitehouse by some of her friends and her critics. Why, then, Mr Caulfield's repetition of an oft-told tale? Perhaps because unaccustomed modesty held Mrs W back from answering the rhetorical question posed in the title of her autobiography, Mr Caulfield hastens to repair the omission. Mary Whitehouse has "the satisfaction of a sense of mission and purpose that could almost be

compared to that of St Joan of Arc." "Some, indeed, are already prepared to breathe her name alongside those of Elizabeth Fry's and Florence Nightingale's." And she herself "does not resent the fact that she has been the object of sneers and widespread calumny, remembering that Christ himself had every bit as much to put up with." (Yes, really!)

If these quotations convey the flavour of Mr Caulfield's "independent but not unsympathetic account" (the publisher's description, not mine) it is all the more striking that his own appraisal of his heroine's opinions and public activities is often distinctly defensive—not to say self-contradictory: "It is easy, perhaps, to detect a certain slight, if understandable, degree of hypocrisy in (her) words." She agrees "wholeheartedly" now that in its early days her Clean-Up TV campaign was too extreme and too sweeping in its denunciations of BBC programmes. ("To be fair to Mrs Whitehouse and her husband, they are the first to admit that their Manifesto, by any objective judgment, was both unfair and inaccurate, when the *total* output of the BBC was considered.")

The argument that her ideas and value judgments would lead to less rather than to more liberty is "not easy for Mary Whitehouse to discount". But later, "It is Mary Whitehouse's case, of course, that she has never demanded censorship—but in the beginning it would appear that there can be little doubt that that is what she intended; and most certainly it was what the vast mass of her supporters intended" (page 80). Yet by page 160 "Mrs Whitehouse makes no bones about it; she wants censorship. It is the kernel, she says, of all her campaigns. She qualifies her demand, of course. She is point-blank against any form of political censorship." Her campaign, she insists, is "not in the business of party politics in any fashion." It is presumably pure coincidence that she lambasts the BBC for its "leftist bias" while defending it from the Labour Party allegations of pro-Conservative bias on the inconsistent ground that the real motive for any such allegation must be a sinister desire to establish political control over broadcasting.

Methinks the lady doth protest too much. Since she can scarcely be accused any longer of naivety (Mr Caulfield positively gushes at "the skill of the woman, her sure grasp of how the power strings are manipulated in modern society"), we must perforce goggle at her colossal effrontery. For in posing as the mouthpiece of "the silent majority", Mary Whitehouse identifies herself with Christianity, democracy, decency and true freedom and tolerance, and asserts that the numerous people and things she disagrees with are—*must* be—the opposite. "Subversion" and "perversion" are her twin major preoccupations, and she sees them advancing hand in hand. She lives by the conspiracy theory: pornography and irreverent satire are cer-

tainly the dupes, and maybe the willing handmaidens, of deliberate Communist corruption ("the forces of revolution, unable to achieve their objectives at the ballot box or, because of the existence of the nuclear bomb, by full-scale war, were endeavouring to encourage moral decay"). This theme recurs incessantly throughout her own books and Mr Caulfield's. She is surrounded by enemies and plots: Far Left students conspire to make her look ridiculous, and attempts are made "to discredit her by luring her sons to orgies on the pretext that they were invited to Christmas or birthday parties."

Her *bête-noir* is Sir Hugh Carleton Greene, the sophisticated if somewhat flippant former Director-General of the BBC whom Mary Whitehouse exults to think she may have had a hand in toppling ("Mary had long been sure that until Greene walked through the portals of Broadcasting House for the last time, the BBC would continue to undermine the British nation"). He "psychologically assaults" her by hanging in his home a painting, "apparently a full frontal nude of Mrs Whitehouse (with no fewer than five breasts)."

