

The FREETHINKER

Founded 1881

Secular Humanist Monthly

Vol. 96, No. 9

SEPTEMBER 1976

10p

ROME FEARS NEW SCHISM AS REBEL ARCHBISHOP DEFIES THE POPE

The Roman Catholic Church is now facing a serious crisis with the defection of large numbers of the faithful who are opposed to the liturgical changes which were introduced by the Second Vatican Council. The traditionalists, whose international leader is Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, are attracting increasing support, and it appears that nothing will prevent the rift with Rome from developing into open schism. The traditionalist movement is strongest in France, but it is spreading rapidly in Britain, Germany and the United States.

Archbishop Lefebvre has been at loggerheads with the Vatican for some time, and even a handwritten letter from Pope Paul himself has failed to appease the intransigent dissident. He is a former superior-general of the Holy Ghost Fathers, and after retiring went to live at Ecône, Switzerland, where he set up a seminary known as the Priestly Fraternity of St Pius X. The Fraternity was at first approved by the Church, but when its founder refused to accept the reforms which followed the Second Vatican Council, approval was withdrawn.

In June, Archbishop Lefebvre defied the personal orders of the Pope and ordained 13 priests. The following month he was suspended from all his priestly duties.

During the recent interview with the German magazine, *Der Spiegel*, Archbishop Lefebvre announced he is to establish a Church which will be "independent of Rome". Lay movements in several countries were setting up organisations which would eventually be divided into four national districts, each led by a superior.

Archbishop Lefebvre went on to say that there has been a fundamental change in the Church's identity. The Second Vatican Council had resulted in heresy by "introducing freedom of conscience and religious liberty." He added: "The Pope made com-

mon cause with reformers under the pressure of those who are primarily aiming at peace with Freemasons and Protestants."

Another leading traditionalist, Monsignor Francois Ducaud-Bourget, has stated that his followers believe that the Pope is no longer a Catholic. "We are the real Catholics", says Monsignor Ducaud-Bourget, who has expressed his admiration for Mussolini, and is of the opinion that France needs a new Napoleon "to introduce a sense of authority."

In Britain, Fr Oswald Baker, the former parish priest at Downham Market, Norfolk, who has defied the hierarchy and continues to celebrate the Tridentine Mass, has challenged a claim by Bishop Lindsay that traditionalist leaders were unwilling to discuss their differences with him. Writing in the *Catholic Herald*, Fr Baker alleged that when he visited Newcastle-upon-Tyne (where he celebrated Mass in a hotel room) Bishop Lindsay refused to confront him in a television discussion.

Change and Decay

The correspondence columns of Catholic newspapers have been swamped with letters from readers who are furiously denouncing each other for wrongly interpreting the teachings of Holy Mother Church. The serious non-religious press has also given wide coverage to the divisions which can no longer be concealed.

Patrick O'Donovan, probably the best informed Catholic journalist in Britain, recently wrote: "Are we, then, really to have a schism? . . . The Archbishop from Ecône has become an international figure. And the Church is receiving all the attention that the heart of a public relations officer could desire. But truly, it is tragic."

The real tragedy is that men and women waste their lives in the service of a monstrous institution like the Roman Catholic Church, and in worshipping a figment of the imagination.

Uri Geller Funks Challenge

Uri Geller has not responded to a challenge by the new Committee for the Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal to demonstrate his powers "under reasonable scientific protocol." The Committee has been established in the United States and has an autonomous British section whose members include Dr E. J. Dingwall, Dr Bernard Dixon (editor of *New Scientist*), Dr Christopher Evans (psychologist and writer), Professor Antony Flew (philosopher at Reading University), Christopher Macy (editor of *Psychology Today*) and Nicolas Walter (editor of *New Humanist*).

Professor Paul Kurtz and Professor Marcello Tuzzi, co-chairmen of the Committee, said in a letter to Geller that in view of his alleged psychic powers they believed that a definitive test of those powers would be in the interest of the public and of men and women of science. They said that the results of previous tests were not scientifically definitive, and it was the aim of the Committee to determine whether or not there can be any scientific substantiation of Geller's alleged abilities.

They went on to make a specific proposal:

If Uri Geller can, under reasonable scientific protocol as defined by and in the presence of those designated by the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal, produce *one* of the following "paranormal" phenomena in experiments set up and carried out for the committee, we are prepared to declare that he may be the possessor of "paranormal" or otherwise unexplained powers. We also state that, regardless of the outcome, the results of the tests will be published in detail by the committee, along with a complete analysis of the events.

We ask that Mr Geller demonstrate to the committee's satisfaction that he can produce any of the following paranormal phenomena: (1) cause a common spoon to bend, twist, or break without the use of ordinary methods of deformation; (2) cause a key, commonly used for ordinary door locks, to undergo any of the above changes, under the same rules; (3) cause a compass needle to deflect significantly without the use of special devices or means other than paranormal powers; (4) cause a stopped watch to advance, retard, or change in any way without resort to means other than psychic powers; (5) divine the contents of a sealed envelope supplied by the committee, without resort to means other than psychic powers; (6) perform *any* demonstration under reasonable scientific protocol wherein the accepted laws of nature are violated and of which an ex-

planation would seem to indicate a demonstration of paranormal powers.

The Committee agreed to pay Uri Geller one hundred dollars a day during the time he was being tested together with all reasonable travelling and accommodation expenses. They suggested that the time of the tests would be decided by mutual agreement between the parties.

Mr Geller or his agents were requested to answer the letter within 45 days either agreeing or refusing to be examined by the Committee. If he did not answer it would be assumed that the challenge had been declined.

Neither Uri Geller nor his agents have replied to the letter from the Committee.

EXORCISM TRAGEDY — BISHOP ACCUSED

The Roman Catholic Bishop of Wurzburg in West Germany has been accused of negligent homicide. Four private citizens who are opposed to exorcism have lodged complaints following the death of a 23-year-old student teacher who believed that she was "possessed". For ten weeks before she died the girl resisted all attempts to feed her.

It is just three years since her parents, described as "simple and deeply religious", consulted a priest about the girl's "disturbed spiritual state". The priest eventually called in a Jesuit "expert" who declared that the girl was possessed of the devil.

Last year the Bishop of Wurzburg gave permission for a third priest to conduct exorcism rituals which appear to have consisted almost entirely of reciting prayers. The girl saw several neurologists who were of the opinion that she was suffering from epilepsy. One professor of psychology has suggested that epileptic fits could result in an obsessively religious person believing she was "possessed", and produce other symptoms such as hysteria and split personality.

The Right Rev Robert Stopford, who has died at the age of 75, was a noted Anglican educationist and a former Bishop of London. He took an independent line on many issues and refused to condemn Margaret Knight's controversial broadcasts on morality without religion 21 years ago. Bishop Stopford said: "There are too many 'four-wheeler' Christians in the Church—people who arrive there only in pram, car or hearse for their christening, marriage and burial—and ignore religion in-between-whiles." He said that he actually enjoyed the broadcasts of Mrs Knight whom he described as "a sincere agnostic."

Putting the Clock Back

CAROLINE SMITH

The House of Commons Select Committee on Abortion has produced its report. As readers of "The Freethinker" may know, the original committee consisted of 14 members, eight of whom were committed anti-abortionists—hardly a representative sample of either the House of Commons or the country as a whole. The other six, including three of the four women, asked to be released from the Committee mainly because they felt that "... it will be used as a device to undermine the main provisions of the 1967 Act by restricting the grounds on which abortion is made available."

The report of the Select Committee was predictable. It contained measures to make abortion more difficult, particularly in the private sector, which includes the charitable, non-profit-making clinics.

The first recommendation is that, in private practice only, the two doctors who approve the abortion "should not be partners and should not be in the same employ or share a financial interest in the same nursing home or agency, and that one of them should be of at least five years' standing." This odd and punitive recommendation will discriminate heavily against a woman whose GP is, or is believed to be, hostile to abortion. She would have to tout herself up and down the length of Harley Street (or its provincial equivalents, where they exist) to find a doctor who would sign the green form for her before she went to a clinic.

The clinic would have difficulties, too. They currently arrange that the woman is seen by two doctors, usually part-timers employed on a sessional basis. This sensible system, which works well, would become illegal.

