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MRS THATCHER CHALLENGED ON "THE TYRANNY OF CENSORSHIP"

David Webb, Organiser of the National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts, accompanied by the Campaign's legal officer, Edward A. C. Goodman, handed in a letter to the Prime Minister at 10 Downing Street last month. They were protesting against police "pornography" raids and the Government's failure to introduce comprehensive legislation to liberalise the United Kingdom's repressive censorship laws along the lines recommended by the Williams Committee in their report to the Home Secretary more than three years ago. NCROPA has also made a formal complaint to the Metropolitan Police about its handling of publicity concerning raids on sex shops.

In his letter, Mr Webb reminded the Prime Minister that during her recent visit to the Falkland Islands she spoke much about the necessity for fighting to preserve freedom in that territory.

"It is a pity, therefore, that these noble sentiments are so hurriedly forgotten when it comes to their practical application to the citizens of the United Kingdom. How can a country, like ours, which has now more censorship laws than virtually any other in the Western world, be said to be 'free'? How can a country which wastes hundreds of thousands of pounds of taxpayers' money every year seizing and destroying millions of harmless books, magazines and films, and for which there is such a huge public demand, be said to be 'free'? How can a country which imposes gigantic fines and savage prison sentences on those who are doing nothing more than fulfilling this demand, be said to be 'free'?"

Mrs Thatcher was told that "massive raids on sex shops and establishments by the Metropolitan Police are a clear and alarming manifestation of the sham and hypocrisy of your fine words about 'freedom' and those of many members of your Government and party".

The Prime Minister was reminded that it is more than three years ago since the Williams Committee's Report on Obscenity and Film Censorship was presented to Parliament. The Committee concluded that sexually explicit material was basically harmless and should be available to consenting adults.

"Notwithstanding the findings of this distinguished Committee, which were unanimous, your administration has not only failed to take any action to implement its recommendations, but has actually increased censorship restrictions even further, either by passing legislation initiated by the Government itself—e.g. the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982, with its measures for the licensing of sex establishments—or by giving undisguised backing to private members' Bills which have, in any case, invariably originated from the Government—e.g. the Indecent Displays (Control) Act 1981 and the Cinematograph (Amendment) Act 1982".

Police Discrimination

Mrs Thatcher is challenged to have the courage of her convictions "by converting the much-flaunted Conservative Party philosophy of 'the freedom of the individual' into practical reality and thereby ridding this sexually-repressed country of the tyranny of censorship, thus bringing us into line with the rest of the Western world, as well as honouring our commitment to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (articles 18 and 19) and the European Convention on Human Rights (articles 9 and 10)".

The Organiser of NCROPA severely criticised the Obscene Publications Squad for the way in which they have conducted their operations against sex shops. In a letter to Sir Kenneth Newman, the

(continued on back page)

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Vol 103 No 3 CONTENTS March 1983

MRS THATCHER CHALLENGED ON "THE TYRANNY OF CENSORSHIP" ...	33
NEWS AND NOTES ...	34
The Ayatollahs of Bradford; Bibles and Bullets; Thou Shalt Not Shop FORGING THE CANONS ...	37
Barbara Smoker SEX EDUCATION—FORBIDDEN TERRITORY! ...	39
Michael Duane ASTRO-THEOLOGY ...	40
R. J. Condon FREETHINKER REVIEWS ...	42
BOOKS Hunting the Past. Fossils, Tracks and Trails: the Search for the Origin of Life, by L. B. Halstead Reviewer: Brian Charlesworth THE INFLUENCE OF PORNOGRAPHY ON BEHAVIOUR Reviewer: Francis Bennion Iron Britannia, by Anthony Barnett Reviewer: T. F. Evans THEATRE Messiah Reviewer: Jim Herrick LETTERS ...	44
Barbara Smoker, David Wright THE BISHOP AND THE MESSIAH ...	45
R. J. M. Tolhurst CHILDREN: TO HAVE OR NOT TO HAVE Anne Murry	46
THE SECT THAT BREAKS UP FAMILIES LOSES APPEAL FOR NEW TRIAL ...	48
CHRISTIAN PROTEST ...	48

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NEWS

THE AYATOLLAHS OF BRADFORD

When, in 1970, the National Secular Society published *The Cost of Church Schools*, its author, David Tribe, posed the question: how long would it be before adherents to non-Christian faiths demanded their right under the 1944 Education Act to establish their own schools? He wrote: "Already there are signs that some Muslims are restive and are asking pointedly why, if there are maintained Catholic schools and Anglican schools and Methodist schools and Jewish schools, there are no maintained Islamic schools. If this argument were to prove irresistible and they and other oriental religious schools were to be established, at once we would have the concomitant establishment of racial and colour segregation on the American or South African pattern".