Behind the hysteria, one glimpses a personality by no means wholly insincere or unattractive. The young Mary Hutcheson had an unremarkable family background and upbringing (which she describes engagingly in her autobiography) and became an unremarkable schoolteacher. She seems to have had a spontaneously warm personality, a deep love of nature and the countryside, and a genuine affection and concern for her pupils. She fell in love with her future husband and shared his allegiance to Moral Rearmament—a movement more renowned for its rabid anti-Communism than for its exhibition of the proclaimed moral absolutes—absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness, absolute love. Today Mary Whitehouse finds it expedient to stress her National Viewers' and Listeners' Association's independence from MRA, and denies that she is funded either by MRA or by the CIA—"smears" which, her admirers feel, are put about by pornographic publishers and which, if true, would, Mr Caulfield considers, result in "the disgrace, humiliation and total destruction of her cause." (The logic of this escapes me. If Mrs W approves of either MRA or CIA, or both, why should she spurn their help?)

Whatever may have been the case 13 years ago when Mary Whitehouse first boiled over with fury against "the propaganda of disbelief, doubt and dirt that the BBC projects into millions of homes", today she is much more than just a muddled mum figure. She fingers the levers of power, and Home Secretaries and BBC top brass, though they may privately despise her, are publicly polite. When she speaks, the press jumps to attention. Ironically, this scourge of the mass media has been elevated by them into a national figure. Where will she go from here? While it may seem ungallant to note with

quiet satisfaction that she is already an energetic 65, and can scarcely keep up her gruelling round of public appearances indefinitely ("her schedule was much fuller than any film star's and possibly as well filled as that of the Prime Minister"), there is no doubt that as long as there is breath in her body Mary Whitehouse's voice will be heard in the land protesting against what she conceives to be the evils of our time. And, more importantly, demanding stricter laws and punishments. For Mary Whitehouse has "come to appreciate that the best form of defence is to attack."

And so attack she does, badgering the police, the Customs, the Director of Public Prosecutions (whose office, she characteristically believes, is "staffed with too many permissively minded individuals"), and Parliament itself. Because juries acquit, she attacks the obscenity laws. Because the BBC broadcasts "unbalanced" discussions (one Communist on a panel of four, she points out, is "out of proportion"—perhaps she would care to join the Electoral Reform Society?), she attacks the BBC's Charter. While protesting that she doesn't want to interfere with what grown-up people choose to do in private, she attacks their right to pay to see *Blow Out* at the Curzon Cinema.

The most significant chapter in Max Caulfield's book is the one headed "Censorship and Liberty", in which he endeavours to reconcile Mrs Whitehouse's attitude to these two concepts. He fails. (It was a hopeless enterprise anyway.) He has to concede that she is for censorship, and against liberty, on the ground that "those who assert that the rights of the individual are paramount pay little heed to the moral, or indeed physical, harm that the 'rights' of some individuals may cause in the lives of others." The fallacy in this argument, it seems to me, is that it ignores the crucial distinction between the free exchange of *thought and information* (which is an essential component of democracy) and unfettered freedom of individual *action* (which, I totally agree with Mrs Whitehouse, would make civilised life impossible). But no-one, except the practitioners of violence, is arguing for a return to the law of the jungle—nor against "the liberty of the individual not to have his sensibilities assaulted without his consent." What those of us who strenuously oppose Mary Whitehouse maintain is that the restrictions which she and her allies seek to place upon the public's freedom to read, see and hear what it chooses would circumscribe democratic choice to an insufferable degree and pave the way for a totalitarian type of thought control.

Whether Mary Whitehouse understands it or not, the real battle is about freedom, not about pornography. She believes that pornography is destroying freedom without stopping to ask herself whether her own obsession with curbing pornography is not even more likely to kill free expression. Her sublimely simple, apocalyptic—and ultra-political—

point of view is summarised thus by Mr Caulfield: "It did not need a great deal of discerning intelligence to realise that the apostles of pornography fell into neat groupings. There were, firstly, those who saw a profit in the business—the publishers of 'dirty' books, producers of 'blue' movies and so on; secondly, there were those, homosexuals or lesbians or simple libertines, often placed in positions of authority within the media, who hoped for a 'more tolerant' climate of opinion for their own status; and thirdly, there were those who saw in pornography—as they saw in the use of drugs—a way of destroying the moral fibre of the younger western generation, thus undermining its will to resist political change or, if it came to a showdown, to fight for their country."

