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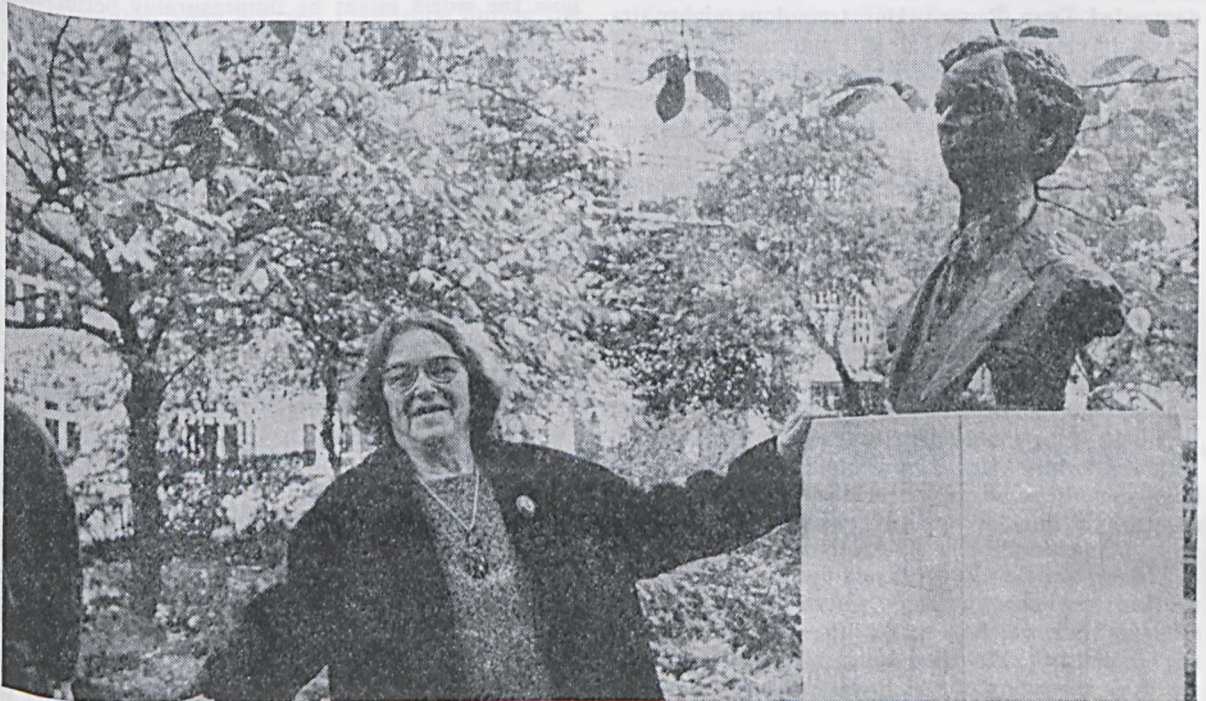
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CALL FOR PEACE AT RUSSELL CEREMONY

Bertrand Russell was described by Lord Fenner Brockway as "a complete man" and Dora Russell remembered him as a man of "wit and wisdom" on the occasion of the unveiling of a new bust of him in the gardens of Red Lion Square. The bust, created by the sculptor Marcelle Quinton, was revealed on 23 September at a ceremony at which Lord Fenner Brockway, Dora Russell, A. J. Ayer, Peter Cadogan and the Mayor of Camden spoke. The memorial has been achieved as a result of an idea by Dora Russell and a public appeal by a committee for which Peter Cadogan acted as secretary. Lord Brockway, Honorary Chairman of the Appeal Committee, began the occasion by describing

Bertrand Russell as "a complete man — a great philosopher, a great mathematician, a great sociologist, who might be remembered in each of these spheres". But Russell was not an academic in an ivory tower, he was a great activist. Fenner Brockway explained how he had met Russell during the First World War, which they had both opposed because, unlike the Second World War, they saw it as predominantly an imperialist war. Russell had lost his academic post at Cambridge in consequence of his opposition to the war, and suffered six months in prison after claiming responsibility for writing an anonymous article attacking the war.

Bertrand Russell was deeply human, and Fenner



Dora Russell unveils a bust of Bertrand Russell

Brockway recalled that he had once arrived late at a committee meeting after emptying his pockets of cash to a down-and-out and leaving himself with no bus fare. (Will any of the down-and-outs who congregate in Red Lion Square be aware of this as they gather in sight of his bust?)

In referring to the period of the First World War, Fenner Brockway said "Russell was an inspiration to us all". At the end of the war he had warned of the dangers of totalitarianism and the need for liberty. His active life had begun and ended in opposition to war, since he so vigorously opposed nuclear war towards the end of his life. Fenner Brockway hoped if this country ever suffered the terrible consequences of nuclear attack that the bust of Russell would survive as a warning.

It fell to Dora Russell, former wife of Bertrand Russell, to unveil the bust. Fenner Brockway pointed out that Dora Russell, who is a campaigner for women's rights, had led an important career in her own right.

Dora Russell remembered that "Bertie", as she recalled him, had been fond of saying that he came from the kind of family that expected equestrian statues to be erected in their memory. He did not expect this himself, but he did think one ought to try to do something to be remembered by.

Man of Wisdom

She recollected him as a man of wit and wisdom, who had played a great part in the age-old struggle for peace and liberty. "Did Bertie labour in vain?" demanded Dora Russell. Her tremulous eighty-six-year-old voice resounded urgently across the square, on a bleak damp morning at a time of growing international tension and mounting spirals of armaments programmes. "The world," she said, "now seems in a worse state than ever. Russell talked of the good life inspired by knowledge and love. There is too much knowledge and not enough love, today," she claimed. "We must learn to love one another and create peace on earth in a world not divided by ideologies.

"Why should the young seek gurus abroad," she asked, "when they can follow the wisdom of Bertie?"

Dora Russell turned to unveil the bust of Russell revealing it as the head of a young man, sculpted with vigour and clarity. In a moment of inspiration, in which the audience were visibly moved, Dora Russell cried out (in Wordsworth's words of Milton): ". . . Thou shouldst be living at this hour. . ."

Fenner Brockway continued by suggesting that the bust was appropriately placed within sight of Conway Hall, which he called "the cultural cathedral of humanism". He then quoted Russell's famous words (a recording of which was played at Russell's memorial meeting): "An individual existence should be like a river—small at first, narrowly confined

within its banks, and rushing passionately past boulders and over water-falls.

"Gradually the river grows wider, and the banks recede, the waters flow more quietly, and, in the end, without any visible break, they become merged in the sea, and painlessly lose their individual being."

A. J. Ayer, the well-known philosopher, was present and briefly thanked those involved in the project of placing the bust in the square.

Peter Cadogan, secretary of the committee responsible (and General Secretary of South Place Ethical Society) said that he had been associated with Russell on the Committee of 100. He thought one of Russell's especial contributions was to see things ahead of others; he gave as an example Russell's Christmas broadcast about the dangers of nuclear war in 1954.

Peter Cadogan said that in looking for one paragraph of Russell to quote on the occasion, he had borne in mind the view that Russell was at his greatest during the First World War. He quoted from *The Tribunal* (October 12, 1916), a journal for protesters against the war at that time: "Our minds and thoughts must not be filled with thoughts of the evils of the present moment, but with the vision of the world we hope for—a world without violence and bloodshed, where men are free to grow, where the dominion of greed is at an end and love finds no obstacles of mutual selfishness. If we resist, it is not with hostility to those who try coercion, or with any self-centred feeling of what we owe to our consciousness, but for the sake of the world—because we see how the world might be immeasurably better than it is, because all that is necessary is that others should see too, and because we desire to share with all the hope for the world which makes our happiness and our opportunity."

Peter Cadogan said that he could not resist quoting Fenner Brockway's words in the same journal: "Our struggle will not end with the Treaty of Peace. It will end only when the last vestige of militarism has disappeared from the earth, and in place of destruction and death a social order has been established wherein full opportunity is given to every life to develop to its highest. That ideal will demand our service not merely for the duration of the War. It will demand our service for the rest of our lives."