Also, there is no sense in insisting that a doctor agreeing a private abortion should be of five years' standing. The decision to terminate a pregnancy is usually based on social factors, and the operation itself does not require the expertise of a consultant. It would also mean that a doctor would be considered competent to help a National Health patient but not a private patient.

The next recommendation is that the quarterly returns on foreign women should state what facilities are provided for the reception, counselling and aftercare of these patients. Earlier in the report the committee said that they wanted to avoid the situation where foreign women are the majority of women being treated in any one nursing home. It is difficult to see why, since foreign women have special problems—they need interpreters, and often have a long journey home after they are discharged

—and it is wise to concentrate facilities for both humane and practical reasons.

The next recommendation is rather nasty. It is that "legislation should be introduced to require any person who terminates a pregnancy to notify the woman's general practitioner of the treatment she has received, provided her consent has been sought and obtained." It is, of course, considered good medical etiquette that any doctor treating a patient should notify her GP. However, many women seeking abortion in the private sector have already been refused by their own doctor. Others have not been to their GP because they fear disapproval and refusal. A doctor who terminates the pregnancy will, to avoid committing an offence, be tempted to put pressure on the woman to consent unwillingly to her doctor being informed. If he refrains from putting pressure he may be endangering himself.

The truncated committee next ask that all referral agencies, pregnancy advice bureaux and pregnancy testing be licensed by the Secretary of State. While licensing of clinics and bureaux is undoubtedly desirable, it is absurd for pregnancy testing. Testing is at present done not only by GPs and hospitals and clinics but also by pharmacists and women's groups, and by the woman herself using a kit bought from a chemist's shop.

The Time Factor

The next recommendation is that the upper time limit for abortion should be brought down from 28 to 20 weeks. This is a contentious issue. At present only about 1 per cent of abortions are performed after 20 weeks and only a quarter of 1 per cent after 23 weeks. The few women who need late abortions include those who, because they are in the middle of the menopause, don't find out they are pregnant until rather late; very young girls, often living in cloud-cuckoo-land, who manage to conceal or ignore their pregnancy; and women whose relationship with their man has broken down during (and often as a result of) the pregnancy, and who don't want to bear the child unsupported. The Lane Committee recommended an upper limit of 24 weeks, which is probably the best suggestion.

The other major and perhaps most sinister recommendation of the committee is that the police should have powers to inspect the records of agencies and clinics. A consultant gynaecologist writes: "I feel that the thought that NHS records might be open to such scrutiny would frighten off a lot of quite liberal doctors who go along with the Abortion Act although they are not great pioneers. This

(Continued on page 135)

Escape from the Moonies

ALASTAIR SEGERDAL

The World Unification Church is probably the most dangerous of the religious cults which have come into prominence in recent times. It was founded by the Rev Sun Moon, a fanatical Right-wing millionaire from South Korea who claims to have been visited by Jesus Christ and Moses, and who encourages his followers to believe that he is the new Messiah. Moon, who lives in a luxurious mansion staffed by Church members, runs a religious and commercial empire largely on the unpaid labour of his dupes. He had good cause to say, "Of all the saints sent by God, I think I am the most successful one." When the Moonies came to Britain one of their early recruits was Rosalind Masters (Rosalind Mitchell since her marriage), daughter of a wealthy Wiltshire landowner. She introduced her parents to the Church—an action which had disastrous consequences for the family. Mrs Mitchell has now left the Unification Church and doubts if a reconciliation with her parents will ever be possible. She talked to Alastair Segerdal about her experiences.

In a world that has become a playground for psychotics and madmen, it is little wonder that the new religious movements have been so successful over the last decade. They appeal most strongly to those people, often the young, aware enough to be looking for something worthwhile in life. People like Rosalind Mitchell for instance, the attractive 23-year old daughter of wealthy parents who are now dedicated members of the World Unification Church, and who signed over to the Church nearly a million pounds worth of their possessions.

Ironically, it was this high-spirited and intelligent girl who got her parents into the Church.

In early 1973 Rosalind was busy studying at one of London's top secretarial colleges. One day she was approached by a girl in a West End street who persuaded her to go to the Highgate Centre of the Unification Church. Rosalind, thinking it was some new Christian group, decided to join. It was offering peace, happiness, and a purpose: "I was a Christian and my parents were always very involved in the Church of England. But also, when you're young, you try and have a dabble in everything." And so, Rosalind Mitchell, the daughter of landed gentry became a Moonie.

When Rosalind joined she had a very expensive wardrobe of clothes, outfits and accessories for every possible social occasion. But not for long: "All my clothes went to Oxfam, for in the Church you have to wear clothes that would put men off. Girls have to wear their hair up and you cannot wear make-up or jewellery. The men weren't to attract the females

either. They have to have their hair cut short and not wear tight fitting jeans.

"But you are not told you have to do this or that—not in so many words. It is subtly suggested to you, and you are looked down upon until you conform."

The new recruit soon learnt a whole new viewpoint to things like marriage and, indeed, to just being a girl. She said: "In the movement, your marriage partner is chosen for you. They wait until you're in a state of complete obedience and then you would accept anyone!" As for normal boy-girl relationships: "You can't have any relationship with a member of the opposite sex, or even be straight friends in case it leads to anything further. Not only is your partner in marriage chosen for you but you may not have even seen him before."

Life in the Unification Church, according to Rosalind Mitchell, is tough: "You get up at 6 am and go to bed at 1 am. You are kept busy all the time, non-stop. You study hard the Divine Principle of Sun Moon, the founder of the movement. I sold magazines for them in the Kings Road, Chelsea, and worked from half past eight in the morning to about six in the evening, making about £20 a day, all of which, of course, was handed over to the Church. It was unpaid labour."

How did Rosalind feel during her stay with the Unification Church? Was she happy? Sad? She went on: "You are either extremely happy or extremely depressed. At least I was. Happy for a period, and then I dropped to extreme depression."

A Windfall for the Moonies

As a result of Rosalind being a member of the sect, her parents became interested. But this was no fleeting fancy. For, according to Rosalind, "they are now in completely. They gave up around eight hundred thousand pounds to the movement. This included land, rare paintings and silverware, together with whole parts of the village of Stanton Fitzwarren, a Cotswold village near Swindon." She then said that her parents' characters had changed completely: "They are now much harder, and the family way of thinking is now the movement way of thinking. For the movement comes first."

As her parents moved into the Unification Church, Rosalind began to want to move out. She kept telling them that she wanted to leave, "so they moved me to Reading to get me inspired again. This didn't work, so they moved me to Wembley where Mr and Mrs Orme live." (Dennis Orme is the "spiritual director" of the World Unification Church in Britain. But it is widely believed that Doris Orme, his American wife, is a much stronger character who exerts considerable influence.)

It was at the Wembley Centre that she finally made the break and left. She had been moved all over Britain—to Thornton Heath, Reading, Glasgow, Hull, Cardiff, and finally back to Wembley. When Rosalind left the Church she had £5, a pair of scruffy old jeans, a skirt and jumper.

Avoid the Trap

Her warning to young people now is: "With this Church it's very dangerous because you do not know if you'll ever be able to get out again. It affects you emotionally for years, like a drug. Read about it by all means, but keep away from it. Don't dabble. If you do, you're in it. I was lucky . . . I got out. So few do."

What happens if you are approached by a member of the Unification Church? Rosalind replied: "All you have to say is that you're not interested and they'll leave you alone. But, if you show the slightest interest, they'll get around you. They'll be keen and take you up on whatever you say, seemingly agreeing with you, drawing you in. They are very nice and charming and you are easily fooled. They are very friendly and they always seem to be much happier than you.

"They try for young people because young people are looking for ideals such as the perfect world. They do not tell you, however, about how you have to give up everything material or about how it all destroys your own character until you have no mind of your own.

"I just wanted my freedom—freedom to make my own decisions and freedom to decide what I wanted to do with my life."

Rosalind was asked further about her parents and how she felt now about this. She said: "If my parents ever came to me or needed help, I'd give it to them." But she now feels that she has lost them to the Moonies and that if they came out, they'd need "deprogramming." "But" said Rosalind, "because of all the money they gave to the Unification Church, they are now treasured people and they are especially guarded. I think it's unlikely I'll ever get them out now."

