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DLAS IN NEW CAMPAIGN TO END FILM CENSORSHIP

A deputation from the Defence of Literature and the Arts Society recently met Lord Harris, Minister of State at the Home Office, to discuss the Society's new statement on the anomalous laws of film censorship in Britain. Ben Whitaker, chairman of DLAS, Lindsay Anderson, the stage and film director, Lord Gardiner, Lord Houghton, Geoffrey Robertson, a lawyer, Lena Townsend, Conservative member of the GLC, John Trevelyan, former secretary of the British Board of Film Censors and Enid Wistrich, ex-chairman of the GLC Film Viewing Committee, expressed concern at the repressive measures which at present apply to films before they can be shown in a public cinema.

The DLAS points out that the battle against prior censorship or licensing of the printed word was won as far back as 1695, and the Lord Chamberlain's authority to censor stage plays ended in 1968. Now plays as well as books and newspapers may be produced freely and are subject only to law. In addition to the law relating to libel and race relations the basic legal provisions relating to "obscenity" provides for a trial by jury on a charge that the material concerned will "deprave and corrupt".

Contrast this position with film censorship. The censors operate in secret and never have to justify their cuts and prohibitions. The primary concern of the British Board of Film Censors is to protect the film trade from criticism, so it responds readily to the pressures brought by the vociferous puritan lobby. Most local councillor censors have not been to the cinema for years and act negatively on the prompting of sensational press reports.

The Defence of Literature and the Arts Society believes that films are subject to unjust discrimination and should be placed on the same legal basis as books and plays as far as control of content is concerned. The Society supports the recommendations of the Law Commission's report on the laws

relating to public morals and decency and wishes to see the following reforms: (1) The extension of the Theatres Act to films shown at cinemas or clubs, with a full defence of the "public good" allowed when there are prosecutions, (2) The abolition of local authority licencing powers controlling the content of films shown to adults, (3) The end of the application of common law offences on indecency and other archaic statutes to film shows, (4) The modification of the Customs Consolidation Act which allows imported films thought to be indecent by Customs Officers to be seized by them.

The Society would like to see the classification of films which may be shown to children to remain, but thinks that expert advice should be provided when classification is carried out. The power to enforce such classification should remain with local authorities, as should the control of lurid advertising outside cinemas.

Freedom for Film Makers

The effect of these reforms would be to leave the British Board of Film Censors as a voluntary advisory body whose decisions were not enforced by local authority licencing powers. Cinemas and clubs would be free to show adults any film they wished, subject only to the possibility of prosecution under the same provisions that apply to theatres. Adult cinemagoers would be free to see or to avoid any film show. Film makers would be under no obligation to submit their work to a censor and would be ruled by their own sense of responsibility.

In a twentieth century democracy, the continuing attempt to supervise and control the content of art and adult entertainment by such an archaic, irresponsible and secretive process as prior censorship is unacceptable. The obsession of the Mrs Grundy lobby against sexual frankness is the driving force behind this oppressive system. The DLAS believes

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Lourdes Grotto is a Gold-Mine

The Bishop of Lourdes, Monsignor Donze, has been criticising local traders who have been cashing in on the gullibility of Catholic pilgrims—surely a classic example of the pot calling the kettle black. He said: "It is natural for pilgrims to want to take away souvenirs of their visit to a place of miracles. Pious souvenirs are supposed to make their owners think of the Virgin Mary, not anything else."

But one of the souvenirs which is now being offered and has prompted the bishop to protest is hardly likely to inspire pious or virginal thoughts. It is a virility charm which the manufacturers claim is made from rock chippings from the Lourdes grotto. It is alleged to put new life into those whose sexual prowess is on the wane.

The virility charm may have upset the bishop, but the shopkeepers are selling it together with Virgin Mary water bottles and brandy flasks, musical madonnas and ash trays whose users stub out their cigarettes on the engraved face of St Bernadette.

One local trader said that even they are shocked by the visitors' bad taste. Another commented happily: "When Bernadette saw the Virgin, she promised to rain blessings on the world. But on Lourdes

the apparition has sent a rain of gold."

The pilgrims—3,593,000 in 1975 alone—have made the hoteliers, caterers and travel agents rich. But it is the manufacturers and vendors of tawdry religious souvenirs who make the biggest killing. Almost two thousand different kinds of gifts are sold in the town's 650 gift shops. Nearly 700 tons of candles are burnt before the Virgin Mary's image at the grotto.

Lourdes has become one of the richest towns in France. It has spent huge sums on a new conference hall, a stadium, a covered swimming pool, sewage disposal works and new football fields.

● Natalie Clamp, aged four, died in her mother's arms as the plane in which they were travelling approached Luton Airport. The child has suffered from cystic fibrosis, a disease that attacks the lungs, since she was four months old. She and her mother were returning from Lourdes where they had been on a pilgrimage for which parishioners at their local Roman Catholic Church had raised money.

Film Censorship

that prior censorship of films, except on a voluntary basis, should be brought to an end and that the legal framework in relation to obscenity should be the same for all the media and should seek to control only that material which can be shown to have harmful effects on people.

The Defence of Literature and the Arts Society grew out of the Free Art Legal Fund, established for the defence of *Last Exit to Brooklyn*, which had three trials (1966-68). The sponsors of the Fund felt that there was a need for a continuing organisation that would assist publishers, writers and artists who were threatened by censorship.

The Society is now firmly established in the forefront of the struggle for enlightenment and is constantly approached by publishers, lawyers and others to advise on the law and tactics in actual cases, to prevent threatened action and assisting in meeting defence costs. In numerous cases the Society has recommended sympathetic solicitors; many members have given evidence in court for defendants involved in prosecutions and have taken part in TV and radio broadcasts and public debates on the subject of censorship.

Copies of the DLAS statement on film censorship and details of membership are obtainable from the secretary, c/o 18 Brewer Street, London W1R 4AS.

Change of Address

THE FREETHINKER
(Editorial and business)

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

G. W. FOOTE & COMPANY

Our new address is
702 Holloway Road, London N19 3NL
Telephone (unchanged) (01) 272 1266

Barbara Smoker's "The Relevance of Atheism", first published in the July issue of "The Freethinker" has been issued as a leaflet by the National Secular Society, 702 Holloway Road, London N19 3NL. It is available at the following special rates (including postage): 10 for 15p; 20 for 30p; 35 for 50p; 50 for 75p; 100 for £1.50.

HUMANIST HOLIDAYS
CHRISTMAS AT BRIGHTON

Details from Mrs M. Mephram, 29 Fairview Road,
Sutton, Surrey. Telephone (01) 642 8796.

While a few of its members trendise in their leather jackets and rush around setting up Jesus centres, the Church of England finds its true vocation, it seems, deliberating such weighty matters as whether green stone chippings should be allowed in churchyards. Typical of this latter kind of preoccupation is the recent publication of "The Calendar, Lectionary and Rules to Order the Service 1976." This is a report which was drawn up by the Liturgical Commission of the General Synod, and published by the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge.

In framing the Calendar, the Commissioners seek to take account of "the realities of the contemporary situation." The Book of Common Prayer has a long list of "feasts that are to be observed in the Church of England", many of which inconveniently fall on weekdays. The new list of Principal Holy Days contains only four that are not Sundays, including Christmas Day and Good Friday. "The pastor", says the Report disarmingly, "may well prefer to concentrate his attention on proclaiming the duty of worship on Sundays." Strangely, one of the few "religious" festivals still popularly celebrated that usually falls on a weekday is omitted—the Papists' Conspiracy of 5 November. But perhaps the less said about that the better.