"Man's Peril"

Robert K. Davies, President of the Bertrand Russell Society in America (with members worldwide) stressed the importance of Russell as an international man. He was an Earthian first and an Englishman second. Mr Davies quoted from Russell's famous BBC radio talk "Man's Peril", warning of the dangers of nuclear war, on 23 December 1954: "I appeal as a human being to

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A Secular Humanist Declaration

The Declaration printed in an abbreviated form below was drafted by Paul Kurtz in the USA. It is being printed in full in a new magazine "Free Inquiry" being launched by Paul Kurtz and others in America. The Declaration has many distinguished signatories who are committed to the principles of enquiry and the secular humanist outlook. Signatures in America included those of Isaac Asimov, Francis Crick and B. F. Skinner. In England Sir A. Ayer, Harold Blackham, Dora Russell, Harry Stopes-Roe, Nicolas Walter and Baroness Wootton have signed. There are also signatures from Canada, France, India, Israel, Norway and Yugoslavia.

Secular humanism is a vital force in the contemporary world. It is now under unwarranted and intemperate attack from various quarters. This declaration defends only that form of secular humanism which is explicitly committed to democracy. It is opposed to all varieties of belief that seek supernatural sanction for their values or espouse rule by dictatorship.

Democratic secular humanism has been a powerful force in world culture. Its ideals can be traced to the philosophers, scientists, and poets of classical Greece and Rome, to ancient Chinese Confucian society, to the Carvaka movement of India, and to other distinguished intellectual and moral traditions. Secularism and humanism were eclipsed in Europe during the Dark Ages, when religious piety eroded humankind's confidence in its own powers to solve human problems. They reappeared in force during the Renaissance with the reassertion of secular and humanist values in literature and the arts, again in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with the development of modern science and a naturalistic view of the universe, and their influence can be found in the eighteenth century in the Age of Reason and the Enlightenment. Democratic secular humanism has creatively flowered in modern times with the growth of freedom and democracy.

Countless millions of thoughtful persons have espoused secular humanist ideals, have lived significant lives, and have contributed to the building of a more humane and democratic world. The modern secular humanist outlook has led to the application of science and technology to the improvement of the human condition. This has had a positive effect on reducing poverty, suffering, and disease in various parts of the world, in extending longevity, on improving transportation and communication, and in making the good life possible for more and more people. It has led to the emancipation of hundreds of millions of people from the exercise of blind faith and fears of superstition and has contributed to their

education and the enrichment of their lives. Secular humanism has provided an impetus for humans to solve their problems with intelligence and perseverance, to conquer geographic and social frontiers, and to extend the range of human exploration and adventure.

Regrettably, we are today faced with a variety of anti-secularist trends: the reappearance of dogmatic authoritarian religions; fundamentalist, literalist, and doctrinaire Christianity; a rapidly growing and uncompromising Moslem clericalism in the Middle East and Asia; the reassertion of orthodox authority by the Roman Catholic papal hierarchy; nationalistic religious Judaism; and the reversion to obscurantist religions in Asia. New cults of unreason as well as bizarre paranormal and occult beliefs, such as belief in astrology, reincarnation, and the mysterious power of alleged psychics, are growing in many Western societies. These disturbing developments follow in the wake of the emergence in the earlier part of the twentieth century of intolerant messianic and totalitarian quasi-religious movements, such as fascism and communism. These religious activists not only are responsible for much of the terror and violence in the world today but stand in the way of solutions to the world's most serious problems. . .

Threat to Civilisation

There are wide differences of opinion among secular humanists on many issues. Nevertheless, there is a loose consensus with respect to several propositions. We are apprehensive that modern civilisation is threatened by forces antithetical to reason, democracy, and freedom. Many religious believers will no doubt share with us a belief in many secular humanist and democratic values, and we welcome their joining with us in the defence of these ideals.

1. *Free Inquiry.* The first principle of democratic secular humanism is its commitment to free inquiry. We oppose any tyranny over the mind of man, any efforts by ecclesiastical, political, ideological, or social institutions to shackle free thought. In the past, such tyrannies have been directed by churches and states attempting to enforce the edicts of religious bigots. In the long struggle in the history of ideas, established institutions, both public and private, have attempted to censor inquiry, to impose orthodoxy on beliefs and values, and to excommunicate heretics and extirpate unbelievers. Today, the struggle for free inquiry has assumed new forms. Sectarian ideologies have become the new theologies that use political parties and governments in their mission to crush dissident opinion.

Free inquiry entails recognition of civil liberties as integral to its pursuit, that is, a free press, freedom

of communication, the right to organise opposition parties and to join voluntary associations, and freedom to cultivate and publish the fruits of scientific, philosophical, artistic, literary, moral and religious freedom. Free inquiry requires that we tolerate diversity of opinion and that we respect the right of individuals to express their beliefs, however unpopular they may be, without social or legal prohibition or fear of sanctions. Though we may tolerate contrasting points of view, this does not mean that they are immune to critical scrutiny. The guiding premise of those who believe in free inquiry is that truth is more likely to be discovered if the opportunity exists for the free exchange of opposing opinions; the process of interchange is frequently as important as the result. This applies not only to science and to everyday life, but to politics, economics, morality, and religion.

2. *Separation of Church and State.* Because of their commitment to freedom, secular humanists believe in the principle of the separation of church and state. . .

3. *The Ideal of Freedom.* There are many forms of totalitarianism in the modern world—secular and nonsecular—all of which we vigorously oppose. As democratic secularists, we consistently defend the ideal of freedom, not only freedom of conscience and belief from those ecclesiastical, political, and economic interests that seek to repress them, but genuine political liberty, democratic decision-making based upon majority rule, and respect for minority rights and the rule of law. We stand not only for freedom from religious control but for freedom from jingoistic government control as well. We are for the defence of basic human rights, including the right to protect life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. In our view, a free society should also encourage some measure of economic freedom, subject only to such restrictions as are necessary in the public interest. . .

4. *Ethics Based on Critical Intelligence.* The moral views of secular humanism have been subjected to criticism by religious fundamentalist theists. The secular humanist recognises the central role of mortality in human life. Indeed, ethics was developed as a branch of human knowledge long before religionists proclaimed their moral systems based upon divine authority. The field of ethics has had a distinguished list of thinkers contributing to its development: from Socrates, Democritus, Aristotle, Epicurus, and Epictetus, to Spinoza, Erasmus, Hume, Voltaire, Kant, Bentham, Mill, G. E. Moore, Bertrand Russell, John Dewey and others. . .

For secular humanists, ethical conduct is, or should be judged by critical reason, and their goal is to develop autonomous and responsible individuals, capable of making their own choices in life based upon an understanding of human behavior. Morality that is not God-based need not be antisocial, sub-

jective, or promiscuous, nor need it lead to the breakdown of moral standards. Although we believe in tolerating diverse lifestyles and social manners, we do not think they are immune to criticism. Nor do we believe that any one church should impose its views of moral virtue and sin, sexual conduct, marriage, divorce, birth control, or abortion, or legislate them for the rest of society.

As secular humanists we believe in the central importance of the value of human happiness here and now. We are opposed to Absolutist morality, yet we maintain that objective standards emerge, and ethical values and principles may be discovered, in the course of ethical deliberation. . .

6. *Religious Skepticism.* As secular humanists, we are generally skeptical about supernatural claims. We recognise the importance of religious experience: that experience that redirects and gives meaning to the lives of human beings. We deny, however, that such experiences have anything to do with the supernatural. We are doubtful of traditional views of God and divinity. Symbolic and mythological interpretations of religion often serve as rationalizations for a sophisticated minority, leaving the bulk of mankind to flounder in theological confusion. We consider the universe to be a dynamic scene of natural forces that are most effectively understood by scientific inquiry. We are always open to the discovery of new possibilities and phenomena in nature. However we find that traditional views of the existence of God either are meaningless, have not yet been demonstrated to be true, or are tyrannically exploitative. Secular humanists may be agnostics, atheists, rationalists, or skeptics, but they find insufficient evidence for the claim that some divine purpose exists for the universe. They reject the idea that God has intervened miraculously in history or revealed himself to a chosen few, or that he can save or redeem sinners. They believe that men and women are free and responsible for their own destinies and that they cannot look toward some transcendent Being for salvation. We reject the divinity of Jesus, the divine mission of Moses, Mohammed, and other latter-day prophets and saints of the various sects and denominations. . . We have found no convincing evidence that there is a separable "soul" or that it exists before birth or survives death. We must therefore conclude that the ethical life can be lived without the illusions of immortality or reincarnation. Human beings can develop the self-confidence necessary to ameliorate the human condition and to lead meaningful, productive lives.

7. *Reason.* We view with concern the current attack by non-secularists on reason and science. We are committed to the use of the rational methods of inquiry, logic, and evidence in developing knowledge

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North and South: Wealth and Poverty

GEORGE MEPHAM

It is widely agreed that the division into rich and poor, affluent and starving, is one of the major world problems of our time. The Brandt Report* set out suggestions for broaching the problem with a concerted world policy. George Mepham outlines the proposals of this important report.