Johnny Speight, scriptwriter of one of Mrs Whitehouse's prime targets, *Till Death Us Do Part*, said this to her biographer: "If she and all she stands for had their way, there would be no room for any improvement in this country at all. We'd become sterile. Art can be dangerous—it can bring in ideas that at the moment don't seem to be to our good, but they are still worth hearing. In dictatorial states, of course, they clamp down on all art. Because art offends the actual opinions of the day, it doesn't mean to say that these opinions are the right ones. Because the majority of the day believe in a certain opinion, doesn't necessarily mean that that is the right opinion, either. When Jesus Christ came around, the opinion of his day wasn't his—and what did they do, they crucified him. You must allow these ideas to come out into the open—once you start clamping down on them, you're fast becoming a sick society. You're frightened to face truths—you call them lies. Better to let things come out in the open and find out if it's a truth or lie about our society or yourself. The type of thing she does, I believe, would be to stop all that."

Who does she think she is?

ANTONY GREY

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### NSS Dinner

"With abortion, the RC hierarchy, the most unscrupulous and experienced pressure group in existence, hit upon an issue that had everything going for it. It appeals at all levels—from the theologian discussing ensoulment of the foetus to naive and trusting members of Catholic women's groups sitting at home knitting booties and forming support groups for babies they believe they are saving from 'murder'.

"Coach parties to rallies and demonstrations, marches of protest, etc, provide not only enjoyable and cheap outings but a feeling of satisfaction that, often under the eyes of the local 'father', they have moved a step further to a place in Heaven.

"The recent highly emotive 'witness one million abortions week', was almost totally Roman Catholic

sponsored, organised and dominated. I feel nothing but pity for those RC women who, in large numbers, resorted to abortion when reality finally overtook belief. They then defied their Church to escape from an intolerable situation in this life, leaving the next to take care of itself.

"Despite increasing noise about tolerance, all the old tactics are being used in a new guise. 'If you cannot convince them with moral arguments, then frighten 'em off' was a common one. Instead of hellfire sermons we now have horror stories about subsequent ill health, sterility and deformed children for women who had previously had an abortion. There was about the same amount of evidence for the latter as for the former.

"*Fruits of Philosophy* tried to bring within reach of the poor, knowledge and the right of birth control that was already available to the rich. The religious anti-abortion lobby is now trying to repeat the pattern."

Diane Munday said she raised these and other matters to illustrate how necessary was the continued existence and campaigning of the National Secular Society. During the last 110 years, its members, like its founder, had not feared to say or do what they believed to be right. She hoped it would long continue.

Nicolas Walter, editor of *New Humanist*, who responded on behalf of the NSS, emphasised the achievements of the freethought movement in general and the Society in particular. Important work had been done during the past century to extend freedom of thought and speech, of behaviour and activity in at least our part of the world.

He added: "Our struggle is not just against organised religion. For example, where Christians are persecuted by those who call themselves humanists we surely stand with the Christians against the humanists and against all organised authority which attempts to restrict those freedoms we have learnt to take for granted. Indeed one of our main difficulties is precisely that so many people do take for granted the precious and precarious liberty which has been won in this country, when it is so rare both in the context of history and in the context of the world today."

Referring to recent disputes over censorship, he insisted that freedom includes the freedom to publish rubbish. And referring finally to the recent statements of Alexander Solzhenitsyn about the dangers of Western humanists, Nicolas Walter offered the double proposition that such statements "were disgusting when they came from a man whose life and liberty had been saved by pressure from Western humanists. But even so, we have to defend the right to say such things. Our movement is the only one which genuinely believes in the freedom to say anything, anywhere."

Barbara Smoker, president of the NSS, was in the chair.

# LETTERS

As an individualist rather than an orthodox Humanist, I was amused to see the holy word "Humanist" occurring so many times in the last issue of "The Freethinker". At the same time, I wonder how many atheists there are who ever ask themselves the following question: "Are 'atheism' and 'humanism' synonymous?"