The Calendar continues with a list of greater holy days and then three lists of lesser festivals (labelled A, B and C), providing a complicated league table of sanctity. The Church of England very wisely avoids any formal process of canonisation, so it can slip people into its lists without having to attempt to prove miracles to their account. Thus, worthy feasts like St Enurchus and O Sapientia can be dropped without comment and such modern and boringly predictable replacements offered as Florence Nightingale and Wilberforce.

The Church's special relationship with the State is acknowledged by the retention of St George (decanonised by Rome). Charles, King and Martyr, has been quietly dropped—part of the same discretion, no doubt, that prefers the "Naming of Jesus" to the "Circumcision of Christ".

Ecumenism is given full sway with days for George Fox and the Wesleys. The various traditions within the Church of England, Protestant and Catholic, are neatly played off, one against the other. Both traditions can celebrate Saints and Martyrs of the Reformation Era on 31 October. Presumably each commemorates those done in by the other side.

The Protestant faction are given an added bonus of specific days for Thomas Cranmer and Bishops Latimer and Ridley (burned by Queen Mary). This is probably an attempt to buy off their indignation

at the appearance of a new festival for the so-called Blessed Virgin on 15 August—a thinly disguised introduction of the outrageously Romish festival of the Assumption.

The new Lectionary still retains the drudgery of ploughing through the whole Bible once a year in the daily services, although Mary Whitehouse will be relieved to hear that special provision is made to make sure that only the nice bits are used on Sundays, when readings thought appropriate to certain themes are used, some silly ("The Whole Armour of God", "The Proof of Faith"), some more sinister ("Those in Authority"—M. W. would approve).

Intellectual Gymnastics

The Commissioners complain that in many instances the Book of Common Prayer does not give sufficient indication of how the service should be ordered or how all the conflicts that arise between movable and fixed feasts should be resolved. Perhaps Thomas Cranmer thought that ministers of the Church of England could be left to use their own imagination and discretion. He thought wrongly, it seems, for apparently the demand today is for a rule to be provided for every eventuality. Can it be that the undoubted decline in the intellectual calibre of the clergy has been so great that it is now lower than in the sixteenth century? Typical of the problems the Commissioners have laboured to solve is the following:

In spite of our endeavours, two intractable problems remain. If December 28 is a Sunday and The Innocents is not transferred, Mat 18:1-10 will be read on two Sundays a fortnight apart, once at Evensong on December 28, and a second time at Matins on Epiphany 1: but only in year two. This reading has already been removed from its place in the weekday course because of its proximity to December 28. If November 1 falls on a Sunday, Matt 5:1-12 will be read at Holy Communion on that day and at Matins or Evensong on the next: and Revelation 7.9—end will similarly be repeated two days later. Moreover a reading from Rev 7 is also provided a fortnight earlier, but in year two only, Trinity 22.

One can only suppose that the conclusion (in most cases correct) to be drawn from all this is that no part of the Bible is worth reading twice. But to give the Church of England its due, it is undoubtedly better that it spends its time (and our subsidies) bogging its own mind on such non-problems, than that it should devote all its efforts to twisting the minds of all and sundry.

● See "Anglican Saint-Makers" (Letters, page 126)

The Compulsory Pregnancy Lobby— Then and Now

MADELEINE SIMMS

Christian churches and their associated organisations have been the most vitriolic enemies of the birth control movement. The Roman Catholic Church may now be virtually alone in its opposition to contraception. But until comparatively recent times the Protestant churches also fiercely attacked the idea that men and women should rely on contraceptives, and not on the whims of a nebulous deity, to control their own fertility. This article consists of extracts from the 1975 Marie Stopes Memorial Lecture. The text of the Lecture appeared in the *Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners*, and we gratefully acknowledge the Editor's permission to publish this article.

The Compulsory Pregnancy Lobby is a phrase I came across when I visited the United States two years ago. There I heard it used by members of the Women's Movement to denote those pressure groups, mostly religious in origin, that seek to compel a woman, once pregnant, to have a baby against her will and better judgment.

More recently, however, reading Marie Stopes' *Mother England* (1929) I came across the phrase "compulsory pregnancy" again, and I suppose she was the first person to use it. This book contains all the letters asking for advice on birth control written to her in the year 1926 by women whose surnames began with the letters A to H. (To have printed all the letters to Z would have produced, she observed, "too bulky" a volume.) This documentary evidence of the quality of life of working class women in Britain in the inter-war years constitutes a horrifying chapter of our recent domestic history.

These letters Marie Stopes received were from the survivors. But many infants did not survive, and their mothers died in droves. Forty years ago, the population of England and Wales was about 40 million, which is about 20 per cent less than today. The birth rate was similar, at about 14 per 1,000. The infant mortality rate was nearly four times what it is now, but at least it was on its way down.

No so the maternal mortality rate. In his *Annual Report for 1923*, the Chief Medical Officer had remarked that it had shown "little improvement since 1894." In 1930, he reported that "the death rate from sepsis has shown a definite tendency to rise during the past 20 years, and one explanation of this is a possible increase in the numbers of deaths from septic abortion which are included in these

figures . . ." In 1933, there were about 3,500 direct and associated maternal deaths in England and Wales, a maternal mortality rate of 600 per 100,000.

The Times has traditionally been the principal organ of the Compulsory Pregnancy Lobby, suppressing the articles, letters and opinions of the birth controllers in the inter-war years, and of the abortion law reformers in the post-war years. In a letter sent to *The Times* on 10 September 1929, which as usual it declined to publish, and which Marie Stopes then published separately, she pointed out that in her birth control clinic in one period of three months, she received no less than 20,000 requests for abortion from women who took abortion so much for granted as the only method of birth prevention, that it never occurred to them that it was illegal.

It is clear why *The Times* suppressed this important letter for its implications were deeply subversive. It showed that despite the overlapping forces of organised religion and anti-feminism, the Compulsory Pregnancy Lobby was bound to fail. It was then, as now, running against the grain of history, impervious to the social developments around it, blind to the revolution of rising expectations that was taking place before its eyes.

Marie Stopes herself was nervous of the abortion issue. She feared that abortion and birth control would be confused in the public mind to the detriment of the latter. She was well aware that her enemies would do their utmost to encourage this confusion, just as, now, Roman Catholic prelates make a point of talking about abortion and euthanasia in the same breath.

A Woman's Right

One can see why Marie Stopes was so anxious to separate birth control from abortion, though one can also see with hindsight why this attempt was doomed to failure in the long run. The underlying issue at stake, as the Women's Movement in our own day has recognised so clearly, is woman's right to control her own fertility. It is this that the Compulsory Pregnancy Lobby was then, and is now, concerned to challenge.

The attitude of the Church of England to compulsory pregnancy has long been pragmatic compared with that of the Roman Catholic Church. At the Lambeth Conference in 1930, birth control was officially, if a shade uneasily, tolerated for the first time. Some years previously Marie Stopes had burrowed in the 1911 Census Report. Here she discovered, and gleefully publicised, that the Anglican clergy, with teachers, doctors and authors,

had the lowest birth rates on record, whereas miners, dockers and unskilled labourers had birth rates that were between two and four times as high.

The Church, in the best Anglican tradition, discreetly accepted reality. "I was much embarrassed", wrote Cardinal Heenan (1971) in his autobiography recalling those days, "by the contraceptionists who cited the recent Lambeth Conference in their support. I avoided attacking the Anglican bishops, but I could hardly defend them."