Trade and Development IV (1979) is evident in the proposals affecting international trade. The Pearson Report (1969) was mainly concerned with aid from the developed to the developing countries; the Brandt Commission has attempted to provide a comprehensive view of all matters affecting the relationships between rich and poor countries. The Report urges that the "centrally-planned economies", i.e. USSR, China and the Eastern Communist countries, should participate in new initiatives.

The Commission proposes a summit meeting of some 25 heads of government, representing all major regional groupings. It now seems almost certain that such a summit will be held in Mexico in the summer of 1981. Doubts whether the problems will be tackled with sufficient urgency must be increased by the appalling lack of progress in the UN's special two-week session on these problems, that ended on 5th September.

UK's Selfishness

A great deal of publicity has been given to the plight of those developing countries that cannot meet their debts—debts that have grown with the rise in the price of oil and with the increase in protectionist measures adopted by industrialised countries. The Brandt Commission urges an immediate transfer of resources to reduce the debts of the poorest countries in Africa and Asia. Aid cannot solve the long-term problems of trade imbalance and inequity in the world. The objective must be to enable all countries to achieve as much independence as possible in an interdependent world. But that is no excuse for the selfish attitude of the UK Government, which is cutting rather than increasing aid at this time. The cuts in real terms over the next three years will be 14 per cent, and that is more than three times the cut in overall public expenditure (4 per cent).

One of the merits of this Report is that it asserts the need for more equal status in negotiations between the developed and the developing countries, and a number of different recommendations are designed to achieve that change. For example: (1) UNCTAD and GATT (General Agreement on Tariff and Trade) should be amalgamated into one organisation, representing the interests of both North and South. (2) Development finance should be based on a mandatory system of international revenue levied on all countries, possibly with a tax on national income or trade. (3) Decentralisation of the World Bank's activities, so that the regional banks can play a greater role. (4) A World Development Fund with universal membership and a broader sharing of management and control over

Much of the discussion about the need to raise living standards in the less developed countries has centred around the moral claims on industrialised countries to give aid. It has therefore been a discussion about charity and urged along mainly by protest movements. The Brandt Report will intensify the moral claims, but it opens new ground in asserting that both developed and developing countries have a mutual interest in change—that the future prosperity and employment of people in the industrialised "North" is dependent on economic growth in the developing "South". Indeed, since the industrialised countries have so much more to lose and have had greater expectations of economic progress, their people have a vital interest in the outcome of discussions arising out of this Report. By contrast, people in the developing countries have little to lose, have much to gain, and have no illusions about the prospects for improving living standards.

The Report, published early this year, comes from an independent commission formed by Willy Brandt in 1977 at the suggestion of the President of the World Bank. It consists of eighteen distinguished politicians and economists from all the major regions of North and South, apart from the communist block. Ted Heath was a member, and so was Shridath Ramphal, the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth.

The Report is non-technical, and is about world economic development problems. It examines the consequences for the developing countries of recent changes in international relations and world economy. The Report's title, *North-South: A Programme for Survival*, is therefore perhaps misleading. North and South are only partly synonymous with "rich" and "poor", "developed" and "developing". The "North" must be taken to include Australia and New Zealand. The "South" includes half-industrialised Brazil and other oil-exporting countries that have higher incomes per head than some of the northern countries. The geographical separation of rich and poor is neither uniform nor permanent.

Few of the findings or proposals are new. The UN declaration on the "New International Economic Order" (1975) covered much of the same ground, and the influence of United Nations Conference on

allocation of the new mandatory revenues. (5) To provide an acceptable framework for the activities of multinational corporations there is a need for effective national laws, and international codes of conduct governing restrictive business practices and the sharing of technology. Multinational corporations now control a quarter to a third of all production. Their total sales in 1976 were about the same as the total GNP of all the developing countries, excluding those in OPEC. Trade carried on within these organisations makes up 30 per cent of all world trade.

The Commission's emergency programme includes a global energy strategy to be agreed between oil producers and consumers. The development agencies should increase substantially the exploration for and development of energy resources, and a global energy research centre should be set up under the UN. It has been reported that India is spending one third of its export earnings on oil, Brazil 40 per cent and Turkey 60 per cent. Prior to 1973 Costa Rica needed to sell 28 Kg. of bananas to buy one barrel of oil; today it needs to sell 420 Kg.

Eradication of Hunger

Expansion of food production will require massive investment in agricultural projects. But eradication of hunger will also require greater equity of the distribution of income in many of the poorer countries. Land reform is essential in most, and the Commission proposes that funds be made available to reduce obstacles to reform.

The Commission draws attention to the gap between the expenditure on armaments and on aid. World military spending is currently 450 billion dollars per year, while the total spending on "official development aid" is 20 billion dollars per year. Sales of conventional weapons from industrialised countries to developing countries are increasing. 70 per cent of all arms exports go to these countries. Some of the developing countries, notably Brazil, are now exporting arms, but 70 per cent of the arms sold to these countries come from the USA and the USSR. The Commission urges that "we need a new concept of security". True security cannot be achieved without the provision of basic conditions for peaceful relations between countries, and for solving military and other problems by peaceful means. The elimination of poverty, hunger and gross inequity are essential for our security. The arms race is no solution. The Commission believes that the UN should be given a strengthened role in maintaining peace, with power to prevent conflicts developing into warfare.

The Commission reviewed the changes in international organisations since the UN was set up in 1945, and is concerned at the proliferation that has occurred. Growth has led to "fragmentary and diffused activity, overlapping responsibilities and organ-

isational rivalries". UN's Secretary-General recently referred to "institutional escapism", i.e. the tendency to call a conference or to set up a new body rather than face up to the problems directly. Some six thousand international meetings are held every year in New York and Geneva, and about a million pages of documents are produced for them. Ironically perhaps, the Commission proposes that yet another body should be set up (external to the UN) to monitor the work of the different bodies in the development field, to define their objectives more clearly and ensure achievement more economically and effectively.

The Commission urges that international bodies should increasingly involve non-government groups in their work, and views with approval the consultative machinery of the International Labour Organisation and the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation.

The Commission has made a significant contribution that could bring about changes in attitudes towards our economic and social problems. The consensus achieved by the eighteen members needs to be extended to all who are concerned to work for a more sane world.

*"North-South: A Programme for Survival", published by Pan Books, 304 pages, price £1.95.

In South Glamorgan the system of allocating places in church high schools has been attacked by Mr Victor Steele, a recently retired headmaster. He said that it was very unfair to issue every pupil in South Glamorgan primary schools with a form of application for church high schools, when the county schools do not have a similar process. The churches are accused by him of unnecessary "cavassing" for pupils. He has also criticised the hypocrisy of "an influx of Sunday school pupils and prospective choristers about 12 to 18 months prior to the date of entry to high school."

"THE DEVIL'S WORK"

Youngsters on the Isle of Skye have little recreation and money has been raised to provide a hall for villagers in Staffin, which will include facilities for young people. The Rev John MacDonald, a minister of the Free Presbyterian Church, has opposed the project. He said: "This is the devil's work."

A local councillor commented: "It's the same old story. Whenever anything involving the district as a whole is suggested you can be sure of the church finding fault." Planning consent has been granted. A member of the church has commented (anonymously): "Public halls are places where entertainments of dubious worth take place, dancing, drinking to excess and other practices alien to our beliefs."

Turn Again From Jesus

When Oxford students came to Holloway, on an evangelical mission, they spent a week of the "vac" adventuring into an unknown, poor desert of London as earnest as a group of missionaries in earlier times trekking into darkest Africa and beaming with good intentions like the unsightly orange blinking of a Belisha beacon. "Turn Again to Jesus" was the slogan on one of their handouts and the "keynote" of the campaign—a reference to Dick Whittington's alleged *volte face* somewhere near the bottom of Highgate Hill. A stone which marks the spot—well, it is more probable than many a Christian myth about the saints—is within spitting distance of the bus depot where evangelical meetings were carried out.

The National Secular Society, with headquarters sited in Holloway Road, was invited to join the jamboree, and Barbara Smoker, the Society's President, debated the credibility of Christianity with a well-known evangelical preacher, Canon Michael Green. The debate took place in Jackson's Lane Community Centre, within earshot of the heavy lorries which rumble northwards to the M1 and would take more than an Oxford student's cry of "Jesus" to turn from their inexorable path. The community centre is a model for the useful conversion of useless churches to community needs; you can learn movement or dancing, find nursery facilities, see children given theatrical and artistic opportunities, or attend touring concerts or drama groups in what must have been the main part of the church. For the Barbara Smoker-Canon Green show the makeshift theatre was half converted back into a church again: evangelical pamphlets were set up, Christian badges were worn, cliques discussed church matters, and the Canon's tone came perilously close to the sonority of the sermon.