It is generally assumed that atheists, rejecting God and the supernatural, are consequently committed ("dedicated") to man and the human. What of the cynics, pessimists, misanthropists, nihilists, all of whom may be atheists but many of whom view the human race with emotions like contempt, indifference or nausea? Such persons are not necessarily aggressive, gratuitously inflicting suffering on others—rather, despite their repudiation of everything connected with the absurd theistic hypothesis, they find themselves in no mood to dutifully substitute the worship of "Humanity" for the worship of "God". This is what is so unfortunate about freethought—that it arbitrarily assumes that all atheists are naturally devoted to ideals like democracy, liberty and sexual permissiveness, to name but a few of the sleek sacred cows of secularism. I often find it difficult to understand why certain "religious Humanists" are so worried about the anti-religious attitude of secularists, when there is no such thing! Secularists have manufactured a comfortable secular equivalent of religion, in which the sacred object is "Man", and we must consecrate ourselves to the realisation of "human" values. No-one questions the noble (or chimerical?) ideals of humanity, freedom, etc, while the piety and infatuation with words is often as overpowering as that manifested (albeit for different objects) by religious folk.

I am not trying to scandalise the Humanist faithful, nor advocate that we should all become predatory, ruthless individuals, totally unmoved by any ethical principles. What I am asking is that it not be so readily concluded that every atheist is necessarily a humanist, if by this term is meant someone to whom "Humanism" (and the undemonstrable necessity for its continuance) ranks as "sacred". If we allow ourselves to be moved by reason and love, let it be for pleasure—not because it is our "human duty", or because that is the way to "fulfilment, integration and maturity."

GEOFFREY WEBSTER

## WORDS

Dr Szasz, a recent "Humanist of the Year" is on record as saying that a critical contribution that Humanists can make lies in the direction of plain speaking and the proper use of the English (or any other) language. I entirely agree with him. This is why I wrote off Nicolas Walter's original reply and now do the same with his further letter.

It is a question of respecting language and respecting people. The word "absurd" is a very strong word indeed and should only be used most circumspectly. Nicolas Walter devalues and debases it when he uses it 16 times in his original letter and six times in the follow-up. In my opinion we should not use words to bludgeon anyone, certainly not fellow Humanists. All it does is to lower the argument below the threshold of communication.

If I might take just one of my alleged "absurdities" to make the point clear. We are told that it is "absurd" to say that "humanism centres on the critique of religion." Yet those founders of humanism, Socrates and Plato, centred their humanism on the need to

replace the worship of the Greek gods of the legends with the rationally defensible ideas of justice and the legal State (see Cassirer's "The Myth of the State" for an elaboration of this). They were equally concerned to defeat the Sophists who, likewise past believing in "the gods", were teaching that "might is right".

In the second round of humanism at the time of the Renaissance, it was Machiavelli, Erasmus, More, Bacon and the rest who confronted and defeated the superstitious, dogmatic and hierarchical qualities of medieval Catholicism.

In the third round of humanism, in the nineteenth century and our own time, what was left of revealed religion was largely disposed of by Darwin, Mill, Frazer, Marx, Freud and their contemporaries.

In each case, directly or by inference, the case turned upon the critique of religion as the received opinion of the temple or church, and a different kind of religion began to emerge.

It is important not to trivialise a serious argument.  
PETER CADOGAN

## NOT HISTORICAL

In his article "What Makes Easter Move?" ("The Freethinker", April), J. M. Alexander is correct in pointing out that the most important doctrine of Christianity, the Resurrection, is not being celebrated on a fixed date, and therefore cannot be connected with any historical event. The whole story of Christ follows the critical points of the progress of the sun, therefore his "holy" day is the Sun-Day. The Jewish Jahve—whose name must not be pronounced but is circumscribed as "Adonai" (Lord)—represented the irate planet Saturn, therefore for Jews the Satur(n)day is tabu. "Shabbath" (the seventh) stands for both Saturn and the Saturday, because of holy awe to pronounce the proper name. I explained (under my pen-name, P. G. Roy) the origin of the biblical calendar in "Springtide in Scriptural Imagery" ("The Plain View", Summer 1959).