"Christian Principles"

Lest this suggests an enthusiastic conversion to birth control, it is worth looking at the terms of the Anglican resolution to see what it was that Cardinal Heenan found so hard to defend:

"15. *Where there is a clearly felt moral obligation to limit or avoid parenthood, the method must be decided on Christian principles. The primary and obvious method is complete abstinence from intercourse (as far as may be necessary) in a life of discipline and self-control lived in the power of the Holy Spirit.*

"*Nevertheless, in those cases where there is such a clearly felt moral obligation to limit or avoid parenthood, and where there is a morally sound reason for avoiding complete abstinence, the Conference agrees that other methods may be used, provided that this is done in the light of these same Christian principles. The Conference records its strong condemnation of the use of any methods of conception-control from motives of selfishness, luxury, or mere convenience.*"

This highly qualified approbation was carried by 193 votes to 67. The Conference duly recorded its "adhorrence of the sinful practice of abortion." But this was not universally acceptable, even then. The Modern Churchmen's Union, the South Bankers of the 1930s, recognised that there were at least legitimate health grounds for legal abortion, and this recognition was, of course, carried several stages further in 1965, when the Church's reassessment of the abortion problem was published, which also took account of social factors.

The Mothers' Union was not as enlightened as the Modern Churchmen. It claimed a membership of nearly 600,000 "and we feel sure that the Committee would wish to take into consideration the considered opinion of such large numbers of wives and mothers." Motherhood was described as "the core and centre" of the spiritual and physical life of women. Without it, they were "robbed of the fullest meaning of their womanhood"—a view that certainly put spinsters and other childless women in their place.

Rather than permit this exalted spiritual exercise to be undertaken on a voluntary basis, the Mothers' Union was prepared to see the high maternal morality rate maintained, expressing "grave

anxiety" lest "*the desire to reduce maternal mortality should result in any changes in the law which would render the procuring of abortion no longer a legal offence.*"

It took the view that there was no essential difference between abortion and infanticide, and its objection to the practice of birth control was hardly less. Women were alleged to have an "instinctive revulsion against the use of contraceptives" which were said to be forced on them by men. Nowadays, it is abortion to which women are said to have an instinctive revulsion, and which is forced on them by men.

Religious Racists

The members of the League of National Life, an extremist wing of the Church of England, were also associated with the League of National Life. This had been founded in 1925, and described itself, as such organisations always do, as "non-sectarian and non-political." In fact, it was both sectarian and political. It was largely Roman Catholic in inspiration and membership, though it did have a handful of High Anglican members, sufficient to give itself a rather spurious inter-denominational air.

The League disapproved of birth control which "in our opinion is the chief cause of the declining birth rate, which is causing such grave concern." Contraceptive failure would lead inevitably to attempted abortion. So contraception was doubly to be deplored. If it succeeded, it reduced the birth rate; if it failed, it increased the abortion rate.

The League's other enthusiasm was for fostering marriages "at the best age for reproduction." To this end, it advocated giving young people furniture vouchers and other "marriage gifts" as Hitler was doing in Germany, with apparent success since the German birth rate was rising. Indeed, the Nazis were held in some esteem by the League, particularly by one of its founders and most active members, Dr Halliday Sutherland, a Catholic convert who had been involved in the libel action against Marie Stopes in 1923. He called attention to the heroic efforts of Hitler and Mussolini to increase the birth rates of the white races, and he commended the Nazi Penal Code of November 1936, which made "public ridicule of marriage or of maternity, and all propaganda in favour of birth control and abortion" into criminal offences.

Even after the war he is still to be found advocating the death penalty for contraceptive manufacturers: "If saboteurs deserve hanging, so also do they" (*Control of Life*, 1947). He naturally also held Nazi views about women. Education for girls should not fit them for careers, but for breeding, or, as he put it more delicately, for "looking for a home." Pope Pius XII had stated that a woman's place was in the home, and that "society must find its cure

in women." If anyone doubted the Pope's wisdom, said Dr Sutherland, "then let him make an anthology of what the greatest men have written in gratitude to their mothers." Neither the Pope nor Dr Sutherland remark on what the greatest women have written in gratitude to their fathers.

At the last general election, the National Front was the only party to have repeal of the 1967 Abortion Act as an official part of its political programme. So the tradition lingers on. On the whole, the present day Compulsory Pregnancy Lobby is embarrassed by the Nazi sympathies of its immediate predecessors. On the principle that attack is the best form of defence, its various spokesmen always make a point of saying how Nazi-like it is to legalise abortion and thus give women freedom of choice. Malcolm Muggeridge, the high priest of this cult, which numbers MPs, professors of gynaecology, *Times* and *Spectator* feature writers among its acolytes, usually manages to tie up abortion, euthanasia, and Nazism neatly into one parcel.

Ignorance and Discrimination

Any deliberate withholding of information always affects the poor most severely, since they have more limited access to knowledge than the more literate and articulate middle classes. Thus Catholic attitudes in this field, wherever they prevail, will always discriminate against the poor, widen the social chasm between the sophisticated and the ignorant, and polarise society.

The Compulsory Pregnancy Lobby has a poster which it carries around on its religious and political processions on which is inscribed: "Abortion or Social Justice?" as if these were alternatives, as if it were possible to achieve social justice alongside compulsory pregnancy. Without the freedom to choose, there can be no social justice for women. The availability of birth control and abortion are sensitive indicators of the position of women in any society, as the Latin American countries on the one hand and the Scandinavian on the other. vividly illustrate.

Right from the beginning of her career as a birth controller, Marie Stopes grasped the central animating idea that has inspired subsequent generations of workers in the birth control and abortion law reform movements.

By contrast, her opponents looked upon motherhood as one of the accidents or hazards of life, to be endured like the weather or some natural disaster—and made the best of. Nonetheless, it would be mistaken to represent Marie Stopes as a contemporary liberated woman. She was in many respects a child of her own time. It is true that in her introduction to *The First Five Thousand* (1925) she states that "Only motherhood which is in the control of the mother can now truly advance our race", but it becomes clear, as one reads through

her works, that the racial advancement mattered to her as much as the personal choice. She sees birth control as "the keystone in the arch of progress towards racial health and happiness." The first world war had slaughtered the nation's most vigorous young men. How were these unprecedented losses to be made good, and the Empire, the White Man's Burden, to be held together?

This is a constant preoccupation of the writers of the period, even of political radicals like the Webbs, George Orwell, and the young Richard Titmuss. Her enemies, of course, wholly shared this concern. That the Empire had already entered upon a period of decline had not yet penetrated the public consciousness. Consistent with its admiration for Hitler, the Compulsory Pregnancy Lobby laced its elitism with a heavy dose of racialism. In 1927, for example, the Bishop of Exeter draws attention to the differential fall in the birth rate: "*The birth rate in Hampstead in 1926 was 12.2; Shoreditch is 23.3. The fall, therefore means that the best stock is diminishing. Shoreditch is largely inhabited by Jews and foreigners.*" (*Exeter Diocesan Gazette*, 1927.) His solution is to ask the sisters of those who were killed "to bear sons to fill their vacant places" provided, that is, they belong to the right race and colour.

The Future

If the 1967 Abortion Act were to be restricted, some women who at present qualify for legal abortion would not do so in the future. Of those who would not *qualify* for legal abortion, those who would not *obtain* it would, almost by definition, be the poorest and least adequate members of the community.

The rich and intelligent are not much deterred by obstacles. They usually manage to obtain or buy what they require, if not at home, then abroad, since Europe is now following Britain's example and reforming its own abortion laws.

Thus, the new crop of unwanted children would be born to a group of poor, weak, helpless, and perhaps also bitter and resentful, mothers. They would form the pool from which would be recruited in disproportionate numbers the deprived, the delinquent and the battered babies of the next generation. This group would represent the triumph of the Compulsory Pregnancy Lobby's dedicated efforts. What a squalid exercise in maximising entirely preventable human misery all this would represent, and what a hollow triumph.