In the chair was Sir Derek Osborn, who proved a very fair arbitrator of the arguments and eventually gave the most accurate judgement of the evening when he said that if no-one had changed their views at least rusty arguments had been oiled and positions re-examined.

Canon Michael Green opened the debate on whether Christianity can be believed by adopting the rhetorical device of looking at Christianity from its opponent's position. He said that Christianity was not attractive to the outsider—divided, petty, reactionary, with an appalling historical record of corruption in South America, the Inquisition, and the legacy in Northern Ireland. However, he continued, "I would be depressed, if I was a secularist, at the failure of secularism to spread: religion is a force in the world, in Iran, in the American election, where all candidates are born-again Christians, and with only Western Europe showing a major decline

in religion." He suggested that secularism failed to satisfy deeper needs, that the secular societies of today were no more happy, honest or generous than other societies. Secularism fails to give joy or adequate moral power and is inadequate to explain the fullness of life. In China, and Russia, where religion was suppressed, it survived; and Stalin, a "dedicated secularist" had a daughter who returned to Christianity.

Passionate Jesus Fan

Canon Green then claimed to be a "passionate fan of Jesus". He described the popularity of Jesus at Oxford, said that a professorship of philosophy held by A. J. Ayer was now held by a dedicated Christian, and that scientists and men of intellect were by no means all atheists. Intellect does not compel people one way or the other: Joad, of the Brains Trust, returned to Christian beliefs because of an analysis of the psychology of personality.

He then cited some of the normal questions of any theist (not just a Christian). Why is there a world at all and could it have generated spontaneously? How do we account for beauty and love and for cause and effect being part of the world? How do we know right from wrong and why have all societies in history exhibited some form of religion?

Moving to a fairly conventional apologia for Christ, he then claimed that Jesus was different from any other teacher, had prompted a new literature and taught with authority, profundity and attractiveness. He was persecuted, poor and yet expressed fully what it means to be human. . . His claims were either those of a monomaniac or were true. . . The evidence of his resurrection bears powerful scrutiny. . . He can change our lives and "my purpose is not to argue, but to bear testimony to what Jesus can do, the joy and healing he can bring". He concluded this traditional evangelical stuff with the statement that when anyone calls on Jesus he finds a new beginning in life.

Barbara Smoker countered the full flow of the preacher with the careful, if less rhetorical, process of reason. She at first conceded that Christianity could be believed because anything *could* be believed (even that the earth was flat)—but this did not make it true. She was pleased that Michael Green had so thoroughly admitted the faults of Christianity, since it saved her the trouble of describing them. Religion, she declared, was perhaps the worst characteristic of man, though in demonstrating the harmfulness of religion Islam was now outstripping Christianity.

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EALING SCHOOL LOST

The campaign to prevent the Church of England buying the multi-racial comprehensive school of Twyford in the Borough of Ealing has failed. The National Secular Society's secretary, Terry Mullins, criticised the decision in the LBC programme *After Eight*. The Society commented in a press release: "A decision by the Education Secretary, Mr Mark Carlisle, to approve the sale of Twyford High School, Ealing, to the Church of England, is a most retrograde step. The proposed sale has been strongly opposed by parents and teachers, and Mr Carlisle's action will be condemned by everyone who is concerned about educational standards, children's welfare and social harmony."

"The National Secular Society, which is opposed to church schools within the State education system, believes that the sale of Twyford High School will have serious repercussions. Under the new regime, preference will be given to children from Anglican and other Christian homes. Parents who are Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus—a substantial proportion of Ealing's population—will not feel encouraged to send their children to an Anglican school. Young people and educational careers when it is most important will therefore be divided at a stage of their lives that they should be together."

Ealing Borough Council have been approached by the Sikh community with a request to buy a school in Southall. They have so far stalled the request with a resolution stating that there is no available school for sale in the foreseeable future and suggested that there is confusion in the minds of the proposers of the scheme between a Sikh (religious) and Punjab (language) school. (Has there been confusion in the minds of the Ealing Borough Council between a church school and a white, middle-class pseudo-grammar school?) The Borough have reaffirmed their support for voluntary aided schools dealing with religious education and have asked the Chief Education Officer to open discussion with the Department of Education and Science with regard to the educational principles involved in the request for a Sikh school.

The Ealing Community Relations Council have consistently opposed the sale of state schools to religious groups and have said "We believe that religious schools will tend to be also racially segregated schools."

The National Secular Society commented: "Other non-Christian religious groups will be encouraged by Mr Carlisle's decision to acquire their own schools. It is already reported that the local Sikh community is trying to buy Villiers High School, also in the London Borough of Ealing. This policy will result in the classroom segregation of young people on grounds of sex, religion and colour."

"The Church of England and other defenders of

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the religious clauses of the 1944 Education Act have much to answer for."

BENEFICIAL EXORCISM?

A proposal that exorcism should be part of Health Service treatment of dangerously insane patients has come from a mental health reform organisation. The Matthew Trust, chaired by Peter Thompson, has sent a report to Mr Patrick Jenkins, Minister of Health, suggesting this bizarre form of "treatment".

Mr Thompson, a former patient at Broadmoor, said "My proposal is that exorcism is offered as a last resort to see if spiritual help can be given to patients who have committed inexplicably violent acts. . ." Mr Thompson said that exorcism should not be used indiscriminately: "We recognise that if improperly administered it could lead to the patient becoming worse."

Professor John Gunn of the Institute of Psychiatry gave the plan cautious approval: "Occasionally exorcism can be of great benefit." Other psychiatrists have opposed the scheme.

Coming in the wake of a trial of two men who were convicted of causing a woman's death by attempted exorcism (see *The Freethinker*, October, p153), this idea will be regarded by many as extraordinary. It is known that this Government is trying to make savings in the health service, but surely it would not countenance such potentially damaging "treatment" being inflicted on the most extreme cases, who are entitled to help not irrational attack.

"EXIT" THE OLD GUARD

This year's Annual General Meeting of Exit (the Voluntary Euthanasia Society) was, however inappropriately, very lively indeed.

Anyone arriving at Caxton Hall just after 2 pm on Saturday, October 18, found a queue forming outside, and was informed that the room booked for the meeting was already over-full, and the hall manager would not admit any more. Still, most newcomers joined the queue, and by 2.15 (the advertised starting time for the meeting) it stretched round the street corner. Then someone suggested that the Great Hall was apparently vacant until a dance in the evening, and some 300 people surged inside and occupied the Great Hall. Eventually, with the wise concurrence of the manager, they were joined by the 300 who had arrived early enough to

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get into the York Room, together with two television crews and dozens of press reporters, and the meeting began at about 3 pm.

Some of us remembered when VES (as it used to be) only just managed to muster a quorum for its AGM. The transformation may not be unconnected with the fact that Nicholas Reed (formerly an executive member of the National Secular Society) is now General Secretary of Exit, bringing to the job a campaigning zeal and vigour that belie the society's *raison d'être*. He had been in a minority on the executive committee on many issues, but the one that had generated most heat and had culminated in the great public interest in this AGM was the proposed booklet (for members only) which, whilst counselling against impulsive suicide, would detail the best and worst methods of committing suicide—the worst being those that not only fail to kill you but could leave you living with a damaged brain. The 1979 AGM had instructed the executive to go ahead with issuing the booklet, but a majority of the executive decided against implementing the wishes of the membership at large—including five executive members, who, being doctors and solicitors, were understandably reluctant to risk being struck off their professional registers.

Several motions on the agenda this year reflected the anger of many members at being denied the promised booklet—one motion aiming to amend the Constitution so as to make decisions of a General Meeting mandatory upon the EC, one demanding the annual election of all committee members over the age of 70, one demanding the election of the entire committee (instead of one-third) for this year only, and one baldly declaring “no confidence” in the committee. All of these were passed with an overwhelming majority, and the ensuing ballot returned a new committee comprising only those few members of the previous committee who had stood for the booklet plus newcomers who pledged themselves to do so, “even if it means conviction and possible imprisonment”; one of the new committee members being NSS President, Barbara Smoker.