Mr Alexander writes: "Isis, the prototype of the Virgin Mary, was a Nile goddess and the names of both mean 'pure water'." This is not correct. Isis—hieroglyphic Eset, the sister of Osiris (Asari)—was no Nile deity, and Mary's connection with the sea is secondary and in no way is her name connected with Latin "maritime" (mare-sea). Originally the name had been Marya-in, later Merya-in, which the Jewish Mishna changed into Miryam, the root of which is Meri—fat, well-fed, well-built. Oriental men consider this as beautiful or sexy, and before the wedding their brides frequently are being fattened.

OTTO WOLFGANG

## CHRISTIAN BIAS

I read with amazement a letter by Eric Franklin ("The Freethinker", April) attempting to justify the arbitrary ethics in the supposed teachings of Jesus. Unable to resist a few side swipes at Jews and Judaism in order to prove the imagined superiority of Jesus' ethic, he claims that "The Jew would have spat upon a Samaritan who had dared to help him." Really! Perhaps he could quote spitting precedents on good or even bad Samaritans? And is it really inevitable that "those wedded to the rigidly respectable system of those or any day would be scandalised."

Does it indeed follow that deeply religious and observant Jews (or other peoples) must necessarily be lacking in compassion and humanity? And in any day—or would he prefer to restrict his claim to only

those days? Mr Franklin might not have met many Jews and his concept of Judaism might well be limited to the distorted imbecillities featuring in the gospels. Let him consider the possibility of Jews in those days, and in these, as being perhaps the most compassionate and charitable of peoples. This faculty, it should be noted, derives precisely from the "rigid formalism and legalism" (and this type of adjectival rubbish which Christian critics reserve for Judaism) whereby Jews are bidden to treat their neighbours and the stranger within the gates

GAY FIFEN

### THE GOOD SAMARITAN

My critics ("The Freethinker", March and April) must consider me singularly obtuse if they really think I do not realise that the point of Luke 10 : 29-37 is to inculcate love of neighbour in the widest sense. My point, however, was that this parable has been made, by the evangelist, part of a longer discussion between Jesus and a lawyer which begins already at 10:25; and that in thus combining the parable with another (originally independent) unit of tradition, the evangelist has spoiled the lesson of the parable.

This is recognised by many commentators. For instance, J. D. Crossan, writing in "New Testament Studies" volume 18 (1971-2) says: "The parable of 10 : 30-5 would fit quite well with 10 : 28-9 showing that the neighbour is anyone in need; and it would also fit well with 10 : 36, indicating that the neighbour is one who assists another's need; but it cannot go with both 10 : 27, 29 and 10 : 36 simultaneously."

G. A. WELLS

### Police State

So separated from their brethren on the beat that cases have frequently occurred at political rallies, pop festivals and demonstrations of long-haired hippies being manhandled by correctly attired police and even arrested—only to be found members of the SB.

Independent evidence however, suggests that the Branch has been effectively increased almost ten-fold during the last 25 years. In addition, there is a murky grey area of activity shared by the Special Branch and MI5. The line of demarcation between the two sometimes appears very indistinct indeed.

There is the classic case of a few years back when SB-MI5 officers were supposedly following two Russian diplomats. The Russians, thought to be KGB men, were carrying a transistor radio to pick up beamed transmissions from a secret Government short-wave station, disguised as a garage, in Bernard Road, Clapham Junction. The detectives were arrested by local police as suspected persons, and in the mix-up the Russians seem to have escaped.

A disturbing feature appears to be links between some members of the Special Branch and foreign secret police agents in Britain. These include the South African BOSS (there have been strong suspicions of a South African connection in the Hain case), Rhodesian, Turkish, Iranian, Spanish, various

South American and the CIA. In some cases police photos of nationals of these countries taken at demonstrations have been "leaked". Of even more concern is the liaison which seems to exist between some officers and groups which include the National Front. At two recent public meetings, in Newham and Bristol, Home Secretary Roy Jenkins was pelted with bags of flour. These could easily have been bombs or bullets. But the point is, although both meetings were liberally attended by Special Branch officers, no attempt was made by them to deal with NF disturbers and flour throwers. Afterwards some were again seen drinking with NF members.

Could there be a connection between the "Red" smear on Humanists, renewed calls for censorship, fresh cases of telephone tapping, spectacular dawn police raids on people totally unconnected with the IRA, and snide attacks on juries and defence counsel? There have been strident demands for the unemployed to be recruited as unpaid police aides. The "get tough with youth, unions, Left-wing MPs and 'do-gooders'" lobby has become increasingly vocal.