● "The Freethinker", Volume 95, 1975, is obtainable from G. W. Foote & Company, 702 Holloway Road, London N19 3NL, price £2.60 plus 30p postage.

The Much Deformed Church

BARRY DUKE

The recent massacre of black Africans in the Soweto township was the worst incident of its kind in South Africa since the Sharpeville killings 16 years ago. In spite of the final death count of 176, the Dutch Reformed Church still unequivocally supports apartheid and continues to be the Government's most fervent ally. Dr F. E. O'Brien Geldenhuys, director of the DRC's ecumenical affairs, said in an interview with the "Methodist Recorder": "Most of the English-speaking churches say that the present system is inherently wrong and should be replaced by a multi-racial society. We say 'no'. No political system is entirely right or wrong. At present the Government aims at a solution which, to our minds, seems to be in accordance with the word of God."

The powderkeg that was Soweto and its sister ghettos has—to South Africa's cost and eternal discredit—finally erupted into a holocaust of unprecedented violence. The fuse was a short one. Years of oppression under Christian National rule saw to that. The spark that finally ignited it was the directive that black children learn Afrikaans—a tongue they have every right to regard as the language of their tormentors. They said "No" in Soweto to that ruling, and they were answered with bullets. More than a hundred people are dead and over a thousand injured. Once again South Africa's white Calvinist society is left standing with blood on its hands. Yet not shamefaced, not repentant, never that.

The Nationalist regime blames the conflagration on a nebulous enemy that exists only as a figment of its own warped mental processes, with the predictable blind arrogance it always adopts when confronted with its own stupidity. Neither Prime Minister Vorster, who constantly speaks of "agitators", nor Justice Minister Kruger, who prattles on about "certain sections of blacks seeking confrontation with whites" will ever admit that the real cause of the riots are, as a Durban newspaper puts it, "poverty, frustration and the cruel laws of apartheid." What the *Sunday Tribune*, or any other South African newspaper dares not add is that all these injustices spring directly from the establishment Dutch Reformed Church—a flawed, corrupt and inhuman organisation bent on provoking race hate and violence, and never preventing it.

Is it fair to blame the Church for the actions of the Government? Certainly it is; in South Africa Church and State are synonymous. They are indistinguishable and inseparable. Vorster's brother is the moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church, and whatever decisions the Government takes, they are

certain to get the DRC's unqualified nod of approval, no matter how much suffering they may cause. The Church often initiates policies, and forces laws on to the statute book. Among them are some of the cruellest in the world. The Dutch Reformed Church advocated apartheid, for instance, because they interpret the Bible as asserting that non-whites are the offspring of Ham and are therefore to be condemned forever to be "hewers of wood, drawers of water." In other words, lackeys to superior white South Africans.

That this policy has despatched millions of people—and aims at piloting many more—into political, cultural and moral voids like Soweto and the homelands without regard to human dignity, to family life, to any of the ideals Christianity allegedly stands for, is of no consequence whatsoever to the Church. God is a white man and his will shall be done—by means of bludgeonings or bullets where necessary.

The Language of the Master Race

It is this inherent insensitivity to people's feelings that led to the Bantu Education Department's arrogant insistence that African schoolchildren should learn a language they neither want nor need. Except perhaps to say "Ja Baas" ("Yes boss"), or understand the meaning of "Waar is jou pas, kaffir?" ("Where is your pass, kaffir?") These they already know only too well. There is absolutely no need for them to learn the language—particularly as it is the Government's policy to de-South Africanise most Africans so that they can go off and "develop separately" in their respective bantustans.

Why then did Bantu Education Minister Botha wish to inflict his language, the language of his Church, on black schoolchildren? The conclusion is inescapable: to remind them that they are a third-class people, to rub their noses in the servility thrust upon them, to add another humiliation to the long list his regime has already heaped on the heads and on the souls of four-fifths of the population.

Dr Andries Treurnicht, an extreme Right-wing pastor in the Dutch Reformed Church and Deputy Minister of Bantu Education, said: "There are people who in the name of Christianity demand that any person in South Africa must be able to live where he will, work where he will, marry whomsoever he will and vote where he will. Such people are not only unrealistic and even naive; they are dangerous and must be resisted."

The Church, alias the Nationalist Government, is responsible not only for oppressing the non-

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MR SPEAKER STANDS UP FOR JESUS

The controversy over school religion shows no signs of abating. A committee of the Free Church Federal Council has presented its report, *Religious Education in County Schools*, and it is certainly more coherent and honest than similar documents which have been published recently. Increasing opposition to religious assemblies and acts of worship in school has been reflected in the correspondence columns of national and local newspapers. Mary Whitehouse's crusade to "Save Religious Education" has taken plenty of knocks, with the British Humanist Association hitting back vigorously against her Communist smear campaign.

But the Christian indoctrinators have been digging in behind the religious clauses of the 1944 Education Act. Their anti-Humanist venom and contempt for less doctrinaire fellow-Christians is typified in a new booklet entitled *Truth Betrayed: the Threat to Christian Education*. It has been published by the ultra-conservative Roman Catholic organisation Pro Fide, and carries a foreword by Patrick Wall, MP, an ex-brasshat who is probably the most devoted and reactionary Romanist at Westminster.

In Birmingham, the religious education handbook which had become the ecumenists' Koran was not literally burned by the new Conservative education committee; but it was badly mutilated. Forty pages, including the section on "stances for living", have been deleted because the chairman and his colleagues objected to the "anti-religion and non-religions" contained therein. The handbook had taken six years to prepare.

Perhaps the most outspoken defence of Christian privilege in the nation's education system came from George Thomas, Speaker of the House of Commons, when he addressed a prize-day audience at the Roman Catholic Ratcliffe College, Leicester. Mr Thomas, an active lay-preacher and former vice-president of the Methodist Conference, declared: "It is high time for all of those who are Christian believers to be more assertive in their propagation of the Christian message . . . The time for learning God's love for mankind and of our relationship with him is in childhood . . . We must not budge an inch in our insistence on the right of our children to be instructed and nurtured in the Christian faith by their teachers."

Mr Thomas was at his most arrogant when he condemned "dangerous elements" who seek to wean the younger generation away from Christian loyalty. No doubt he was referring to those teachers and educationists who, preferring honesty to humbug, refuse to be part-time missionaries. He said: "Some of them have reached positions of influence within the education system of our land. They are not slow to use their influence. There is no reluctance

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on their part to push their views on the younger generation."

Such an example of the "Don't do as I do—do as I say" attitude is to be expected from a product of the Welsh chapel. But many people will be naive enough to expect better from the "impartial" Speaker of the House of Commons.

There is one sentence in Mr Thomas' speech with which we can agree: "Humanists are on the march." During the coming months the Humanist movement must campaign with greater vigour than ever to break the grip of the Christian indoctrinators. Every letter to a Member of Parliament or newspaper, every resolution passed at a professional association or political party meeting, every leaflet distributed to parents, teachers and pupils, will contribute to the achievement of a system of secular education.

We can win, even if an evangelical Bible-puncher presides over the House of Commons for the next 50 years.

CHRISTIANITY'S DEPARTMENT OF DIRTY TRICKS

A particularly nasty development in the campaign to wreck the 1967 Abortion Act has become discernible in recent months. Emotive phraseology, bogus statistics and outright lies have become the standard weapons of campaigners against liberal and rational abortion laws, just as they had been to their predecessors who heaped calumnies on Charles Bradlaugh, Annie Besant, Marie Stopes and other pioneers of the family planning movement.