An old member of the society announced that he would seek an injunction in the High Court to stop publication of the booklet—so the new committee could find themselves “in contempt of court”, as well as being open to prosecution under the Suicide Act as soon as the first person in possession of the booklet commits suicide. The maximum penalty in England for assisting someone to carry out suicide is 14 years' imprisonment. In Scotland, however,

there is no such crime, and the suicide booklet has already been published by Scottish Exit, with impunity. The delay that has occurred south of the border will at least allow for some revision, in both content and wording, of the English version of the booklet—all to the good, perhaps, in something where exactitude is all important.

BABYISH FILM BAN

Cardiff City Council have exercised their right to ban films shown locally and forbidden a screening of *Pretty Baby*. The film, by a respected film director Louis Malle, aroused controversy because it is about a prostitute played by a girl of 12—but there are no sexually explicit scenes.

Six out of 75 councillors saw the film before the council over-ruled the licensing committee's approval of the film and voted it out by 28 to 16. The decision has been criticised by the secretary of the British Board of Censors, which gave the film an X certificate. The secretary, Mr James Ferman, claims the ban brings the system of local council certificates into disrepute. He also pointed out that the Director of Public Prosecutions had indicated that there was no infringement of the law in the film as shown.

The recommendations of the Williams Committee on Obscenity and Film Censorship, if implemented, would remove the power of local councils to ban films locally. Cardiff Council have shown the need for a change of system.

NEW FUNERAL ORGANISATION

An organisation of humanist funeral officiators was formed at a meeting held in Brighton on 12 October. Introducing a discussion of “Funeral Ceremonies for the Non-religious”, Mr R. J. Delaurey, chairman, said that it had become necessary to set up the new group because of increasing demand for such services.

He added: “With the declining role of the churches in human affairs we will provide a useful social service. Church weddings and other ceremonies are decreasing, and we believe that there would also be fewer religious funerals if an alternative service is provided.”

The new organisation will be known as Humanist Funeral Officiators (South-East Group). It will be able to meet requests for non-religious funeral ceremonies in Sussex and in parts of Kent and Surrey.

An explanatory leaflet has been published and is obtainable from Mr W. McIlroy, 32 Over Street, Brighton, Sussex (telephone Brighton 696425).

A leaflet about non-religious funerals is available from the NSS, 702 Holloway Road, London N19 3NL (Sae).

BOOKS

MY GURU AND HIS DISCIPLE by Christopher Isherwood. Eyre Methuen, £8.50

What can turn an atheist intellectual into a resident devotee at a vedanta temple? What can turn him away again? Explanations are here proffered by the atheist himself, in cool and lucid Isherwood prose.

The guru of the title is Swami Prabhavananda, head of the Hollywood Centre of the Ramakrishna Order. Isherwood's atheism leads him to the Swami. To deny God brings one nearer to him. In the Swami's words: "Anyone who says he has devotion or thinks he has devotion doesn't have it." Credulity is the greatest obstacle to spiritual progress. Isherwood discovers within himself a strong devotional inclination coupled with emptiness. He is steeped in that dull brutish inertia the Hindus call *tamas*. Yet there is nostalgia, an almost-memory of something once known, long-since forgotten.

Who can fill the gap but God? At first Isherwood recoils:

"To me all this Oriental stuff was distasteful in the extreme. However my distaste was quite different from the distaste I felt for the Christians. The Christians I saw as sour life-haters and sex-forbidders, hypocritically denying their rabid secret lusts. The Hindus I saw as stridently emotional mysterymongers whose mumbo jumbo was ridiculous rather than sinister."

The Swami's personality and teaching dispel the ridicule. God is a sound as well expressed by "a Nature to be known" or even "this thing." It is another word for the reality within, the Atman. On hearing that a rodent exterminator is to join the Temple, a devotee smartly ripostes: "from ratman to Atman." But the Atman is no joke. An initiated disciple will not be set free from his guru until he realizes the Atman within himself, and is united with it.

The obstacles to this release are tough. Addictions and their opposite, aversions. Pretensions. Possessions. The Swami teaches that austerity and discomfort are not the answer. A man of true renunciation concerns himself neither with poverty nor with riches. Mere outward austerity is a degenerate form of ritualism. The spiritual soul makes no demonstration of its renunciation or its communion with God.

Behind and fortifying the obstacles lurks the ego or self-will. The spiritual person does not try to impress you with his personality, the way most people do. His ego-space takes up little room. The Swami was like that. With candour, Isherwood makes it plain that at no time did his own ego cease to obtrude. It sabotaged his attempts at spirituality by insinuating doubt. It strove to maintain

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the messy impulse-driven way of life to which it was accustomed. It would rather wallow in lazy black misery than be interfered with by the Swami. But the aim of religion is not to make you happy in a worldly sense. "The death of the ego was never supposed to be pleasant, and this misery may really mean that we are getting ahead with it."

The misery was principally over sex. The devotee must be celibate, and Isherwood places sexual experience high in his list of essentials. Here we confront a contradiction in the spiritual life. All the great religions agree that chastity is essential to spirituality. Yet in doing this they discard a human attribute. How can a legitimate philosophy of man reject a part of man? The Hindu doctrine of *kundalini* does not reject sex altogether. It puts it in its place, and it is literally a low place. The *kundalini* is a reserve of energy situated at the base of the spine. The energy can rise to any of seven levels, depending on the person's degree of spirituality. If it reaches the highest there is *samadhi*, the ultimate experience of union with what is eternal within oneself. Chastity is a necessity, to conserve the psychic power essential for spiritual progress. Sex is not evil or sinful, but something to be overcome along the road to personal development. If one wishes to win the race one must keep in training.

Within the Swami, Isherwood is aware of strong sexuality. It is controlled, rather than repressed or concealed. The Bengali is small in stature, somehow babylike. He arouses protective feelings and has an animal lack of selfconsciousness about bodily functions. He freely smiles and giggles, showing two rabbit-like front teeth. He chain-smokes cigarettes, drinks alcohol and eats meat (though not beef). He shows the devotees how to be a follower, not how to be a leader. Every one of them loves him. Indeed to them he is the very embodiment of love, though not the kind that makes demands. With him there is lack of demand, lack of strain, entire reassurance. He does not think of sexual activity as "impure" (though Isherwood does). For the Swami, purity is telling the truth. He believes in the universality of religion, and is against creeds, sects and fanatics. This raises a question for the humanist. If spirituality is part of man the humanist cannot reject it. A humanist should oppose *wrong* religion not *all* religion.

The discipline of the Harakrishna Order was less rigorous in Hollywood than at its base in India. Meditation was central. At first it is a struggle to fix the mind on all-pervading Existence. Later,

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contemplation is effortless. We are unaware of the passage of time, and the need for images stops. We pass beyond the stage of logical analysis. We cease to infer. We know.

To aid contemplation, the guru gives the initiate a *mantram*. This consists of one or more names in Sanskrit. Constant repetition of the mantram (perhaps with the aid of a rosary) is called making japam. A devotee makes between five thousand and ten thousand repetitions on an average day. Meditation can take place anywhere. Isherwood's favourite spot for it was the shrine room of the Temple. The smell of incense helped. It induced a special mood by association — just as the smell of antiseptics induces the passive mood of the hospital patient. The shrine contained holy relics, about which Isherwood remarks:

"The Hindus, like the Catholics, believe that such relics generate spiritual power which can be communicated to worshippers who expose themselves to it. But this is only half of the process. What the worshippers receive, they must return to the shrine through acts of worship; thereby they 'recharge' the shrine, and thus themselves, continually."

Isherwood never quite became a believer. He could not bring himself to abandon the self which sometimes needed to be sex-absorbed, drunken or angry. He missed his friends, and above all he needed to pursue his genius as a creative writer wherever it might lead him. The price of holiness was too high. He remained a demi-devotee with a foot in both worlds.

This beautifully-written book squarely confronts what each of us must face. Men and women are fleshly spiritual. Being both, can we live both? If not, which shall we prefer?

FRANCIS BENNION

ARGUMENTS FOR SOCIALISM by Tony Benn. Ed. by C. Mullin. Penguin, £1.50

It has been a tragedy of the Labour movement in Britain that its roots lie in Methodism rather than Marxism. Tony Benn is decidedly in the former camp, coming from a non-conformist background, though he is prepared to concede that humanists, Marxists and Fabians have made a contribution to the expansion of the Labour Party this century.

This short work by Tony Benn, based on earlier talks and essays, outlines his personal case for being a socialist and sets out the arguments with reference to democracy, freedom of information, employment and the Common Market. Contrary to the popular

press I found that, if the evidence of this book is anything to go by, Tony Benn is in no way doctrinaire, but a libertarian democratic socialist as opposed to the party hacks on the Labour "right" such as Williams, Rodgers and Owen who could loosely be termed social democrats.