THOMAS PAINE

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Reviewed by AUDREY WILLIAMSON
on page 138

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CHURCH LEADERS SHOW NO COMPASSION

Recent statements by Roman Catholic leaders in Italy have demonstrated yet again the inflexibility and cruelty of a church that puts superstition before human welfare. The latest example of this attitude comes from two professional celibates in Milan who, despite the fact that they have no experience of parenthood, have the impertinence to instruct adults that they must not practise contraception or terminate a pregnancy even if the child may be born seriously defective.

Cardinal Giovanni Colombo, the 73-year-old Archbishop of Milan, has condemned new regulations which will allow women living in the "poison cloud" region to have an abortion. The cloud, which resulted from a factory explosion, has affected a wide area, and the authorities fear that genetic damage may be caused by dioxin poisoning. Women have been advised to avoid pregnancies, and those who are already pregnant will be allowed to have an abortion. But Cardinal Colombo has decreed that all children who have been conceived must be born—whatever the consequences.

Although abortion is prohibited under Italian law, the constitutional court recently ruled that a woman may undergo the operation "if continued pregnancy endanger her physical and psychological welfare." It is believed that the majority of Italians want more liberal abortion laws, but the Church has relentlessly opposed any reform.

Warning Against Contraception

The Church in Italy has also been directing her guns on a distinguished theologian who published an article in which he stated that contraception should be permitted in certain cases. Fr Bernard Haering, a Redemptorist who teaches moral theology at Rome's Lateran University, made his views known in a leading Catholic magazine, *Famiglia Cristiana*. He was strongly criticised in the Vatican daily, *L'Osservatore Romano*, which carried a reply from Monsignor Giovanni Guzzeti, the archdiocesan censor. Monsignor Guzzeti reminded readers that Pope Paul VI had described contraception as "intrinsically dishonest" in his encyclical *Humanae Vitae*.

He warned Catholics that contraception is "something that can be performed by no one at no time regardless of the reason or circumstances." He also attacked *Famiglia Cristiana* for publishing Fr Haering's article, and hinted that in future it should not be sold in churches.

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

Christianity, Censorship and Corruption

BARRY DUKE

Dr John Court, who is described as a world authority on "obscene" material and its effects on society, has been ringing the alarm bells over pornography. By all accounts, Dr Court, a leading supporter of the Australian Festival of Light, believes that governments which fail to introduce harsh legislation against pornography are shirking their moral duties and heading for a complete breakdown in civilised values. He claims to be the only person to have made on-the-spot statistical studies of pornography in many parts of the world. But how relevant and reliable are his statistics?

Dr John Court, the 41-year-old sometime lecturer in psychology at Flinders University, South Australia (nine-tenths of his time is now spent travelling the globe researching his subject), bases his claims on studies which he says reveal definite links between liberalised obscenity laws and an increase in sex crimes. In an interview with the *Guardian* a day before setting out to air his views before a group of Peers in the House of Lords, Dr Court cited Australia, New Zealand and Denmark as countries where the incidents of rapes had increased dramatically when pornography laws were relaxed. But in Singapore, where pornography had been strictly controlled, the rise in rape was minimal. And in Japan "a tight policy on porn and a tight policing system" had actually led to a drop in the number of rapes. But his statistics are completely meaningless and irrelevant on at least two important counts.

First, Dr Court does not say how many of the sex crimes were committed *as a direct result* of the offenders being exposed to pornography and thereby incited to act out their fantasies. Secondly, and even more significantly, he fails to relate the *total* number of sex crimes in secular liberated countries to those in repressive Christian ones like South Africa.

If Dr Court had in fact visited South Africa he did not say so—which, from his point of view, is very sensible. To mention South Africa as an example of a country with "civilised values" while blacks were being gunned down in the streets, and a British woman, seven months pregnant, was being held in solitary confinement under Vorster's Terrorism Act, would have seriously damaged his credibility, and left his theories in tatters. For if ever a country has succeeded in destroying the values Dr Court claims to cherish so much, it is South Africa. And the exceedingly Christian regime did it simply by enforcing the same brand of Christian puritanism that the John Courts, the Mary White-

houses and the Raymond Blackburns are advocating for Britain. And if Dr Court is not, in fact, aware of South Africa's history of repression in regard to all matters sexual (as distinct from cultural and political) his research isn't nearly as extensive as he would have us all believe.

Does he know, for instance, that the possession of a copy of *Playboy*, *Cosmopolitan* or *Forum* in that morally bankrupt society could render one liable to a fine of about £180, about ten times the penalty for assault? Fines for "hard core" pornography can stretch to about £700. You could even be shot at for possessing "obscene" material—as a German immigrant discovered in 1972. He fled from a popular German pub called the Deutche Bierkeller in Hillbrow, Johannesburg, when he was caught by a detective showing "dirty" pictures to a friend. Confused as to what was happening when the detective grabbed him, the foreigner fled into the street and down an alley where the policeman fired two shots at him. Miraculously he was not hit. Miraculously, because the South African police have the uncanny knack of firing "warning" shots which invariably prove quite deadly.

The Social Cost of Puritanism

Does Dr Court know that in spite of some of the most draconian censorship laws in the world—formulated by Christians with cold-shower mentalities to keep the population brainwashed and blindered and completely protected from permissive outside influences—South Africa has the highest suicide, divorce, and spirit alcohol rates in the world? The murder and road death rates are among the highest, and of all the people executed around the world each year, half are hanged in South Africa.

Sex crimes (and here one has to include, regretfully, the iniquitous Immorality Act which makes it an offence, with a penalty of at least six months' imprisonment, for people to cohabit across the colour bar) are rampant. In many instances the rape victims are blacks and their assailants are often whites with a strong Calvinist background. Particularly disturbing is the high incidence of white policemen who wind up each year in the dock charged with rape or with contravening the Immorality Act. Add to this the terrifying high number of deaths caused by back-street or self-administered abortions and you have a fair picture of what life is like under Christian tyranny.

Let me refer to a letter from a South African reader which recently appeared in *Men Only*:

"I was recently able to obtain my second only

copy of your magazine which I read avidly from cover before destroying it—yes, *destroying!* You see, the risks of being found with such a magazine are too great; and the penalty is heavy—a very stiff fine after a harassing court case. My wife and I both found the contents like a breath of fresh air in a country where almost everything is repressed—do you remember how the Nazis burnt the books?

"You must thank God in England that you do not live under a regime like ours; fight and fight against all oppression, for it is the thin edge of a terrible wedge. Please do not print our names; one never knows what the repercussions might be . . . Love is beautiful, *hatred* is obscene."

The Enemies of Democracy

There is only one thing wrong with that letter—the anonymous South African's notion that God, for some reason or another, is synonymous with tolerance, and is therefore to be thanked for Britain's climate of liberality and enlightenment. I referred that letter to Mary Whitehouse shortly after she had returned from South Africa earlier this year. She described the writer as "sick", pointed out that the Nazis "thrived on pornography", and said she would like to see magazines like *Men Only* banned.

The sanctimonious Dr Court blandly states that if legislation relating to so-called obscene material were to be liberalised, it would lead to democratic societies breaking down into incoherence as small groups of sick and self-interested people dictate to the rest of us. This is, in fact, a pretty fair assessment of those vociferous Christians who have erected such fortresses of ignorance and prejudice as the Festival of Light, National Viewers' and Listeners' Association and Order of Christian Unity. Dr Court would like us to think that he has researched his subject scientifically, rationally and objectively, while simultaneously associating himself with all the unscientific and irrational cant and claptrap dispensed by such groups. Fortunately, he won't find Britons all that gullible; people are getting a little weary of having their lives and life-styles peered into by censorious Christian pressure groups.

The last few weeks have been quite satisfying on this score. Raymond Blackburn's private prosecution of *Language of Love* was thrown out by the Appeal Court (at a cost to the taxpayer of over a thousand pounds). *The Times* has stated that Britain today is the most secular nation in Europe; the London *Evening Standard* revealed that churches were being made redundant at the rate of a hundred a year. And there was the news that the Festival of Light had lost one of its key personalities when Peter Thompson announced his resignation.