Now racism has been introduced by the anti-abortionist; indeed it would be more accurate to say that it has been resurrected, for, as Madcleine Simms points out in *The Compulsory Pregnancy Lobby—Then and Now* (p116), this vicious and dangerous form of propagandising was frequently resorted to by religious opponents of sexual freedom during the 1920s and 1930s.

The latest example of such despicable scaremongering is a speech made by Trevor Skeet, Conservative MP for Bedford, when he spoke at a meeting which was organised by the Bedford LIFE group and chaired by a gentleman of the cloth. Mr Skeet's speech was described by a local newspaper as being "disturbing because of its racist undertones."

AND NOTES

The Member for Bedford claimed that the British race was in danger because of the 1967 Abortion Act. He declared that "we must reproduce our own kind" and called for an end to abortion in order to preserve the race. He is reported as saying later in an interview: "If we are not going to replace ourselves by having children, then of course we are going to be taken over."

Mr Skeet had "another engagement" and left the meeting without answering questions. But his critics were not silenced. Chris Frost, chairman of the Eastern Region Young Conservatives, condemned Mr Skeet's speech in forthright terms. He said: "I am appalled that a Conservative MP should come forward with this dangerous nonsense at a time when racial tension in the country is at a peak."

"The fact that we are over-populated as a country seems to mean nothing to Mr Skeet. I should have thought that he would be advocating a reduction in the population, rather than an increase. Suggesting that we should do all we can to keep up with other races in breeding potential can only be described as fascist. The next step is to award MBEs to mothers with more than eight children."

The unscrupulousness and hypocrisy of the British anti-abortion lobby have often been exposed in *The Freethinker* and elsewhere; but in the words of the old song, "It's the Same the Whole World Over". In Melbourne, Australia, there is a Fertility Clinic, and every week about a dozen moral meddlers picket the building and harass women who attend to seek advice on contraception or abortion. The anti-abortionists push cameras into the patients' faces and photograph, or pretend to photograph them, as they enter the clinic.

Helen Steg, a counselling psychologist at the Fertility Clinic, says she is disgusted by such tactics. Women who seek advice should not have the additional worry that employers or parents may find out they had been to the clinic. It is unpleasant for the women who attend the clinic merely to get contraceptive advice or to pick up a patient. But great psychological damage can be done to a woman who, after counselling, has decided on an abortion. To make patients go through a picket line is bad enough, but to shove a camera in each woman's face at the time when she most needs support and sympathy is sadistic, cruel and punitive.

It appears that the Australian anti-abortionists have little to learn from our own sex-obsessed campaigners in SPUC, LIFE, Festival of Light and Order of Christianity Unity.

PATRIOTIC HUMBUG

The Humanist movement campaigned to end the death penalty and has resisted attempts to re-introduce it in Britain. This futile and barbaric form of punishment should be condemned wherever it is carried out, and the recent execution of four mercenaries in Angola is no exception.

One of the most distasteful aspects of this tragic affair was the campaign by cynical humbugs in newspaper offices and political circles to present the mercenaries as misguided heroes and martyrs. They were nothing of the kind; they were murderous scum who butchered anyone, including 14 of their fellow mercenaries, who crossed them.

Fleet Street is the graveyard of morality; the vulgar, insensitive exploitation of human suffering is the business of people whose chief interest is boosting circulation figures. But it is the Government that deserves strongest condemnation in this matter. Had the mercenaries been recruited to fight in defence of a Left-wing regime, ways and means would have been found to delay or prevent their departure from Britain. Instead they were treated like VIPs at London Airport and departed in a blaze of publicity and patriotic fervour.

Those who bear much of the responsibility for the mercenaries' deaths are still operating as honourable men in Whitehall and as grubby recruiting agents in suburbia.

HUMANIST LEADER ARRESTED IN INDIA

Almost a year to the day after the declaration by the Indian Government of a state of emergency, Mrs Gandhi has added C. T. Daru to the many thousands of men and women who are being detained without trial. Mr Daru, an eminent lawyer, is general secretary of the Indian Radical Humanist Association and a board member of the International Humanist and Ethical Union.

Mr Daru was arrested on 24 June and now faces up to two years' imprisonment without the necessity of charges being brought. Those arrested under the state of emergency are not told the reason for their detention nor have they recourse to any court of appeal. Their names cannot be published in the Indian press.

This is an issue of basic human rights, and continuous pressure from outside India is needed both to make the fate of those arrested known, and to persuade the Indian Government either to bring formal charges or to release these political prisoners.

Freethinker readers are urged to send letters to protest to the High Commissioner for India, India House, Aldwych, London WC2.

SOLZHENITSYN'S RELIGION by Niels C. Nielsen.
Mowbray, £4.95.

When Solzhenitsyn published *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* at the end of 1962, he immediately became a leading Russian literary figure. For a decade he seemed to be a great novelist in the general European and particular Russian tradition—the realistic, moralistic, humanistic tradition (of the kind described by Peter Faulkner in *Humanism in the English Novel*). He was praised not just by impartial critics everywhere, but by both anti-Marxists in the West and Marxists in the East. When he was expelled from Russia at the beginning of 1974, he immediately became a world political figure. Yet his entry on to a wider stage has ironically narrowed his appeal. For two years he has produced virtually no work of literary interest. He seems to have been corrupted not by success but by power, to have turned from a writer into a prophet, from a human into a religious publicist.

Since 1974 Solzhenitsyn has released a *Letter to Soviet Leaders*, calling for the abandonment of totalitarian Marxism in favour of authoritarian Christianity, and broadcast a *Warning to the Western World*, calling for the abandonment of “pragmatism” and “utilitarianism” in favour of authoritarian Christianity; he has contributed essays to a reactionary Christian collection called *From Under the Rubble*, sent a message to the Russian Orthodox Church in exile, and put together a series of crude fictional glimpses of Lenin before the Revolution. More important than all this, he has released the successive parts of *Gulag Archipelago*, but even this magnificent exposure of the prison and camp system of Communist Russia is disfigured by attacks on individuals such as Bertrand Russell (who in fact did much for victims of the system, including Solzhenitsyn himself) and on groups such as the Western humanists (who in fact did what they could to preserve life and liberty in the Communist world).

So Solzhenitsyn has become a political and indeed a religious writer. A few critics noticed the trend right at the beginning, but it has only recently become obvious. As he despaired of getting a hearing inside Russia, he gradually said more openly what he secretly thought. The development is a matter of some significance for our understanding not only of his work but also of the contemporary world. How should we look at such apparently humanistic works as *Ivan Denisovich*, *Matryona's House*, *An Incident at Krechetovka Station*, *For the Good of the Cause*, *The First Circle*, and *Cancer Ward*? And how should we take the fact that yet again (following Pasternak and Sinyavsky) one of the leading Russian writers has

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turned from Stalinist Communism to Orthodox Christianity? At least there must be a thorough examination of Solzhenitsyn's religion—but that is not provided by this book.

Niels Nielsen is head of the Department of Religious Studies at Rice University, Texas, and *Solzhenitsyn's Religion* is a boring and banal digest of other people's facts and ideas, giving a religious view of Solzhenitsyn rather than a view of Solzhenitsyn's religion. Most of the book consists of quotations from or summaries of works by Solzhenitsyn and commentators on him, and the remainder consists of Nielsen's own badly arranged and badly expressed ideas; in fact the book is significant for what it isn't rather than for what it is.