As I write this review I hear on the radio that Mr Callaghan has resigned, and he has upset the motions passed at the Labour Party Conference in Blackpool calling for a new method of selecting a leader by insisting that a new leader be installed immediately. This demonstrates Tony Benn's view that for democracy to be seen to be done there must be greater accountability within the Labour movement. Parliamentary Labour Party, please note.

From a secularist point of view, criticism could be levelled against Benn for his mixture of Christianity and socialism. I doubt very much that Christian concepts are a dominant force in his thinking, but nevertheless he is prepared to use biblical quotes in this work to reinforce his thesis. There is nothing wrong in using such references to reinforce your ideas, but as secularists know too well just as many quotes can always be used from the same work to state precisely the opposite case. It seems that over the years the Christian element within the Labour Party have acted as a restraining rather than a radical force. The best example of this would be Lord Soper who is quite capable of campaigning against what he sees as injustice in society without really altering its basic structure.

It should never be forgotten that the temperance movement at the beginning of this century was closely interwoven with the origins of the Labour Party and this has had the effect of making Labour an organisation which goes for piecemeal reform rather than radical change. This criticism could not be levelled against Tony Benn, who, because of his sometimes outspoken opinions, has earned the dubious distinction of being the current bogey man of the left. The image has been manufactured by the media, and the press barons in particular, over the past decade; not unnaturally Benn is not sympathetic to Fleet Street. Of the national dailies at present only one consistently supports Labour, so the press barons are able to manipulate public opinion to a certain degree, particularly when an election approaches.

The subject of the power of the press brings me to another important topic mentioned in this work — the Common Market. Almost without exception the press were pro-Market and Benn is correct in asserting that the press, combined with large multi-national interests, presented a distorted case to the public. I often wonder how many of the people who voted to go into the EEC during the referendum would do so now given a second chance. After all, it does make more sense for a manufacturing country like Britain to export to third-world primary-produc-

ing nations in return for raw materials, rather than to export to other manufacturing nations where there are rival products on sale from their own domestic industries.

In the wake of the present tide of Thatcherism sweeping Britain, the arguments for socialism are indeed relevant and this brief work by Tony Benn is definitely worth a glance. KEN WRIGHT

THEATRE

DUET FOR ONE by Tom Kempinski at the Duke of York's Theatre, London

Stephanie Abrahams, a top-notch violinist in her early thirties, has contracted multiple sclerosis and has been urged by her husband to see a psychiatrist, Dr Feldmann. The entire action of this two-hander consists of Stephanie's preliminary consultations and the breaking-down of her spiky defences. Or, more accurately, almost the entire action of this resonant and deeply moving play takes place off-stage, in Stephanie's memory and imagination. Kempinski gently pushes his personal viewpoint, and Feldmann would seem to be his mouthpiece. He has been watching his recalcitrant patient for some time with owlish inscrutability. Suddenly he lowers his own defences and speaks out passionately about the sorrow and sense of defeat he experiences when he hears of a patient's suicide. Feldmann is in a position to make this kind of plea, as he is able to some extent to help alleviate Stephanie's misery, something which the enforcers of our laws on euthanasia could not reasonably claim to be able to do.

The setting, designed by Caroline Beaver, is Feldmann's garden flat, graciously cluttered with books, magazines, a stereo set on which he plays Stephanie's recordings, a Topolski portrait of Ben Gurion, contented plants, ethnic artifacts; the loved, fragile possessions of a lonely man, accumulated over the years. Leggily folded into her wheelchair, Stephanie, alert and venomous, tries at once to evade and to capture a sense of bereavement that goes deeper even than the loss of her art. Kempinski has the skill to build up an absorbing drama out of the exploration of Stephanie's childhood, gradually disclosing the traumatic early loss of her mother, herself a frustrated musician, and her existence with her bullying, small-minded father. Subjects too painful for discussion are wrapped in layers of wishful thinking, and the peeling away of these makes for exhilarating, if at times hard to bear, theatre—revelation is after all the stuff of drama. The experience is far too chastening to be called ghoulish or voyeuristic. The fine-drawn performances by Frances de la Tour and David de Keyser, working together in perfect harmony, are quite simply not to be faulted.

Stephanie starts out arrogant and brittle, boasting about her husband's genius as a composer and their

house in Tuscany; her mood swings upwards into too-bright confidence and down again into despondency. Her suffering has an ugly face, too. She begins to doubt her own talent ("It was only my image . . ."), to show contempt for her husband's "twelve-tone crap" (and it is to Kempinski's credit that he has enough respect for our imaginations and for the nuances of human feeling not to attempt to tell us what Stephanie "really" thinks of her husband). She also abuses Feldmann and herself ("I haven't taken my pants off since I last saw you. They're beginning to smell.") At last comes the naked grieving, the admission that her art meant absolutely everything to her. The course of therapy can begin in earnest.

Surprisingly enough, and Kempinski himself has admitted to surprise at this, the play is full of unstrained comedy. It soon goes beyond the mordant wit of a person trying to mask their pain and to hurt and shock others, which is a rather over-worked formula, but appropriate and effective here. As the play progresses, it becomes richer in that kind of Jewish humour which is both homespun and worldly-wise. The play makes one of its cruellest points almost by default. Deep unhappiness is not the prerogative of the better off. Intensive psychotherapy on the whole *is*. Social realism and comment are not really the province of this play, though. It is partly a paean to art in general and music in particular. Stephanie speaks of music as the force which must have inspired Man to invent God. At such moments the prose soars, and I for one doubt if I shall ever be able to listen to the violin, or indeed the cello, with my old casual insensitivity.

VERA LUSTIG

LETTERS

ABOUT THE CATHOLIC CONGRESS. . .

I was born and lived for 31 years in Catholic countries. Very laboriously I cultivated my mind in non-believer's ideals (I learned very much from the books of your Bertrand Russell at that time).

So, in these lands I became accustomed to listening to how the Catholics talk about "liberal changes" . . . Theoretical, vague "changes" . . . It is nothing but the old trick of saying one thing and doing another. For instance, I read in your magazine that a lay conference of Catholics "asked for a reconsideration of teaching on contraception, a new look at the possibility of married priests and the ordination of women, and a greater emphasis on human justice and peace" ("Catholic Congress Challenges Traditional Religious Beliefs", *The Freethinker*, front page, June 1980). The "reconsideration" of teaching contraception, the ordination of women and the married priests constitute solutions for the best development of the Catholic power in the world and not "the spread of secular humanist values". A Church which "employs" women is equally dangerous for the human rights as a Church with only men as "employees". With respect to the "greater emphasis on human justice and peace" it is the old demagogical artifice to attract the ingenious and fools: see how, when the parishioners discuss education—one of the keys of the Catholic empire—"the Congress was less progressive" (why not "reac-

tionary"?). It is in the subjects of education and economy that Catholicism loses its mask of "democratic and progressive" and shows the hypocritical and despotic face so well known.

In Latin America the Catholic Church plays the marxist-leninist role, in USA it supports the capitalist system, in China it works "independently" of the Vatican, in the UK it "wants to be" liberal . . . I wonder if the author of that article is aware of all these facts.

I do not know why "a liberal Church is preferable to an illiberal one". It is like affirming that the nazi Church was better than the feudalist Church. The real option—stated in humanist terms—does not consist of a choice between two sicknesses but of a search for the way to cure both of them.

The author of the article seems to be very interested in an approach to Catholic thought. He does not seem concerned with the enormous financial interest of the Catholics in the arms trade, nor even the enjoyment of ignominious privileges in countries pulled down in misery and ignorance, or the complete impunity of its manipulations of big multinationals. . . For this author all that counts is that the Church "moves towards a secular humanist outlook"(?) and that it "allied itself very strongly(!) with arguments for greater(!) human justice. . ." For this author what the Congress says about peace and justice is enough for him/her to invite the freethinkers of Britain to endorse far too much of what the astute Catholics say.

The author of the article even writes about a possible cooperation with the Church. . . I reply: NO! It is the Church which must collaborate with the non-believers, it is the Church which must endorse what we say and what we do, but first it must dismount all its machinery of cultural, economical and political oppression.

In the Spanish-speaking countries we have a large number of "progressive priests" that constitute the most formidable obstacle to reason, humanism and culture: they are a highly-efficient machinery that can manage the social, cultural, political, and economical mechanisms of those governing and those who are governed, and amalgamate the synthesis and antithesis of the historical process with the purpose of leading all these people to the most convenient situations for the survival of Catholicism.