Freedom, like peace, is indivisible. The struggle to maintain hard-won rights is one fight—even if we do not agree with, or like every individual in the ranks. We must unite on the same side, like it or not. Civil liberty has enough enemies without assistance from anyone labelling himself progressive. The blueprint for the imposition of a police state seems to be ready. All it awaits is a leader with credibility. Let us all beware, for *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes* still applies.

● This article was written before and in ignorance of the publication of Tony Bunyan's "The Political Police in Britain". This important book will be reviewed in a future issue of "The Freethinker", and is now obtainable from G. W. Foote & Company, 698 Holloway Road, London N19, price £4.95 plus 42p postage.

### BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS

Copies of our list are available on request

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The National Secular Society held a public meeting at Caxton Hall, London, on 7 May, the theme of which was "Religious Opposition to Sexual Freedom". Speakers dealt with various aspects of the question including abortion, homosexuality and sex education. A report will be published in our June issue.

# Freethinker Fund

There has been encouraging support for the Fund which helps us to meet the deficit every month. We thank those readers who contributed during the period 22 March to 20 April. Anonymous, £3; H. Bowser, £1; Mrs V. Brierley, £7.50; R. Brownlee, £1.25; C. Brunel, 50p; J. Buchanan, £3.50; J. G. Burdon, 25p; E. Cecil, £1; B. J. Farlow, £1; R. A. D. Forrest, £5; Mrs E. V. Hillman, £1.50; E. C. Hughes, £1.26; E. J. Hughes, £1; C. Jones, 50p; A. F. Langham, £1.50; N. Leveritt, £5; L. G. Lewis, 50p; C. Marcus, £2.50; Mrs C. J. Monrad, £2.50; W. A. Mundie, £1; T. Murphy, 50p; J. Ormrod, 50p; D. Pickett, 50p; J. C. Rapley, 50p; E. Richard, £1; Mrs M. Russell, 50p; R. H. Scott, £5; D. K. Sparrow, 50p; G. Wharton, £1; Mrs S. Winckworth, £1; O. Wolfgang, £2. Total: £54.26.

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# EVENTS

**Brighton and Hove Humanist Group.** Imperial Hotel, First Centre, Hove. Sunday, 6 June, 5.30 pm. W. McIlroy: "Humanists and the Press".

**Humanist Holidays.** Summer Holiday (7 to 21 August) at Weston-super-Mare. Details from Mrs M. Mepham, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey; telephone (01) 642 8796.

**Lewisham Humanist Group.** Unitarian Meeting House, 41 Bromley Road, London SE6. Thursday, 27 May, 8 pm. Martin Taylor: "Amnesty International".

**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, 46 Hamilton Square, Birkenhead. Meetings held on the third Wednesday of the month, 7.45 pm.

**Muswell Hill Humanist Group.** 5 Leaside Avenue, London N10. Thursday, 13 May, 8 pm. Georgina Ashworth: "Work of the Minority Rights Group".

**National Museum of Labour History.** Lime House Town Hall, Commercial Road, London E14. Sunday, 6 June, 3 pm. Audrey Williamson: "Thomas Paine and his contemporaries".

**The Progressive League.** Lodge Hill, Pulborough, Sussex. Friday 28 May to Monday 31 May. Spring Bank Holiday Conference: "Science and Art". Details and booking forms: Terry Gabriel, Flat 8, 24 Stanley Gardens, London W11.

**Waltham Forest Humanist Group.** Ross Wyld Hall, Church Hill, Walthamstow, London E17. Friday 14 May, 8 pm. Millie Miller, MP, David Paintin: "Threats to the 1967 Abortion Act".

**West Glamorgan Humanist Group.** Friends Meeting House Annex, Page Street, Swansea. Friday, 28 May, 7.30 pm. Peter Cadogan: "Dietrich Boenhoeffer".

**Worthing Humanist Group.** Burlington Hotel, Marine Parade, Worthing. Sunday, 23 May, 5.30 pm. Annual General Meeting.