The latest setback for Mary Whitehouse was the well-deserved brush-off she got from Home Secretary Roy Jenkins over her efforts to have Danish film director Jens Jorgen Thorsen kept out of Brit-

ain as an "undesirable alien". He intends making a film here about the sex life of Christ—something Mrs Whitehouse says would be "obscene".

All these are victories for rationalism, and cause for some satisfaction. But Humanists cannot afford the luxury of complacency. Further victories of this nature are only assured by a sustained battle against the dangerous Christian propaganda of the kind that John Court is so good at spouting.

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combined with clause 91, suggesting the maximum fine on summary conviction be increased to £1000 (from £100) and provision made for extending the time limit for summary proceedings to three years from the commission of the offence is very dangerous. The three years is a very very long time and could well be applied in retrospect.

"Although we are all quite conscientious about our records, I am sure practically every hospital in England has a one in a hundred error which could be snooped out."

Many young people, who, though shunning more formal places, nevertheless go to centres like the Brook Advisory Clinics. They would certainly stay away if there were any likelihood of police interference.

The 1967 Abortion Act of 1967 hasn't legalised abortion—that reform is yet to come. What is done is to stipulate certain circumstances in which abortion is not illegal. Since 1967 a million women—and perhaps nearly as many men—have been saved from having their lives ruined, and a million fewer unwanted children have not been born into an unwelcoming world. Probably a similar number have been denied the benefit of the Act because they lived in an area where the medical authorities are illiberal, or have been turned down by their GPs. They may have been asked to pay a fee they couldn't afford or have been frightened into motherhood by punitive Roman Catholic priests and anti-abortion propagandists. Or they simply didn't know the ropes.

Maurice Ronin is one of those sensitive souls who seem to regard straightforward ridicule of irrational beliefs as being somewhat disagreeable, and attacks on the edifice of religious superstition, intolerance and humbug as being a negative exercise. He prefers to be a "positive" Humanist; recently he demonstrated his positivity by compiling a Humanist Calendar, and was prompted by Christopher Morey's article on the new Church of England Calendar (published in our August issue) to send a copy to *The Freethinker*.

The Humanist Calendar is described as "a list of voluntary observances for individual Humanists and Humanist groups." (Individual Humanists and Humanist groups will be relieved to hear that Mr Ronin has not suggested any obligatory observances—yet.)

First on the list is New Year's Day, which Mr Ronin thoughtfully reminds those of us who are afflicted by chronic absent-mindedness, is the first day of the year. His designation of Good Friday as World Humanist Day may be considered by some to be an example of positive bad taste and insensitivity.

British Humanist Day (17 May) marks the foundation of the British Humanist Association all of 13 years ago. Other observances include Philosophy Day (2 July, "Middle day of the year") which may be celebrated by "Festive meetings on any aspect of philosophy." Science Day (23 September) is to be an occasion for "Festive meetings on any aspect of science." (Wedged between Philosophy Day and Science Day we have IHEU Day on 26 August to commemorate the inauguration of the International Humanist and Ethical Union in 1952. Ordinary, not Festive, meetings are stipulated—an understandable refinement, but one which may not go down too well in foreign parts.)

The reason why Mr Ronin has selected 1 November for the Festival of Human Rights is that it "Humanises All Saints Day."

If, dear reader, you have seen the Humanist Calendar and think that it is a leg-pull (quite a number of people have already expressed such an opinion), be assured that Mr Ronin seriously believes it "will be of assistance in spreading Humanist values and popularising the movement." We have it in writing.

Maurice Ronin has just been elected to the Executive Committee of the British Humanist Association. Perhaps he will persuade his colleagues (as a positive contribution to spreading Humanist values and popularising the movement) to commission a Happy Man sculpture, to be erected at the portal of 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, and to which all who enter may genuflect (voluntarily).

PRESS COUNCIL COMPLAINT

It would have been better if the *Guardian* had published a straightforward correction on a delicate domestic matter than involve the parties in published correspondence. That is the adjudication of the Press Council in a case which followed complaints against the newspaper by Dora Russell and *The Freethinker*.

Dora Russell, second wife of Bertrand Russell, reviewed Ronald W. Clark's *The Life of Bertrand Russell* in *The Freethinker* last December. The review was sent to certain newspapers together with a press release giving biographical information about Dora Russell and her address. Dennis Barker telephoned Dora Russell and later published an article entitled "Russell was no Sex Object", in the *Guardian*. He referred to "Lady Russell" and said that she spoke from "her home in Wales".

Dora Russell, who never uses the title, lives near Penzance, Cornwall (a fact that was stated in *The Freethinker* press release). But Bertrand Russell's widow, Edith, Countess Russell, lives in Wales, and was greatly offended by the *Guardian* article.

The Editor of *The Freethinker* immediately contacted John Ryan, Executive Editor of the *Guardian*, and pointed out the error. But Mr Ryan refused to publish a correction. Mr Mellroy also submitted a short letter for publication but it was rejected. However a letter from Edith, Countess Russell, was published and it was considered by Dora Russell to be extremely offensive. Dora Russell then wrote to the Editor of the *Guardian* but her letter was not published.

At this stage the Editor of *The Freethinker*, with the approval of the Board, lodged a complaint with the Press Council. In a letter to the Council he said that the reason for pressing the case was that the *Guardian*, which had published an incorrect statement in the first place, refused to insert a correction. He added: "A reputable newspaper would be expected to make amends as soon as possible, particularly as two elderly ladies were likely to be caused distress and embarrassment by the inaccurate report. Instead, the *Guardian* adopted an attitude of indifference and high-handedness throughout."

Dora Russell also complained to the Press Council. She wrote: "From the conversations I had with *Guardian* editorial staff when in London, and the tone of the letters received, it appears to me that they have been only concerned to protect themselves in their errors. These caused harm to Countess Russell and myself, though the more to me, since I was not allowed any reply on my own behalf."

S AND NOTES

MORALITY OR EXPEDIENCY?

Kevin McNamara, MP, a Roman Catholic member of the Select Committee on Abortion, recently informed *Catholic Herald* readers that he was at first tempted to vote against James White's Abortion (Amendment) Bill. The reason for Mr McNamara's initial reluctance to support the Bill was that "by limiting the grounds and curbing the rackets, the White Bill would give abortion a respectability which I did not wish it to have. It would make abortion more socially acceptable. It enshrined the principle of abortion within its clauses."

Can it possibly be that Mr McNamara would prefer to see the abuses—real and imaginary—to continue? No doubt well-orchestrated exposures of "abuses" would enable the Roman Catholics to step up their scurrilous campaign against the 1967 Abortion Act, sex education programmes and contraception. (It will be recalled that when the veracity of the holy book of the anti-abortion lobby, *Babies for Burning*, was questioned by the *Sunday Times*, Malcolm Muggeridge commented that it would be a pity if the book proved to be unreliable.)

Humanists have been reluctant to suspect that opponents of the 1967 Act, inside and outside Parliament, are being hypocritical and cynical when they attack "abuses". The anti-abortion campaigners know that propaganda about "abuses" has a wide popular appeal, and the moral teachings of the Roman Catholic Church have not.

Perhaps we were not wrong after all.

A LACK OF CHARITY

The Freethinker has published many examples of the ease with which harmful religious cults and pressure groups become registered as charities and thus enjoy considerable financial privileges. In some cases these pious charlatans have arrived from the United States or the East, and after a spell of preaching and fund-raising in Britain have moved to another country, leaving behind a trail of disrupted careers and broken lives. They have usually departed considerably richer, thanks to the charity laws and the attitude of the Charity Commissioners which favour such religious entrepreneurs.

The Charity Commissioners have just made yet another of their extraordinary decisions as to what is required of an organisation seeking registration. By refusing charity status to the August Trust, the Commissioners considerably hampered the work of an organisation whose object is to give practical

help to a section of the community which in the past has suffered much because of social ostracism and prejudice.

The August Trust is endeavouring to provide accommodation for elderly homosexuals in London and other parts of the country, and the Charity Commissioners' refusal to register the Trust as a charity is a severe set-back to its work. According to David Harvey, chairman of the trustees, they intend to re-apply for registration in a year or two.

This case highlights once again the need for a radical change in the laws relating to charities.