The then NSS president's appraisal of the situation and his blunt warning about possible future developments did not go down too well in ecumenical circles; there were accusations of crying wolf and even rumblings about racism. But the restiveness noted 13 years ago has gathered momentum and Muslim zealots have become increasingly determined to turn classrooms into part-time mosques.

A recent suggestion that Muslim Imams should be allowed to go into schools in order to give sectarian religious instruction was disturbing enough. But plans by Muslims to take over five local authority schools in Bradford, a move described by one of their spokesmen as "only a start", has caused alarm among educationists and community workers. The scheme has been aptly described as educational apartheid.

It is envisaged that the schools would be designated "Islamic Voluntary Aided", and enjoy the same status and benefits as Roman Catholic and Church of England schools. Mr Raiz Shahid, secretary of the Muslim Parents' Association, said they will appoint the governors and that the head of each school will be a Muslim.

Councillor Peter Gilmour, chairman of Bradford Education Committee, and Mr Ronald Farley, chairman of the Council's race relations group, are opposed to the creation of Muslim schools. Mr Farley commented: "It will divide society in Bradford just as we seem to be making great progress for Muslim parents in State schools".

Mr Alex Fellows, head of Bradford's Drummond Reception Centre, where newly-arrived Asian children are taught, is more forthright. He contends that such schools will lead to polarisation and separate development. It is a move that "racist groups like the

AND NOTES

National Front have been wanting. . . I'll bet they are rubbing their hands with glee at the prospect".

Critics of the Bradford scheme have to admit that those Muslims who put religion before education are acting within their rights under the 1944 Education Act. It is unlikely that R. A. Butler and his colleagues foresaw what the Act's religious clauses could lead to. These were intended to placate the mainstream Christian denominations with due consideration to Jews and other religious groups.

The "conscience clauses" were included as a sop to parents and teachers of no religious faith or who belonged to small sects. They have been virtually unworkable in State schools—whether they were intended to work has always been a moot point—and it is highly unlikely that they would be respected in a school governed by Muslims and whose head was appointed as much for religious orthodoxy as professional ability. Few Muslim parents or teachers would dare to exercise their legal rights for fear of reprisals by religious fanatics.

Mr Shahid says that the intake at Muslim schools would include English children for whom "we shall make arrangements for Christian religious instruction". English parents who attempted to withdraw their children from even Christian religious instruction in a Muslim school are also likely to get short shrift from Muslim-appointed governors and head teachers. Few non-Muslim parents (and a substantial number of Muslims who have settled permanently in Britain) want their children to be segregated on grounds of religion, sex, race and colour during their formative years.

It is estimated that the scheme would cost about £1.2 million. Mr Abdullah Patel, one of the MPA negotiators, said this would be no problem as any of the Muslim states in the Middle East would give financial assistance.

The authorities in Bradford may be tempted by this bonanza at a time when educational services are being savaged by the Government. But attractive though the offer may now be, it would pay bitter dividends in years to come. Future generations would inherit the social and racial problems resulting from segregated education on such a scale.

It is not only Muslim religious leaders who are responsible for this creeping apartheid in the classroom. For nearly 40 years Christian clergy and educationists have resolutely defended the privileged legal position of their creed in the nation's schools. Criticism of the 1944 Act's religious clauses have been brushed aside and the public purse plundered to finance church schools. Small wonder the

Muslims have decided that they want some of the gravy.

Ironically, the strident demand for Muslim religious privilege comes at a time when teachers in State schools are often ignoring the requirements regarding prayers and an act of worship at morning assembly. Even Roman Catholic parents are questioning the ethos of Church schools. But there are still zealots of all faiths who are prepared to take advantage of a system that provides a captive audience in a State-financed institution.

Muslim parents would be encouraged to have their children educated in schools which serve the whole community if pointless rules which offend them—like insistence on girls wearing skirts or dresses—were ended. There should always be a vegetarian alternative on the lunch menu for those religious minorities who eat only the meat of animals ritually slaughtered, and of course for the growing number of English vegetarians.

Everyone who is concerned about social harmony and the welfare of the young should resist attempts by Muslims to take over schools in Bradford or anywhere else. Such schools would soon become exclusively Muslim. They would turn out religiously orthodox but socially disadvantaged young citizens, particularly girls, and perpetuate a ghetto mentality in areas with a large immigrant population.

Father Michael Mitchell, director of the Roman Catholic Radio and Television Centre, has resigned. He has also given up the priesthood and left the Franciscan Order. He plans to seek work outside the Roman Catholic Church, probably in education or charity administration.