Nielsen doesn't even ask the literary questions. How should we read Solzhenitsyn's work in the light of his later work? Should we prefer the latter to the former, or see them as part of a greater whole? Should we re-read *Ivan Denisovich* from the point of view not of the protagonist Shukhov, who struggles to survive through a combination of decency and determination, but of the Baptist Alyoshka, who cares only about his faith? Should we re-think the ideological debates in *The First Circle* and *Cancer Ward*? Should we pay more attention to the bitter story *The Easter Procession*, written in 1966 and published in the West in 1969? How can we judge Solzhenitsyn? Similar questions were raised by Tolstoy's conversion nearly a century ago, and have never been fully answered. It is possible to regret Tolstoy's transformation and yet prefer *Ressurrection* and *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* to *Anna Karenina* and *The Cossacks*. It is scarcely possible to make such a distinction between Solzhenitsyn's belief and writings.

If, as seems likely, Solzhenitsyn has ceased to be a leading literary figure, he remains a leading political figure (moving in the opposite direction to Tolstoy). Nielsen's answers to the political questions are simplistic repetitions of the fallacy that Christianity has a necessary connection with liberty, equality and fraternity. It is up to us to find better answers. How should we take Solzhenitsyn's recent pronouncements? Should they be rejected with the same scorn as those of Donald Coggan or Billy Graham? Should they be refuted in detail? (After all, what he calls “pragmatism” and “utilitarianism” is what we call rationalism and humanism.) Should we at least accept what he says about the persecution of religious people in Communist countries? (This has been, perhaps, the greatest blemish on so-called humanism this century.) Should we

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give stronger support to the non-religious critics of Russia, such as Sakharov and the Medvedev brothers? Whatever we do, we must surely defend the tradition of the Renaissance, of the Enlightenment, of the Scientific Revolution, of true freethought, against Solzhenitsyn and his followers from Bernard Levin to Niels Nielsen. We don't want Communism, no doubt, but we don't want Christianity either. Bad old ideas are no better than bad new ones.

NICOLAS WALTER

THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE JESUITS by Edmond Paris. Protestant Truth Society, £2.50.

Writing in the early years of the last century, the French historian Jules Michelet, put it on record: "If you stop the man in the street, the first passer-by, and ask him, 'What are the Jesuits', he will immediately reply, 'the counter-revolution'." For the past four centuries, since its foundation in 1540 by Ignatius Loyola, the Company of Jesus (to give it its correct military title), has been the crack SS Corps of the Vatican. As such, it has been in the forefront of the whole series of battles and conflicts that have stemmed from the Reformation. During the whole of this period the Jesuits have consistently lived up to the inspired aphorism of their founder: "No storm is so deadly as a perfect calm while no enemy is so dangerous as the absence of all enemies."

Naturally, in view of its bizarre character and of its important historic role, the famous Company has provoked an extensive literature in many languages. The most modern addition to this comprehensive list (to which the present reviewer has also contributed) is represented by the recent English translation of *The Secret History of the Jesuits* by Edmond Paris, who, prior to his death several years ago, published several important works on the Church of Rome, and the policies inspired by the Vatican.

In this latest volume, Edmond Paris surveys in great detail and with exhaustive references, the cosmopolitan activities of the Jesuits, as the spearhead of Vatican policy from China to Peru (in both of which countries the Jesuits played an important role), and indeed on a worldwide scale. The author lucidly describes a relentless campaign waged on an international scale and united by a single unifying thread—the consistent role of the Jesuits as the supreme and undeviating champions of militant Catholicism, *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam* ("To the

Greater Glory of God"), and of his earthly representative in the Vatican.

Whether plotting the assassination of Protestant monarchs (Guy Fawkes was a pupil of the Jesuits) during the Counter-Reformation, striving to build up a theocratic empire in Paraguay (1610-1768), or intervening assiduously in the affairs of modern Europe since the French Revolution, the Jesuit Company has frequently assumed the status of a European, indeed of a world power. Temporarily dissolved by the Papacy in 1776, under pressure from "The Age of Enlightenment", the Jesuits were saved by the French Revolution that compelled the Papacy to restore its Pretorian Guard in 1814. Since that time, as Edmond Paris demonstrates convincingly, this *corps d'elite* of the Vatican has been in the forefront of every counter-revolution from the French Restoration (1814-30) to those of the Fascist dictators of our own time.

Naturally, so extensive and historical a survey is bound to raise a number of controversial points, and the present reviewer does not necessarily concur with all the views expressed by the learned author. The actual title *Secret History* . . . is itself rather ambiguous. A "secret history" is surely one not designed for publicity, and while the Jesuits certainly have some of the characteristics of a Catholic Freemasonary, there is actually nothing particularly secret about most of the multifarious activities that Edmond Paris records. He does not entirely escape the accusation at times, of "seeing a Jesuit under every bush." For example, whilst the Jesuits have been, and perhaps still are, the most powerful Order in the Church of Rome, they are not the only one.

Certainly their activities should not be unreservedly identified with those of their Church as a whole. In certain limited periods (for example the seventeenth century or the first Vatican Council, 1870), the "Black Pope" (the Jesuit General) was probably the real ruler of the Church. But in general the Papacy has usually been its own master, and as the temporary dissolution of the Order (1776-1814) conclusively demonstrated, the Jesuits by themselves could accomplish little when cut off from the Vatican and the world-wide power of the Church.

Another extremely controversial position taken up by Edmond Paris concerns the relationship between the Catholic Church, including the Jesuits, with the Fascist dictators, particularly Hitler. That the Church supported Hitler against "Godless Bolshevism" (then Rome's Public Enemy Number One), is incontestable. But its motives for doing so appear to have been much more complex than our author seems willing to admit. The marriage of Catholicism and the Nazi Reich was primarily a marriage of convenience. For while Hitler may have been a nominal Catholic, the Nazi ideology was fundamentally pagan, not Christian. Did not Alfred Rosen-

burg, the official ideologist of the Nazi Party, describe the Pope as "an Etruscan Sorcerer"? In any case, there was no room in contemporary Europe for two infallible dictators, Pius XII and Adolf Hitler. Sooner or later, a head-on clash between the totalitarian empires would surely have transpired. It would also be interesting to know our author's authority for his surprising statement that *Mein Kampf* was written by a German Jesuit.

However, these are incidental points. In general, this "secret history" has brought many things into the open. It not only gives an excellent account of the evolution of this "old-guard" of the Vatican, but will incidentally, add much to the reader's knowledge on many points of European history. In an introductory note, the publishers state that the author left four other completed manuscripts. We hope that these also will be made available for publication.

During the last few years, probably since the author's death, the Jesuits appear to have performed another chameleonic exercise. For today, Karl Marx is "required reading". In fact when the present General, Father Arrupe (a Basque like Loyola himself), "passes on", his probable successor is likely to be a French Jesuit and expert on Karl Marx. Similarly, the extreme "Left" of contemporary Catholic theology is represented by the Pantheistic theology of the Jesuit, Teilhard de Chardin.

When a successor of Edmond Paris writes another book on the Jesuit Order, it could be entitled *Saint Ignatius Loyola to Saint Teilhard de Chardin* (or even possibly to Saint Karl Marx)! For the Jesuits are still Jesuitical.

F. A. RIDLEY

Edmond Paris

**SECRET HISTORY OF
THE JESUITS**

£2.50 plus 25p postage

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

HOUSING: AN ANARCHIST APPROACH by Colin Ward. Freedom Press, £1.25.