Freethinker Fund

There was a very poor response to the appeal last month with only 18 readers sending donations. Unfortunately our expenses do not even remain static, and it is hoped that more readers will help to bridge the gap between income and expenditure. The following donations were received during the period 21 July until 21 August. Anonymous, £4.50; W. Armstrong, 80p; O. Blakeston, 25p; Miss R. Bush, 50p; A. Cook, £2.50; M. Duane, £1; R. A. D. Forest, £5; Mrs P. Forrest, £1.41; W. Gerard, £3.50; D. Harper, £3.50; E. J. Hughes, £1; S. Johnson, £2; G. Lorraine, 50p; H. Manson, £1; L. D. Martin, 50p; A. Schopenhauer, 25p; E. West, 50p; Miss C. Wrench, 50p. Total: £29.21.

OBITUARY

MR F. JAMES

Fred James, who died recently in a London hospital, spent all his working life in local government service. He was aged 68.

Mr James started his career with the Newburn Urban District Council in 1934 and later served in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and in Bury. He came to Wood Green, London, as a Public Health Inspector in 1939 and was later promoted to Chief PHI. When the London Borough of Haringey was formed he became a senior Public Health Inspector, and in that capacity did much to implement the Clean Air Act in that area of North London. He was later appointed as a Senior Principal and retired in 1973.

Mr James was an Esperantist of international standing and a keen supporter of *The Freethinker*. He was cremated in London and there was a memorial meeting at Haringey Civic Centre. The speakers were Mrs Joyce Butler, Member of Parliament for Wood Green, Councillor V. Butler, Mayor of Haringey, W. J. Wilson, Chief Officer of the Haringey Public Health Department, and the Editor of *The Freethinker*.

COMMON SENSE by Thomas Paine, Edited by Isaac Kramnick. Pelican Classic, 60p.

RIGHTS OF MAN by Thomas Paine, Edited by Henry Collins. Pelican Classic, 75p.

Common Sense has been out of print in England many years; yet it was written by one whom the most literate of present-day parliamentarians, Michael Foot, has called "the greatest Englishman of the 18th century", and in it were not only the seeds from which American Independence flowered, but also the basic principles of "securing freedom and property to all men; and, above all things, the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience."

This was the aim of independent government which Thomas Paine urged on the Americans, and which was echoed in the Declaration of Independence six months after he wrote, with its vision of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Until Paine's pamphlet, Americans had been uncertain and divided on the issue of any permanent fracture in the colonial status with England. But this was an Englishman pointing out in vivid, understandable language the disadvantages of the colonial rôle and the infinite potentialities of a freer, less class-ridden society such as America already enjoyed in embryo. It had, as Isaac Kramnick describes, a "catalytic effect". General Washington referred to its "sound doctrine and unanswerable reasoning", and noted that in Virginia it was "working a powerful change in the minds of many men". In fact it went through many editions and was reputed to have sold half a million copies in 1776 alone. It was read to the soldiers in the army, and in the ensuing months state after state instructed its delegates in the Continental Congress to support the cause of independence.

Paine had emigrated to America in 1774, after a young manhood spent as staymaker (his Quaker father's trade), schoolmaster, Lewes exciseman and amateur scientist. It was the last two that played a vital part in his ideological and political formation. As an exciseman he had already made tentative representations for reform, writing a *Case for the Officers of Excise* which urged better pay and conditions. He had taken part in local town council and vestry meetings, and through the *Lewes Journal* and his own experience become aware of the dependence of the poor on charity, and the severe national restrictions of franchise and aristocratic government against which English reformists were agitating in vain. And like so many of his time, he was affected too by the explosion of scientific and theological ideas which had given his age a new outlook, based on enlightenment and reason.

Now, in his new country, where he had found a

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niche as a journalist, he was suddenly thrust into a situation of war, his new freedoms and opportunities threatened by British repression, which as Kramnick makes clear had been accumulating in the course of the century. "It was time to stir. It was time for everyone to stir", wrote Paine later, in that strong, clear, rhythmic prose which, like the prose of Ruskin later, echoed the imagery and cadences of the Authorised Version. "Government, like dress, is the badge of lost innocence; the palaces of kings are built on the ruins of the bowers of paradise". Here was anarchy taking its cue not only from the language but also the republicanism of the Bible, for whole passages in *Common Sense* are devoted to a brilliant use of Israelite history, from the warnings of Gideon and Samuel, to repudiate the adoption of kings as a direct violation of the will of the Almighty. The future author of *The Age of Reason* was not here so much questioning the historical basis of the Bible, as using it as a launching pad for a rocket aimed at the entire system of hereditary monarchy, and government itself except as "a mode rendered necessary by the inability of moral virtue to govern the world." The "design and end of government" was only "freedom and security".

To this journey into the outer space of governmental theory Paine brought a technological expertise and forthright common sense. "We have boasted of the protection of Great Britain, without considering that her motive was *interest*, not *attachment*", he wrote; and "it is the commerce and not the conquest of America by which England is to be benefited, and that would in a great measure continue, were the countries as independent of each other as France and Spain; because, in many articles, neither can go to a better market." Why should America be dragged into England's European wars, when commerce with England's so-called enemies is so much more truly beneficial? "Our plan is peace for ever", wrote the Quaker's son, claiming "brotherhood with every European Christian." "We have it in our power to begin the world over again." And with remarkable prophecy he looks forward to the "huddled masses" welcomed on the base of the next century's Statue of Liberty. "Freedom hath been hunted round the globe. O! receive the fugitive, and prepare in time an asylum for mankind." It is characteristic of Paine that he expected victims of religious as well as political persecution to swell the population of his shining "asylum for mankind."

The writer of the introduction to Pelican's new

REVIEWS

edition is American but he shows, unlike some Americans (and Englishmen), a sympathetic understanding of Paine's philosophy and egalitarianism, and also the English background that formed him: "He brings to the burning issues of Philadelphia in 1776 the theoretical mind and raging anger of English radicalism." He has read my own (and the three other biographies cited) over-hastily and so makes a few errors. Paine was not elected deputy for Versailles in the National Convention, but for four different districts including Versailles, of which he chose Calais. He did not write "the first part" of *The Age of Reason* in prison: it was completed and placed in Joel Barlow's hands just before he was arrested. Nor did William Cobbett "lose" Paine's bones: they were among his effects when he died in 1835. These are specks in the sun of a very welcome reprinting of a classic.

Paine's *Rights of Man* has rarely been out of print, in spite of frantic government suppression, imprisonment and deportations of its publishers and booksellers, and Paine's own outlawry on a charge of "seditious libel" (not "treason", as the "blurb" of this Pelican Classic reprint states). It was written on his return to England, partly in answer to the renegade Burke's vicious attack on the French revolution, of which Paine had close knowledge as an intimate of the then French leader, the Marquis de Lafayette. It took its title, in fact, from the "Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizens" recently made by the French National Assembly, and gives these in full. But while answering Burke's glittering and repetitive diatribe with an ironic echo of his imagery ("He pities the plumage, but forgets the dying bird"), Paine goes more deeply than in *Common Sense* into principles of government and the iniquities of hereditary office, pointing out that no generation has the right to impose its will on posterity, and enlarging on the humanitarian basis of his ideology.

This compassion for humanity, evident in all Paine's work, becomes crystallised in *Rights of Man* in its epoch-making second part. He had already in *Common Sense* produced impressive costing figures for the formation of an American fleet: he now follows in the wake of Adam Smith and gives a dangerous economic analysis of government and monarchical spending, and the way the money could be far better used in a detailed programme of social welfare, from old age pensions beginning at 50 ("It is painful to see old age working itself to death, in what are called civilized countries, for daily bread") to family allowances for education, maternity

grants, and unemployment relief. "Hunger is not among the postponable wants."

He attacks war and warmakers, and suggests arbitration treaties, thus influencing President Woodrow Wilson as he had also influenced President Abraham Lincoln; and once again he analyses religious freedom: "By engendering the Church with the State, a sort of mule-animal, capable only of destroying and not of breeding up, is produced, called *The Church established by Law* . . ." "Persecution is not an original feature in any religion; but it is always the strongly-marked feature of all law-religions, or religions established by law."