Dr JOSE MANUEL FERNANDEZ SANTANA
(Organiser of the First International Exhibition
for Non-Believers, Stockholm, 1979)

The Freethinker will continue to criticise Catholicism, in the absence of an immediate Utopia with no religion, I prefer liberal to illiberal Christians, and cannot rule out occasional co-operation with Christians, e.g. in moves for disarmament. Editor.

IN PRAISE OF FUCKING

My first reaction on reading Geoffrey Webster's "procellibacy" letter in the September Freethinker was one of simple outrage. Why, I asked myself, do I find religious irrationalism in The Freethinker, of all places?

My second reaction was more moderate. I noted that Mr Webster twice refers to sexual pleasure as "momentary" and that he writes as if only the moment of orgasm were pleasant. I conclude that he takes no pleasure in sharing the company of a lover, knowing that the evening will finish with lovemaking, but finding no need to rush to this natural conclusion. Plainly he takes no satisfaction in the extended foreplay that prepares lovers for fucking and fills the gaps that separate one fuck from another, when lovers take the time to please one another. And certainly he finds no satisfaction in the quiet repose that follows lovemaking.

I am sorry that Mr Webster has missed these things.

Sorry too that he sees love-making as "blind egoism"—for good sex, like good in all human relationships, requires a real concern for the other person. Certainly a person who ignores the partner's feelings is very unlikely to be a good lover.

But is someone whose sexual experience is, apparently, so limited and unsatisfactory a good person to advise the rest of us? I think not.

In fact, I think my first reaction was sound. There really is no evidence that "moderate sexual activity is debilitating". Nor does sexual desire cause extensive suffering—though jealousy and frustration certainly do—without desire there could be no satisfaction of desire and the world would be a poorer, greyer, place.

Geoffrey Webster gives himself away in one phrase. He describes "coitus" as "that act by which we are burdened with existence". This is the Manichean heresy in which St Augustine was raised and which, through him, became an essential part of Christianity. (The details may be found in "Eros Denied" by Wayland Young.)

The supreme rite of the Manichee heresy was starvation unto death. This seems rather gruesome but if Mr Webster continues to find life a burden I think that Exit might have some advice for him.

DAVID FLINT

BHA CONFERENCE

May I make two small corrections to the report on the British Humanist Association Conference which appeared in the September issue of The Freethinker.

I did not say that almost 75 per cent of BHA members would be quite happy to do without local groups, indeed we have never asked our members this question and have no figures one way or another. It is however true that not all BHA members wish to join a local group even if there is one in their area—approximately half do so.

Neither did I say that many of the groups' topics for talks were trivial and unconnected with the importance of humanism—in fact I said just the opposite. I did however suggest that in order to attract people to a local group there was a need for the group to become more involved in the local community than is often the case. I also said there was a need for some basic education about humanism to cater for those who came to a local group without much knowledge of humanism wondering if it was in fact "for them".

KENNETH FURNESS
General Secretary

Whilst I agreed with much of Paul Ebsworth's assessment of the BHA Conference 1980 (Freethinker, September), Colin Campbell's talk seemed to me to be one of the better contributions to the weekend. No two people see things alike do they?

Incidentally, this ex-Methodist Minister turned Humanist is available to talk on "The Acceptable and Unacceptable Faces of Jesus" and also on any of the great Greek Humanists.

R. L. SCRACE

FASCISM AND RELIGION

Concerning David Berman's excellent "Fascism and Religion" (September)—many people call others fascist without knowing what one is. There is a complete difference between a conservative who values a traditional authority based on rank and privilege and the fascist whose ideology is a racial consciousness embodied in a folk culture that becomes expressed in the being of a supreme hero who gives the whole a dynamic coherence.

The fascist exploits the conservative fears and passions by assuming the mantle of traditional authority themselves. Hitler's view of religion had at its root not the Christian God but his own ego as the incarnation

of an Aryan God with a mission amongst his chosen people.

Fascism is an analogue of Industrial Power, man in conformity with the machine he invented; where rational power thought is secondary to the passion to be welded into a common bond of unquestionable power and the resolute energy of the will.

It has then a lot in common with Christian enthusiasm. Is it surprising that anyone gullible enough to be a Christian might also be a fascist?

JOHN SUTCLIFFE

EARTHQUAKE APPEAL

A television camera allowed us to see a young boy leaning on the rubble which had been his home whilst rescuers worked around him searching for survivors after the terrible earthquake in Algeria. His bewilderment and despair must typify the feelings of many thousands of children who, in the space of a few minutes, lost their possessions, their homes and their families. In their trauma they must feel there is nothing to depend on, but, as always in an emergency affecting children UNICEF is ready to supply immediate and long-term aid. Already it has flown in medication worth £150,000 and is supplying other agencies with vitally needed emergency stock.

Coming so soon after the heavy emergency programmes in Kampuchea and East Africa it is increasingly difficult for UNICEF to maintain its ongoing projects to bring a better life to children around the world. UNICEF is therefore asking urgently for contributions to help the relief programme in Algeria.

I would like to inform readers of this latest UNICEF in Action emergency effort and its critical need for funds. My aim is to raise £500 in the name of humanism and freethought for the El Asnam appeal. (Cheques and POs payable to UK Committee for UNICEF sent to me.)

Please help if you can.

MARGUERITE S-WELLS

BHA representative, UK Committee for UNICEF,
15 Maple Close, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex CO15 2DH

(Secular Humanist Declaration)

and testing claims to truth. Since human beings are prone to err, we are open to the modification of all principles, including those governing inquiry, believing that they may be in need of constant correction. Although not so naive as to believe that reason and science can easily solve all human problems, we nonetheless contend that they can make a major contribution to human knowledge and can be of benefit to humankind. We know of no better substitute for the cultivation of human intelligence.

8. *Science and Technology.* We believe the scientific method, though imperfect, is still the most reliable way of understanding the world. Hence, we look to the natural, biological, social, and behavioural sciences for knowledge of the universe and man's place within it. Modern astronomy and physics have opened up exciting new dimensions of the universe: they have enabled humankind to explore the universe by means of space travel. Biology and the social behavioural sciences have expanded our understanding of human behaviour. We are thus opposed in principle to any efforts to censor or limit scientific research without an overriding reason to do so.

While we are aware of, and oppose, the abuses of misapplied technology and its possible harmful consequences for the natural ecology of the human environment, we urge resistance to unthinking efforts to limit technological or scientific advances. We appreciate the great benefits that science and technology (especially basic and applied research) can bring to humankind, but we also recognize the need to balance scientific and technological advances with cultural explorations in art, music and literature.

9. *Evolution.* Today the theory of evolution is again under heavy attack by religious fundamentalists. Although the theory of evolution cannot be said to have reached its final formulation, or to be an infallible principle of science, it is nonetheless supported impressively by the findings of many sciences. There may be some significant differences among scientists concerning the mechanics of evolution; yet the evolution of the species is supported so strongly by the weight of evidence that it is difficult to reject it. Accordingly, we deplore the efforts by fundamentalists (especially in the United States) to invade the science classrooms, requiring that creationist theory be taught to students and requiring that it be included in biology textbooks.

10. *Education.* In our view, education should be the essential method of building humane, free, and democratic societies. The aims of education are many: the transmission of knowledge; training for occupations, careers, and democratic citizenship; and the encouragement of moral growth. Among its vital purposes should also be an attempt to develop the capacity for critical intelligence in both the individual and the community. Unfortunately, the schools are today being increasingly replaced by the mass media as the primary institutions of public information and education. . . *The mass media (particularly in the USA) are dominated by a pro-religious basis, which must be redressed.*

Conclusion

Democratic secular humanism is too important for human civilization to abandon. Reasonable persons will surely recognize its profound contributions to human welfare. We are nevertheless surrounded by doomsday prophets of disaster, always wishing to turn the clock back—they are anti-science, anti-freedom, anti-human. In contrast, the secular humanistic outlook is basically melioristic, looking forward with hope rather than backwards with despair. We are committed to extending the ideals of reason, freedom, individual and collective opportunity, and democracy throughout the world community. The problems that humankind will face in the future, as in the past, will no doubt be complex and difficult. However, if it is to prevail, it can only do so by enlisting resourcefulness and courage. Secular humanism places trust in human intelligence rather than in divine guidance. Skeptical of theories

of redemption, damnation, and reincarnation, secular humanists attempt to approach the human situation in realistic terms: human beings are responsible for their own destinies.