The most important pieces of social commentary generally appear as topical articles in ephemeral small-circulation journals, and all too often they are read for the last time within a week or two of publication. There are three rare possibilities of this wastage being averted: the chance discovery of such articles by future social historians; the author's becoming a household name and so ensuring commercial success for collections of his journalistic

output; and a public-spirited book-publisher being willing to subsidise such a collection. The last of these possibilities has materialised to produce this book, at an uncommercially modest price. Freedom Press publishes the anarchist paper *Freedom* and published the former monthly journal *Anarchy*, which was under Colin Ward's editorship for some years.

Colin Ward has a two-fold speciality: that of an anarchist polemicist and that of a qualified architect and an acknowledged authority on housing. The result of this combination is a people's view of the housing situation, but a people's view with expert knowledge of practical techniques.

The articles, written over a period of 30 years, are arranged under five theme headings: "Direct Action" (a survey of squatting movements in Britain and elsewhere); "Human Needs" (people's own perception of their housing needs being constantly overridden by paternalistic official policies); "Self Help" (including accounts of do-it-yourself housing and outlining an anarchist approach to city development); "Professionals or People?" (how architecture went wrong); and "Dweller Control" (the tenant take-over). Within each of these sections the articles appear chronologically, demonstrating how little the housing problem has changed over the years.

The first section opens with an article published in July 1945, reporting the start of the post-war squatting movement which was to sweep Britain in 1946, and closes with an article written exactly 30 years later, on the achievements of the family squatting movement of the 1970s. I have a particular personal interest in this subject, as I chaired the inaugural meeting in August 1969 of the first of the "family squatting" associations, and, at its second meeting, proposed the name Lewisham Family Squatting Association. This has not only remained its name to the present day but also gave the generic name to the whole family squatting movement, which rapidly spread throughout the London boroughs and into other cities. I coined it in a desperate attempt to reconcile the two elements among our potential supporters—the respectable side, who wanted to give the organisation a soft, social-worker image, and the anarchists, who were determined to express solidarity with the unauthorised squatters in Redbridge and elsewhere. Simply preceding the blatant word "Squatting" with the warm emotive "Family" resolved the dissension, and the framework set up that day has succeeded in housing thousands of homeless and badly housed families, with the fluctuating co-operation of local authorities, in houses that, awaiting demolition, would otherwise have been left empty.

Some immature anarchists have vociferously denounced their fellow anarchists in the family squatting movement as renegades for papering over the cracks in the structure of the welfare state. Not so

Colin Ward, who puts realism before ideology—whilst, for the sake of the idealist, citing Kropotkin's defence of voluntary organisations. He also shows that, ironically enough, in squatting struggles the anarchists have kept more scrupulously within the provisions of the law than the local authorities.

The book is a tangible expression of the anarchist retort to those who equate anarchy with chaos: "Anarchy is what we want, chaos is what we have now." The facts are well researched and arranged to the best advantage, the ideas are carefully thought out on a firm basis of relevant expertise from sociology to building techniques, and the book is well printed in an excellent format with attractive semi-stiff cover.

Were compulsion not inimical to anarchism, I would suggest that it should be made compulsory reading for all local councillors, for all planners and architects, for all local government officers, for all social workers, and for everyone interested in housing as a base for human living. And surely that means every one of us.

BARBARA SMOKER

JESUS THE CHRIST by H. E. W. Turner. Mowbrays, £2.95.

This book, by the former Professor of Divinity at Durham, is "an attempt to guide the reader through some . . . of the main contributions to Christology" (p.6). The "root problem" in Christology is to understand "how Christ can be mediator between God and man, not by being a bit of both, but by being both at once" (p.4).

Rationalists will regard the real problem as: how could such a contradictory conception ever get into men's minds? But for Professor Turner, Christ's humanity and divinity is a fact, and he supplements this premise of conservative theology with others, equally conservative. Thus he accepts the "Virgin Birth as a reliable historical tradition" (p.17). The Ascension, though not literal truth, is "evocative imagery" which expresses the truth of "the return of Jesus to the glory of the Father after his earthly work was completed" (p.13). This hardly differs substantially from how we should understand the event if we took it literally. The resurrection narratives include "differences", "even discrepancies"—one does not speak of "contradictions" in such a context—because the Resurrection is an event "too big for history". How "big" does an event have to be before it becomes too big for history? And how do we measure the size of an event? Perhaps the author means "too incredible".

However, if rationalists can make allowances for Turner's religious conservatism, they will find plenty of information in his book about the Christological debate from the New Testament to J. A. T. Robinson.

G. A. WELLS

Freethinker Fund

The holiday weeks are traditionally a lean period for the Fund, but there was, in fact, a good response during the period 19 June until 20 July. Our thanks to the following readers who sent donations. Anonymous, £1; Anonymous, £1; A. Bayne, 50p; A. E. Carpenter, 25p; L. Fluckiger, £1.50; A. E. Garrison, £2; D. Hill, £2; J. H. C. Hind, £5; E. J. Hughes, £1; J. E. Johnson, £5; Mrs B. Lamb, £3; E. Lewis, 25p; B. Mills, 50p; A. E. Morris, £1.50; J. Mott, £1.28; J. G. Peace, £1; R. B. Ratcliffe, 50p; D. Redhead, 50p; C. Rudd, 50p; W. Shuttleworth, £3.90; F. Skinner, 50p; P. Somers, £2.50; J. Tugwell, 50p; J. R. Watson, 43p; E. J. Willis, £10; Miss C. Wrench, 73p; I. Yettram, 50p. Total: £47.34.

The Humanist Housing Association is arranging an autumn fair at Sunhill Court, Pembury, Kent, on Sunday 19 September, 2.30 pm. A London coach will be leaving Rose Bush Court, Parkhill Road, Hampstead (10 am) and Conway Hall, Red Lion Square (10.30 am). In addition to Pembury Court, stops will be made at the HHA's new projects at Pennington Manor, Southborough and Tunbridge Wells. The coach will return to London from Sunhill Court at 5.30 p.m. Please bring a packed lunch. Coach seats, £1.25 each, can be booked through Mrs F. M. Burnet, 131 Greenhill, Prince Arthur Road, London NW3.

OBITUARIES

MRS R. TABOIS

Ruby Tabois, who has died at the age of 88, was a staunch freethinker for many years. Her death took place after a road accident. There was a secular committal ceremony at the City of London Crematorium.

MR D. WILSON

David Wilson, vice-president of the National Union of Insurance workers, died suddenly at the age of 52 while out on his local insurance round. Until a few years ago he had been a practising Roman Catholic. He was an active supporter of the Labour Party and the trade union movement. Lewisham Crematorium, London, was packed to capacity when the secular committal ceremony took place.

The Westminster (London) branch of the Guild of Catholic Doctors recently held a symposium on euthanasia. Charles Wilshaw, a prominent Humanist and author of "The Right to Die", and Dr Eliot Slater, vice-president of the Voluntary Euthanasia Society, read papers to nearly a hundred Catholic doctors and medical workers. The papers have now been published in the Guild's journal, the "Catholic Medical Quarterly".

LETTERS

I write as a member of the British Humanist Association, National Secular Society and South Place Ethical Society of long standing. I listened to the recent Radio 4 discussion on religious education in schools, during which the views of the BHA were ably advocated by its chairman, Harry Stopes-Roe. He made his case so eloquently, with obvious sincerity and conviction, that I only wish he had had a better case to put forward. I have felt for some years now that we were ill-advised to compromise on a matter which is for many of our members an issue of principle, by negotiating with far more influential and powerful organisations, which ended in our agreeing that religion should be taught in State-aided schools, according to an "agreed syllabus".

It would have been much simpler, more direct and honest, to have maintained that the school is not the place in which religion should be taught. Such teaching to be at all adequate can only overload both the curriculum and the staff, to the detriment of more acceptable and worthwhile subjects.