This edition was first published in 1969 and it was worth reprinting, too, for the splendid introduction by the late Henry Collins, an expert on Paine and Socialist history, who traces his influence through the Chartists to our own day and who rightly remarks on "the astonishing modernity of Paine's thought."

AUDREY WILLIAMSON

THE RISE OF THE MEDIOCRACY by David Tribe
George Allen & Unwin, £4.95.

Behind the numbing neologisms, the purple prose and the alliterative chapter headings of David Tribe's new book, there is the making of a serious work. But one does not pay this price for rudimentary rubrics such as three and a half pages on the Rise of Sociology, nor do I personally care for the sort of book where a riffle through the pages at random can yield up instant judgments like this: ". . . the suzerainty of the bourgeoisie must succumb to the dictatorship of the proletariat; today's power structure to Black Power, Student Power, Pupil Power, Gay Power, Cunt Power." Tribe doesn't endorse such fervent power longings; he defends the continuity of authority (suitably civilised), not the banishment of it. But a less glib packaging of radical ideas might have opened the way to a more sober critique of them; those countries where the proletariat is supposed to dictate are not generally those where students, gays and cunts enjoy any power whatever.

So, first of all, the bad bits. In his howl of anguish at the decrepit decadence of modern life, David Tribe mangles with relish the English language. There are "Hereditary privilegentsias". A cult of youth becomes "juvenilophilia". There is something called the "radical chic" deserving of special detestation. The chapter headings, in oversized type, bellow "Filmic Flotsam", "Blathering Broadcasting", "Curbless Crime". And a constantly breathless, indeed apocalyptic note, infuses the writing; not a page but doom, gloom and disaster portends:

"Headteachers exult in pyrrhic victories over hair length, attire, staffroom revolts and attempted debate by pupils of fundamental educational prob-

lems, while the school fabric is torn apart and the ordinary teacher is exhausted or driven to breakdown or resignation by the sheer effort of preserving semi-silence or maintaining self-defence."

No area of modern life escapes David Tribe's whiplash scorn. Politics, religion, art, mass media, education, professions, literature, music—all stand accused of a kind of rootless "neophilia", a restless searching for the new, the superficial, the trendy or the bland, at the expense of the solid, the worthwhile and the meritorious. It's difficult to describe this book in any but impressionistic terms, for this is exactly the image it conveys: a vast, buzzing, panoramic sweep of a work which subsumes in 198 pages all that Tribe dislikes, and does so (in all fairness) with a provocative gusto which might at times penetrate even the hardest ideological armour of his opponents.

The difficulty, though, is to identify those opponents; they are the "mediocrats", the enemies of the good, the sound, the traditional, etc, etc. But *who* they are is not so clear, since documentation in the accepted academic sense is not David Tribe's way. He doesn't intend to write a carefully constructed academic treatise, and to suggest that he ought to have done so (as the first draft of this review did) was, I now see, to have missed the point. This is a gadfly of a book, the gut reaction of a soured radical who has lost faith in not merely religion but in the secular alternatives; who has witnessed the adoption of all the nostrums of democracy, education and mass welfare, and their failure to change the human condition.

David Tribe's historical analysis leads him to suggest democracy and technology-run-riot as a seed-bed of the mediocracy he despises; they produce a levelling-down and a complexification of everyday life which, allied to an equalising ideology, undermine the traditions and stabilities of social life, substituting the cheap, the tawdry and the mediocre. Tribe doesn't see a way out of "mediocrity" so long as the mediocracy stay in power, and he doesn't suggest a way of displacing the mediocracy. Present-day problems may, therefore, be insoluble.

Annoying this book certainly is; irritating by its grasshopper-like flitting from topic to topic; and, eventually, unsatisfying—if only because of its structural incoherence (no summing-up of the arguments, and no conclusion). Yet I do feel that, struggling hard to get out, is a sequel, a Mark II as it were, to this "universal" tirade and general proclamation of woe; a book which would follow up the insightful analysis of the same author's *Nucleoethics*, and sketch out the politico-social reasons for the present discontents. And this other book would deal not with the nameless, amorphous shadows of demons that throng *The Rise of the Mediocracy*, but the demons themselves, chapter and verse.

PHILIP HINCHLIFF

THE PIEBALD STANDARD by Edith Simon. White Lion Publishers, £5.95.

There is a masonic tradition of continuity from the Knights Templar to modern Freemasonry with supposedly passing on of secret knowledge. In the true Templar degrees, not to be confused with the Degrees of Chivalry worked under the English Masonic jurisdiction (these are but side degrees), the ritual includes the invocation: "Death to all kings, Death to all Popes." This is to immortalise the persecution and final annihilation of the Knights at the hands of the State. Now, the significance of this is that these degrees and rituals were not in their entirety the products of 18th or early 19th-century lovers of secret initiatory societies. There is always a substratum of fact behind and beneath the accumulated myth. The truth is that, of all the crimes of Christendom, the destruction of the Templars aroused most resentment and hatred among the laity, as well as memories that have persisted down to our own times.

The reissue of Edith Simon's fascinating study of the rise and fall of the Templar order is a welcome addition to the literature of the period. It includes valuable data on such inter-related issues as the final loss of the Christian Kingdom of Jerusalem, the high-water point of Arabic advance, political struggles between throne and Papacy, the Avignon episode with duality of Popes, to say nothing of jealousies and enmities between the military orders themselves. *The Piebald Standard* not only gives a record of historical events, it is written in a most readable style. The frequent "asides", analytical viewpoints of the author, as well as background reminders, all give it almost the flavour of a thriller-novel. Indeed she poses more problems than are answered, with the resulting effect of an unsolved "whodunit". This is far more pleasing and intriguing than merely irritating, as it might be with some authors.

When all is said and done, what were the allegations against the Templars, and have they credibility in the light of history and what is known of mediaeval society? The charges as made by the renegade Knight and agent-provocateur, Esquieu de Florian, were: that they put the Order before the moral and religious principles, and swore to defend and enrich it, whether right or wrong; that they kept up a secret correspondence with the Moslems; that novices were made to spit on the cross, to renounce Christ, and participate in a mock ritual; that any who betrayed the order were secretly murdered; that they despised the sacraments, made nonsense of the Mass, and practised lay absolution and idolatry; that they practised sodomy and immorality of all kinds; that they had betrayed the Holy Land; that they worshipped Satan in the form of a cat.

From the "night of the long knives" of 12 October 1307, beginning with mass arrests down to the

final horror of the burning of Grand Master Jacques de Molay and Geoffrey de Charnay on the morning of 19 March 1314, the tragic-farce continued. The show-trials, tortures, "confessions" so ridiculous—one, de Villers cried in anguish that had he been asked to admit to killing Christ himself, he would have done so—are vividly described. And the result? As the author succinctly remarks: "No documentary proof of the charges was ever found. In spite of the surprise effect of the arrests in 1307 and in spite of exhaustive research, the idol which thousands of prisoners confessed to having worshipped—the head of wood, of silver, bearded, beardless, eyeless, carbuncle-eyed, life sized, larger than life, the size of a fist—no such idol was unearthed. No cats were ever apprehended either." The one alleged crime that could have been taken seriously and might even have been validated, that of trafficking with the Islamic opposition, was almost ignored. Therein, as I have observed elsewhere, possibly lies the answer to the riddle of the Templars.

An old print shows a Knight playing chess with a Saracen. But it was much more than chess that was in danger of permeating the Christian empire. Ideas of a rational nature regarding the world, Arabic scientific discoveries, facts about the origins of the Christian myths. These were factors which could undermine and were to finally destroy medieval European society, far more than alleged sodomy or kissing someone's arse in a mock ceremony. Repressive and inhibited institutions always produce sexual obsessiveness, with guilt feelings leading to the need for scapegoats. Christianity was no exception and in addition the rumblings of the Reformation—the power struggles between the Church and the secular authorities were beginning. And so the poor Knights Templar had to suffer.

Throughout the Middle Ages immorality was rife. Stories of homosexuality in monasteries, of infanticide in convents were legion. Yet it was continually ignored or winked at. The other two military orders had possessions and powers approximating to that of the Temple, and abuses of all kinds obtained in religious communities everywhere. But none were attacked, defamed, and destroyed in the same manner. There remains a qualitative difference in the treatment of "The Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and the Temple of Solomon", to give them their full title.