We believe that it is possible to bring about a more humane world, one based upon the methods of reason and the principles of tolerance, compromise, and the negotiations of difference. We recognize the need for intellectual modesty and the willingness to revise beliefs in the light of criticism. Thus consensus is something attainable. While emotions are important, we need not resort to the panaceas of salvation, to escape through illusion, or to some desperate leap toward passion and violence. We deplore the growth of intolerant sectarian creeds that foster hatred. In a world engulfed by obscurantism and irrationalism it is vital that the ideals of the secular city not be lost.

The above declaration has been abbreviated. It can be read in full in "Free Inquiry" obtainable from Box 5, Central Park Station, Buffalo, New York 14215, USA.

(Turn Again From Jesus)

She would be depressed if she had to accept that secularism had failed. On the contrary she felt, though the problems of man were not all solved, the direction of the civilised world followed secularism: scientific study of the world was widely accepted, and very few thought that there was no evidence for evolution. Even those who retained a nebulous belief in some deity or in a future after death lived a basically secular life.

The finality of death was part of the human predicament. Though it might be pleasant to be told of heaven, it was better to face up to the reality than to deceive oneself. If the next life was better and more just than this then why had the deity not made a better life here in the first place? The nasty possibility that hell faced us in the next life was no longer stressed by Christians.

For a believer there was a problem about why God had allowed babies to be born to a life of suffering, and animals to be born into a system of nature in which pain was inescapable and the weakest went to the wall. "If I believed in a God who had created such a world, I wouldn't worship him—I'd curse him."

She saw the idea of prayer as immoral: it was either praise of a God who should not need such flattery, or asking for favours and special treatment when in difficulties. If God listened to such prayers and answered them then he or she would be a capricious being—a childish concept.

Answering Michael Green's link of secularism and Stalin, Barbara Smoker pointed out that secularists had no brief for the totalitarian state and would not want religious people to be persecuted.

Moving to the character of Jesus Christ, upon which Canon Green had placed so much of his case, she said that she was a passionate critic of Jesus. He insulted other people—"ye vipers"—and threatened eternal torment (something she would not wish even on those she most disapproved of). He may indeed have been a monomaniac. The accretion of legends with many similarities to the Jesus story, indicates that there was nothing new in the way his life came to be described.

The cosmos relying ultimately on random chance was preferable to one in which all things good and bad were imposed by a conscious will. Such a belief did not deny the wonder of the universe, the actual wonder of the galaxies and mysteries of reality were far more impressive than the idea of a God with creation coming as though from the wave of a magic wand.

Barbara Smoker concluded by pointing out that the best moral precepts of Christianity related to the Golden Rule "Do as you would be done by" which long pre-dated Christianity.

A discussion followed in which points were made evenly on both sides of the debate. It was disturbing that applause came not for thought-out arguments but emotional statements of faith. Much of the Christian contribution hammered home that Jesus had given joy; but secularists can be joyful, they can face suffering, they can help each other. Holloway was asked to Turn to Jesus; it would be better to turn away from Jesus and from all religious leaders, to turn to reality, to turn away from dreams, gurus and utopias, and turn to the liberating idea that we can in some measure control our own lives and contribute to changes in society.

(Russell Ceremony)

human beings: remember your humanity and forget the rest."

Camden Borough Council contributed the plinth and had co-operated in providing the site.

Bertrand Russell was a rationalist and secularist, whose essay *Why I Am Not a Christian* was published by the National Secular Society. It was first delivered to the NSS as a lecture in 1927, but remains one of the most lucid accounts of this position ever written.

At a time when there is a resurgence of concern about disarmament (a major rally took place a few days after the unveiling of the bust) secularists cannot ignore the potentially world-shattering issue. Among the aims of the National Secular Society are: "The encouragement of disarmament and international co-operation, and the recognition that modern warfare is futile." This aim will have been present in the minds of all present at the unveiling of the bust of Russell.

EVENTS

Belfast Humanist Group. Secretary: Wendy Wheeler, 30 Cloyne Crescent, Monkstown, Co. Antrim. Tel: Whiteabbey 66752.

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group. Antony Grey: The Politics of Puritanism. Sunday, 7 December, 5.30 pm. The Queen's Head, Queen's Road, Brighton (Junction Road entrance opposite Brighton Station).

ANNUAL DINNER. Guest of Honour: T. F. Evans. Vegetarians catered for. Reservations with payment (£5.75) to Mrs K. Pariente, 97 Valley Drive, Brighton, Sussex. Saturday, 15 November at 7 pm for 7.30 pm. The Queen's Head, Queen's Road, Brighton.

Harrow Humanist Society. Symposium on Humanism. Wednesday, 12 November, 8 pm. Gayton Road Library, close to Harrow-on-the-Hill Metro Station.

Lewisham Humanist Group. Tony Milne: The Environment Movement. Thursday, 27 November, 7.45 pm. Davenport Hall, Davenport Road, Catford SE6.

London Secular Group. (Outdoor meetings). Thursday, 12.30 pm at Tower Hill; Sunday, 2—5 pm at Marble Arch. (The Freethinker and other literature on sale.)

Merseyside Humanist Group. Nuclear Power or Not? Monday, 17 November, 7.45 pm. 46 Hamilton Square, Birkenhead.

Muswell Hill Humanist Group. Roy Jarvis: The Life and Works of Aldous Huxley. Thursday, 20 November, 8.30 pm. 33 Finsbury Park Road, London N4.

Sutton Humanist Group. James Moorhouse (Member of European Parliament): Progress in the EEC. Monday, 24 November, 8 pm. Friends Meeting House, Cedar Road, Sutton.

Tyneside Humanist Society. Prof. G. Neil Jenkins: The Magic Bullet and Beyond. Wednesday, 3 December, 7.30 pm. Friends Meeting House, 1 Archbold Terrace, Newcastle upon Tyne 2.

West Glamorgan Humanist Group. Harry Stopes-Roe: Humanist Responsibility. Friday, 28 November, 7.30 pm. Friends Meeting House Annexe, Page Street, Swansea.

Worthing Humanist Group. T. F. Evans: The Problem of Equality. Sunday, 30 November, 5.30 pm. Worthing Trades Council Club, 15 Broadwater Road.

Gay Humanist Group. Humanism—a presentation in prose and verse. (All welcome). Friday, 12 December, 7.30 pm. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.

Humanist Holidays. Easter 1981: Sorrento, Italy, 15-22 April. £160, half board. Bournemouth side of Poole, 15-22 April. £61, half board. Enquiries to Mrs Beer, 58 Weir Road, London SW12 ONA.

Summer School. 22-29 August, 1981. Beamish Hall, Co Durham. Theme: Some World problems, including Russia's role in world affairs, the changing scene in China, the relevance of the UN today. Free time and visits. Approx £68. Humanists welcome. Further details from G. Mephram, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey.

We would like to continue the recent practise of providing an index for The Freethinker. We have generously received the expert services of a volunteer in the past, but he unfortunately has too many commitments to continue. If anyone has the necessary skill and time to do this would they please contact The Freethinker office.

Heretic Cards for greetings are again being sold by Barbara Smoker this year. Prices have had to be increased by 25 per cent from last year. Details may be obtained direct from Barbara Smoker, 6 Stanstead Grove, London SE6 (please send s.a.e.).

Freethinker Fund

We are grateful to the following subscribers for their kind donations: C. F. Ablethorpe, £2; G. A. Airey, £1; M. Ansell, £2; M. Armstrong, £1; S. W. Beer, £7; S. Berry, £2; D. Bressan, 50p; J. L. Broom, £5.75; E. Brown, £2; D. M. Carter, £1; V. Camilleri, 50p; E. F. Channon, £2.25; R. J. Condon, £7; S. Exley, £2; W. R. Grant, £1; P. Harding, £1.25; E. Henderson, £2; E. J. Hughes, £2; In Memory of Wm. Ingram, £2; J. R. Hutton, £2; C. F. Jacot, £7; R. Jeffard, £5; S. E. Johnson, £10; J. M. Joseph, £2; P. L. Lancaster, £10; W. Lazarus, £4; J. J. Lenderes, 50p; K. G. Mack, £1; B. Morgan, £2; F. Muskett, £3.50; W. N. Ramage, £2; J. B. Leader, £3; J. R. Riding, £2; A. B. Spence, £2; G. Spiers, £1; G. G. Thanki, £2; S. Trent, £3.30; J. Verney, £2; P. Ward, £1; B. Whyser, £1; A. E. Woodford, £5; Anon. £25.

Total for the period 19/9/80 to 22/10/80: £140.55.

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THE FREETHINKER

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