WILLIAM BYNNER

ANGLICAN SAINT-MAKERS

The Church of England has always coveted the RC calendar of saints, in the same way as Americans regret their loss of dukes and earls. And, just as Americans compensate both by lionising the British nobility and by naming their sons Duke or Earl, so the C of E both retains some of the Early Christian and medieval saints and adds a few modern names of its own, though without the processes of beatification and canonisation.

In the former category, one of the many saints whose status is reaffirmed in the newly published list is St George. Since even the Vatican admitted some years ago that St George was of doubtful existence, the C of E seems to be more Roman than the Romans—though the chief motive in this case may well be patriotism, for SS Nicolas and Valentine, whose existence is far less doubtful, are among the old saints to be cashiered.

One of the modern additions recommended is Florence Nightingale—who, having unequivocally rejected Christianity in her lifetime, would not only have been astonished at this honour but would almost certainly have declined it. Described by Joseph McCabe as "an advanced Rationalist", she detested all the Churches, and was not afraid to say so. Indeed, she is quoted as saying so, even in some of the more pious biographies. The C of E saint-makers have therefore either failed to do the most elementary research into candidates for their calendar (in which case they ought perhaps to emulate the RC procedure, with "devil's advocate" as prosecuting counsel) or else they choose to put a public-relations gimmick above truth.

Theologians still insist, rightly, that to be a Christian entails more than living a decent life, yet an official C of E committee is apparently prepared to sacrifice honesty to honours in order to bask in the glory of an outstanding human being with a good popular image, even when the person concerned was not only not inspired by the Christian faith but explicitly rejected it.

BARBARA SMOKER
President National Secular Society

NOVEL FICCTIONS

Peter Faulkner argues ("The Freethinker", July) that prose fictions written before the eighteenth century can't be novels because they don't, in his opinion, display "the inherent interest in the individual" which he has ruled is "characteristic" of "the novel". I might as well argue that turnips can't be vegetables because they lack the pleasant (to me) taste by which I've chosen to define "the vegetable".

What happened in the eighteenth century is that the name "novel" gradually replaced the older names for the same thing, "history" and "romance". But the genre existed for centuries before it acquired its modern name. If Peter Faulkner judges that "Don Quixote" doesn't show "inherent interest in the individual", he shouldn't be surprised when people query his judgment. Neither can he justifiably wince when his criterion of "the novel" is blown to smithereens, since by sticking to it he is asserting that "Don Quixote" (1604), "Daphnis and Chloe" (second or third century), "Oroonoko" (1688), "La Princesse de Clèves" (1678) and "The Tale of Genji" (eleventh century) aren't novels.

As if he weren't muddled enough about novels, he drags in "humanism" and chooses to define it by the same essential characteristic as he defines "the novel". Presumably he'd have to recognise as a "humanist novel" one that took an "inherent interest" in the relation of an individual soul to God (who, by the standards of both a theologian and a novelist, is an individual).

Finally, he finds it "odd" of Maureen Duffy to say that a novelist who was a humanist might write "fantasy or myth". Why? Religion propounds its fantasies as truth; art admits that its fantasies are invented but claims they are valuable as creations. Can it be that Peter Faulkner hasn't noticed this elementary distinction, which makes all the aesthetic and moral difference in the world? Or does he assume that "humanist" means "of limited imagination"? Happily, English literature and the secularist movement possess the novels of Maureen Duffy to refute him.

BRIGID BROPHY

TWO-THIRDS CRACKED

Thank you very much indeed for sending me a copy of "The Freethinker". Naturally, I do not agree with its position: but I agree with you that the report of the Doctrine Commission showed, as you call it, cracks in the fabric. The Christian Church has always contained those who take the Scriptures as the supreme guide under God: those who submit their minds to an ecclesiastical authority, notably the Roman Catholics: and those who make reason their main tutor in the Christian faith. It is, I suppose, between the first and last of these three categories that the cracks appear.

MICHAEL GREEN

Editor's note. The July issue of "The Freethinker", in which Margaret Knight's "Cracks in the Fabric" was published, was sent to members of the Church of England Doctrine Commission, who were invited to submit comments for publication. Canon Green is the only member of the Commission who responded.

Letters to be considered for publication should reach the Editor not later than the 20th of the month. They should be typed (double spacing) or in clear handwriting.

PUBLICATIONS

- The Jesus Hoax, Phyllis Graham, (hard cover) £3.95, (breakaway edition) £2.25, (42p). Honest to Man, Margaret Knight, £3.75, (24p). Humanism, Barbara Smoker, 40p, (9p). The Longford Threat to Freedom, Bridgid Brophy, 10p, (7p). The Right to Die, Charles Wilshaw, 25p, (9p). An Introduction to Secular Humanism, Kit Mouat, 45p, (9p). What Humanism is About, Kit Mouat, 53p, (24p). The Dead Sea Scrolls, John Allegro, 55p, (16p). Did Jesus Christ Exist, Chapman Cohen, 5p, (7p). Morality Without God, Chapman Cohen, 5p, (7p). Woman and Christianity, Chapman Cohen, 5p, (7p). Materialism Restated, Chapman Cohen, 50p, 21p. Thomas Paine, Chapman Cohen, 15p, (6p). Religious Roots of the Taboo on Homosexuality, John Lauritsen, 20p, (9p). The Absurdities of Christian Science, Joseph McCabe, 12p, (7p). The Jesuits: Religious Rogues, Joseph McCabe, 12p, (7p). Christianity and Slavery, Joseph McCabe, 12p, (7p). Phallic Elements in Religion, Joseph McCabe, 12p, (7p). 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The Much Deformed Church

white population groups, but has done everything in its power to whip the English-speaking sector (which constitutes about 40 per cent of the white population of approximately four million) into line with regard to the Republic's Christian National identity—of which every Afrikaner is so proud. In practice, this means total control over films, literature, recorded material and theatre by a State-appointed board of censors—most of whom are Afrikaans and Calvinist.

Up till 1973, when I was actively campaigning in South Africa against censorship, the number of banned books totalled 16,000. There were no figures available as to the number of films that were banned outright.

Just to give some indication of the mentality of the people involved in censorship, consider the following bans: *Private Eye* magazine (all issues); T-shirts bearing the slogan "Black is Beautiful"; all copies of the recording of *Jesus Christ Superstar* on the grounds that it is blasphemous; all recording from the musical, *Hair*.

So heavily were the censors under attack in those days that Dr Connie Mulder, Minister of the Interior, simply had the law changed—not for the better, but for the worse. Up till last year a decision by the Publications and Entertainments Control Board could be appealed against in court. The right of appeal has since been removed. And it is now a criminal offence to criticise or make fun of the censors' lunatic decisions.

The Church is also responsible for the ban on Sunday sport, Sunday drinking and the opening of stores, cinemas and all other places of entertainment on the sabbath. The Sunday Observance Act and the blasphemy laws are still applied. The aforementioned Mulder once bellowed at two English-speaking journalists covering a Nationalist political rally: "God is on our side. Write that down in your notebooks."

The fact that Mulder and his ilk exist, let alone are masters of the destinies of twenty million people, is proof enough that a loving God simply does not govern human affairs.

EVENTS

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

Humanist Housing Association. Rose Bush Court, 35-41 Parkhill Road, London NW3. Saturday, 11 September, 10 am until 12 noon. Bring and Buy Sale.

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 (not August).

Harrow Humanist Society. The Library, Gayton Road, Harrow. Wednesday, 8 September, 8 pm. William McIlroy: "Humanism in the 'Seventies'".

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THE FREETHINKER

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