Edith Simon has given us a well-researched documentation of events, with interesting biographical studies of the chief participants. So well-portrayed are the avaricious Philip le Bel of France, cynical, double-dealing Pope Clement and the arrogance and weaknesses of the Templars themselves. It should be required reading for every student of the history of Christianity. And yet . . . and yet, the real mystery behind the vindictive viciousness of the persecution remains unresolved. The intellec-

tual assault upon Christian belief imposed by the Templar episode is hardly mentioned, though its results reverberate down through history. One thing, of which the Knights Templar certainly were guilty was never one of the accusations against them—except by implication. They were members of a secret society!

Let the last words remain with the vivid description of the attitude of the people of Paris to the final burnings: "The onlookers wept and groaned, and shook their fists at the executioners. They fell on their knees and prayed. The soldiers of the King dispersed them. In the night some came back and under cover of darkness salvaged what they could from the remains of the pyre, and, bearing the grisly bits of coal in their mouths, swam back to the mainland, to hide and reverence what might turn out to be holy relics . . . But the martyrs of the Temple never became saints of the Church which had made them great and then consigned them to perdition."

JAMES M. ALEXANDER

DEAR ARCHBISHOP. Compiled by John Poulton. Foreword by Dr Donald Coggan. Hodder & Stoughton, 60p.

If you need an emetic, try this book. It purports to be a selection of the 27,000 letters written to the Archbishop of Canterbury in response to his much publicised "Call to the Nation" last October. In fact, however, it comprises short extracts (many of a single phrase) from a highly selected sample of the letters as an excuse for a syrupy connecting commentary by the Reverend Poulton which takes up far more space than the extracts themselves.

Each extract, even where in opposition to the Archbishop's exhortations, is obviously chosen simply as a stooge's feed to some specious generalisation from the compiler. So the book does not even have the merit of statistical interest. As to the different sections of society represented in the letters, the blurb on the back cover distils this information for us, in irritating non-sentences: "Lord Mayors. Primary school children and sixth-formers. Families who did not go to church anymore. Trade Union branch secretaries."

The "families" (sitting in committee to pen their joint letters?) have to be described as not going to church "anymore" in order to explain all those empty pews. If they were churchgoers, they could not also be presented as typical citizens. On the other hand, it would not do to present Britain as a nation of sceptics. So we are all would-be churchgoers who just don't happen to turn up on Sunday morning for some little reason.

And it was not only families, apparently, who wrote joint letters. "A men's group on Humber-side" is collectively credited with a letter that con-

tains the unlikely phrase "the whole of society needs to be 're-personalised'."

However, to be fair, I will quote one of the positive suggestions put forward for solving the problems of society: "I sit most mornings with my coffee and listen to, and join in, the Service on Radio 4. In this short time if all the people who are at home could just spend those fifteen minutes united in prayer and thought, I'm sure God would work through that medium for good." Whyever did no one think of it before?

BARBARA SMOKER

THEATRE

THE DEVIL'S DISCIPLE by Bernard Shaw. In repertory at the Aldwych Theatre, London.

Shaw with impish perversity and a plot of extreme improbability takes great delight in showing how the man of cloth changes clothes with the man of action. Dick Dudgeon's very name produces a frisson of horror in the rigidly puritanical household where he has been brought up. He has abandoned the stultifying rectitude of his family and become a freebooting, roving adventurer. But with the death of his father he returns bringing a breath of openness and honesty back to the family hearth.

The war of American Independence is taking place and the red-coats are approaching—they have made an example of a reprobate uncle of the family by stringing him up, and are now rumoured to be looking for a more reputable victim: Minister Anderson, the puritan mentor of the Dudgeon family is jokingly spoken of as a possibility. The joke becomes a reality when in the following Act the soldiers enter the minister's house—but instead of the minister at tea with his pretty wife, Dick Dudgeon is being nervously entertained by the attractive Judith Anderson at the "charitable" instruction of her husband. Dick puts on the garb of religion and is prepared to sacrifice himself in the minister's place. Judith interprets this as an act of desperate romanticism and the Minister when he returns flees to take part in the American resistance. Thus Shaw completes his paradox and the devil's disciple becomes the honourable man of sacrifice and the minister the self-concerned man of resistance.

"Morality is expediency dressed up in a white robe", I recently heard Quentin Crisp wittily declare. Shaw would doubtless have disagreed. His own quarrel with the conventional virtues was only a quarrel with men's mistaken belief that they were centred upon religion. Dick Dudgeon, the man of roguishness, courage and consideration is given the energy of a secular morality of great rigour and honourableness. Shaw ruthlessly exposes any overt display of puritanical probity in this play, one of his "Three plays for Puritans". This title, as he

clarifies in his preface, is both because he like any puritan deplores the idolatry of Art also because he believes in punctuating British seriousness by pure entertainment. The besetting sin of today being perhaps an illusion of permissiveness, the play's concern with the paradoxes of morality may have less point for a modern audience. But the bi-centennial implications were not lost, particularly at the performance which I attended, where transatlantic accents abounded. The jokes about British soldiers and American clocks were well received. (If puritanism was a gift which the English gave to the new world, let us hope, in this year of evangelical fervour in American politics where the odds-on future President is said to take his initials J.C. too seriously, that the compliment is never returned.)

Jack Gold's production, seizing on the fact that where melodrama cannot be mellowed it is best highlighted, makes the most of the melodramatic moments. The tension while the will is being opened and read and each member of the family nervously awaits the result is nicely exaggerated by the coughs and pauses of Lawyer Hawkins (Richard Simpson). Judith Anderson (Estelle Kohler) when forced by circumstances to kiss Dick Dudgeon (disguised as her husband) faints to the floor with magnificent dramatic collapse. The moment while Dick Dudgeon stands with the noose around his neck awaiting his end is fully held for the audience to enjoy the pleasure of awaiting the predictable *deus ex machina*.

A difficulty in acting Shaw's characters lies in trying to wrest a full personality from the mouthpieces which Shaw created for his dialogues with himself, and the part of Dick Dudgeon presents particular problems since the motivation for his heroic self-sacrifice is unclear. It was not romantic love and certainly not to court martyrdom, so I suppose we must accept bravado and selfless courage as as likely and admirable an aspect of a man's temperament as any other. Tom Conti approaches the part with proper guile, entering as a gangling charmer and developing every facet of such a posture throughout the play. So exact is his comic sense and his own delight in his "villainous" charm so palpable, underpinned as it is by a steely resolve, that all question of psychological plausibility becomes irrelevant as we relax and enjoy this fine performance.

John Wood, as General Burgoyne, brings a lift of comic genius to the last Act. Establishing himself from the moment when he enters and lies flat on his back on the judge's table, he sustains a centre of burning energy, beneath a surface of sardonic languidness. Music and colour enliven the performance, but it is John Wood's superb acting which sets the seal of comic excellence on a production which would make the most puritan of playgoers abandon sobriety and join in the ringing laughter of the audience.

JIM HERRICK

LETTERS

Barbara Smoker rightly criticises those Humanist reformers who, failing to understand the religious principles of their opponents, use the same utilitarian arguments with them as with more sympathetic audiences ("The Freethinker", July). But she is wrong, I believe, to recommend a direct attack upon those principles as a productive tactic.

There certainly are times when Humanists should make fundamental criticisms of religious doctrine and practice, but in working for reform we need the broadest possible support for our aims. The use of atheistic arguments may alienate this support and is very unlikely to convert the convinced Christian. Humanists should seek approaches based on common principles, or even based on specifically religious principles when dealing with religious people.

Thus, to take Barbara Smoker's own example, when countering Catholic anti-abortionists one may advance the following: (a) The recourse to abortion is inevitable and is, indeed, greatest where abortion is illegal and contraception inaccessible. The legalisation of abortion can make it safer and reduce subsequent infertility. A full birth control programme will reduce the need for abortion. (b) Do they really oppose abortion in all circumstances, even when the woman's life is in danger? (c) In practice, exceptions to the "sanctity of life" doctrine have been made for "just wars", capital punishment, etc. (d) The Catholic view on abortion has oscillated over the centuries, has mostly been less harsh than it is at present, and took its present form only within the last hundred years.

These arguments are more likely to be effective than attempts to refute fundamental beliefs.

DAVID FLINT

TWO STANDARDS

May I congratulate your leader writer on the paragraph, "Patriotic Humbug" (News and Notes, August)? Whilst subscribing to views expressed on the death penalty, I heartily endorse the sentiments regarding the mercenaries. One of the worst features of the affair was the attitude of the police to the recruiting. Messrs Aspinall and Banks seem to have spent nearly as much time in friendly consultation with members of the Special Branch as they did in enlisting their army.

As one recalls the harassment, provocation and deliberate attempts by the Special Branch to prevent volunteers for the International Brigade leaving Britain for Spain in the 1930s, the difference was most marked. Those men, paid a mere pittance, if at all, had to travel almost secretly, in the guise of day-trippers to Dieppe (often with tickets bought by others). They were followed, hounded, and sometimes held until the boat had sailed on faked-up excuses like "resembling" someone wanted for a burglary in Little Snodgrass, or owing maintenance to a non-existent wife.

The Angolan mercenaries were actually assisted by the Special Branch detectives at Heathrow. Reporters and photographers were hustled, and in at least one case, assaulted, and prevented from interviewing the mercenaries. The police cleared a path for them, and helped to cover up the identity of some of them, as well as giving these thugs most friendly parting greetings. Home Secretary Roy Jenkins, as the man nominally responsible, should institute enquiries into what some members of the British political police are really up to.

JAMES M. ALEXANDER

A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION

I agree with William Bynner ("The Freethinker", August) that we shouldn't compromise over religious education in schools, but I don't agree with his interpretation of the policy of the British Humanist Association, or with his own policy. I write as a member of the British Humanist Association, National Secular Society, and Rationalist Press Association, who also listened to the Radio 4 phone-in programme on the subject but got a very different message from it.

I have previously argued ("The Freethinker", March) that it is dangerous for Humanists to work too closely with liberal Christians to reform the present RE system, but I don't think it is fair for Mr Bynner to argue that the BHA is in a position of "agreeing that religion should be taught in State-aided schools." Its policy is to replace the old instruction in religion with education about religion and also about non-religious systems of belief, in a manner summed up by the title of the BHA pamphlet, "Objective, Fair and Balanced". There has been much criticism of the BHA policy, but there is no doubt that it is opposed to the present RE system.

It may be simple, direct and honest to argue that "the school is not the place in which religion should be taught", but it is surely wrong to argue that there is no place for religion in the curriculum at all. I think most children want to know about religion (and irreligion), and I think that some adults should tell them about it—and where better than in school? In fact I would argue for more education about the subject—about more religions and also about non-religious systems, and about more aspects of the subject such as philosophy in general and ethics in particular. I can think of no "more acceptable and worthwhile subjects" for us to work for, since such a system would destroy the unthinking acceptance of religion within a single generation. W. H. PEMBERTON

SELECT COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The long-awaited "First Report from the Select Committee on Abortion" has now appeared. Those who, because of objections to religion-based laws, have taken a special interest in the long-running abortion debate, will already be feeling schizophrenic about the Committee's recommendations.

On one hand, the Report offers little joy to the anti-abortion lobby (the National Administrator of Life, the anti-abortion pressure group, has already expressed in the columns of the "Daily Telegraph", her organisation's "bitter disappointment with the recommendations"). Quite justifiably, anti-abortionists had high political hopes focussed on this Report, but despite having been written by a group of declared anti-abortionists; despite having been based on a highly restrictive Bill, already with a massive Second Reading majority behind it in the House of Commons, the outcome is something of a slap in the face.

On the other hand, the restrictions proposed will do nothing to help women who are unable to obtain abortions on the NHS but will do much to encourage the exploiters and profit-makers to hurry back on the scene and create a new private abortion boom.

In these circumstances, it is important and urgent that pressure is kept on MPs and Ministers and that letters are sent to local newspapers all pointing out the inconsistencies, hypocrisies and dangers of the recommendations. Members of the Roman Catholic Church are apparently putting their pens to paper as well as saying their prayers. I hope "Freethinker" readers will do no less (although they would do well to omit prayers and substitute some effort).

DIANE MUNDAY, Press Officer,
British Pregnancy Advisory Service

ANNOUNCEMENT

A large proportion of readers do not receive their copy by postal subscription, and we will continue to supply *The Freethinker* through trade channels for as long as possible. But newsagents and wholesalers have become increasingly reluctant to deal with us, and those who do so insist on a commission of 60 per cent.

We now understand that one of the main wholesale outlets in London will be closed to *The Freethinker* at the end of September. When this has happened previously, many readers were informed by newsagents that *The Freethinker* had ceased publication.

If you have difficulty in obtaining *The Freethinker* please take out a postal subscription. It is a real bargain at £1.50 per year, and having it posted direct from our premises is the speediest and most reliable method of obtaining your copy. Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to G. W. Foote & Company, 702 Holloway Road, London N19 3NL.

Friday, 8 October, 9 pm, should be entered in every freethinker's diary. That evening, David Yallop's new play, "The Fruits of Philosophy" will be screened by Granada Television. (Check "TV Times" or daily press for any alteration of date or time.) "The Fruits of Philosophy", one of a series of plays under the general title "Victorian Scandals", is based on the famous trial of Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant for publishing a birth control pamphlet. It is almost a hundred years since the trial which caused an almighty furor in Victorian England. As David Tribe points out in his biography of Charles Bradlaugh: "Whatever the logic of family planning it cut across bourgeois concepts of decency and working-class notions of virility, violating strong religious feelings that conception is a sub-section of the natural law, God's gift and not man's thrift." The trial marked the beginning of the modern family planning movement, and during the last hundred years, despite fierce opposition from all the churches, contraception has been accepted and practised by the vast majority.

THE FREETHINKER

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TELEPHONE: 01-272 1266
UK ISSN 0016-0687

The views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Publishers or of the Editor.

"The Freethinker" was founded in 1881 by G. W. Foote and is published mid-monthly. Material submitted (including Letters and Announcements) must reach this office by the 20th of the preceding month.

SPECIAL POSTAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Inland and Overseas: Twelve months: £1.50 Six months: 75p
U.S.A. and Canada: Twelve months: \$4.50 Six months: \$2.25

Please make cheques, etc., payable to G. W. Foote & Company. (Foreign subscriptions by cheque or International Money Order)

"The Freethinker" can also be ordered through any newsagent.

EVENTS

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group. Imperial Hotel, Frst Avenue, Hove. Sunday 3 October, 5.30 pm. David Hobman: "The Work of Age Concern".

Havering Humanist Society. Harold Hill Social Centre, Squirrels Heath Road. Tuesday 21 September, 8 pm. David Paintin: "Legal Abortion".

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

Humanist Housing Association. Sunday 19 September: coach leaves London to visit HHA projects in Kent. Details: Mrs F. M. Burnet, 131 Greenhill, Prince Arthur Road, London NW3, telephone 435 8946.

Lewisham Humanist Group. Unitarian Meeting House, 47 Bromley Road, Catford, London SE6. Thursday 30 September, 7.45 pm. Bill Gray: "Is Humanism a Way of Life?"

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.)

London Young Humanists. 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London W8. Sunday, 19 September 7.30 pm. Maurice Ronan: "Songs of Peace and Friendship".

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. Friends Meeting House, Church Crescent, London N10. Thursday 23 September, 8 pm. Meeting with Society of Friends.

Rationalist Press Association. Harkness Hall, Birkbeck College, Malet Street, London WC1. Saturday, 11 September, 11 am. Annual Conference: "Threats to Freedom". Speakers: Professor Antony Flew, Dora Russell, Tony Smythe. Conference fees (which include refreshments and packed lunch): RPA members, £4; Student or pensioner members, £3; Non-members, £5. Details from the secretary, RPA, 88 Islington High Street, London N1.

Welwyn Garden City Humanist Group. 55 Bridge Road, Welwyn Garden City. Wednesday, 15 September 8 pm. Discussion: "The Open Society—What is it?"

HUMANIST HOLIDAYS CHRISTMAS AT BRIGHTON

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