BIBLES AND BULLETS

The poor old *English Churchman* ("A Protestant Family Newspaper") has little cause for rejoicing these days. It is perpetually agitated over national calamities like neglect of the bible, non-observance of the Sabbath and indifference to Church teachings on social questions. Pope John Paul II's showbiz tour of Britain last year was a worrying affair for a publication that represents the Fundamentalist Tendency in the Church of England.

But the Protestant Family Newspaper recently perceived a chink of light in the post-Christian gloom. It carried a front-page report on how the recent election campaign in the Falklands "gave rise to some very special opportunities for putting the Scriptures into the hands of those who, otherwise, might have had little time for God's Word".

It appears that bible reading became popular with those taking time off from bombing and shelling the Argentinians. The Naval, Military and Air Force Bible Society supplied New Testaments to the Para-

chute Regiment and the Royal Marines. Bibles and religious tracts were widely distributed among ships' crews including, presumably, those of the submarine which sank the *Belgrano* with a heavy loss of life. But never mind the hundreds of deaths and broken families when "it was clear that servicemen were responding to the Gospel message".

With remarkable foresight, HMS *Illustrious* conveyed to the South Atlantic a supply of New Testaments in the Spanish language for distribution among wounded Argentinian servicemen. The age of the bible and the gunboat is not quite over.

"THOU SHALT NOT SHOP"

Only the *Week Ending* team could have done justice to proceedings in the House of Commons on 4 February.

The day commenced with prayers after which Mr Timothy Smith (Conservative, Beaconsfield) presented a Petition that the House "do all in its power to support any amendment to the law to require dog owners to remove excrement deposited by their pets from pavements, pathways, parks, grass verges, beaches and common land". *To lie upon the Table* (the Petition presumably), reported Hansard.

Mr Ray Whitney (Conservative, Wycombe) then moved that his Shops Bill be read a Second Time. He told Members that there was nothing more radical or revolutionary about his Bill "than to bring trading practices in England and Wales into line with those that obtain in Scotland. . . No longer would it be possible for shopkeepers in England and Wales to be prosecuted as criminals under the Shops Act 1950 when they open their doors in response to demand by customers". (Perhaps the one radical and revolutionary Clause in the Bill was that seeking to repeal the Acts of 1579 and 1661 relating to markets and fairs in Scotland.)

Mr Whitney went on to quote absurdities of the present regulations governing Sunday trading. "We may try to explain to our constituents", he declared, "why they can buy a kipper on Sunday but not a Sunday joint . . . corn plasters but not razor blades unless they can persuade the shopkeeper that they need the razor blades to cut their corns, raw carrots but not tinned ones".

The debate proceeded with contributions by Members of all parties representing a wide range of interests from trade unionism to sabbatarianism. The Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr David Mellor) tried to be helpful. He said the Government adhered to the view that the decision must rest on the individual conscience of each Member. The discipline of party machinery would not be invoked.

Mr Ron Lewis (Labour, Carlisle), well known for his sabbatarian sympathies, clearly disliked this lukewarm attitude and asked if the Minister would

give an undertaking that the Government would not act like Pilate and wash its hands. The Minister pretended not to understand the question.

Mr John Stokes (Conservative, Halesowen and Stourbridge) also disapproved of the Government's neutrality. He informed Mr Mellor that "the whole history of the Tory Party was bound up with the defence of the Church of England. Was he aware that by its neutrality the Government appeared to be betraying that history?" The dear old C of E being all things to all men enabled the Minister to reply with confidence: "The Government's position is exactly in accordance with what the Church of England stands for".

Mr Donald Stewart (Scottish Nationalist, Western Isles) referred to the effects of Sunday trading in Scotland. He imparted the sorrowful news that "membership of all churches in Scotland, with the exception of the Free Presbyterian Church, was falling, and . . . membership of the Church of Scotland had fallen below one million for the first time". Accusing Members of whittling away laws for the maintenance of the Sabbath by "salami tactics" he declared: "Existing legislation is being cut away slice by slice until the whole sausage will disappear". The contents of Mr Stewart's speech were as mysterious as those of the homely sausage.

The Rev Ian Paisley (Democratic Unionist, Antrim North) took part in the debate although the Bill did not apply to Northern Ireland. Mindful of other reforms imposed on that Christian enclave to bring it into line with the rest of the United Kingdom, he warned that "the laws summarised in the Ten Commandments cannot be departed from without great detriment to the nation and the people. . . What is true of 'Thou shalt not kill' is also true of 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy'". The Northern Ireland community of which the Rev Paisley is an eloquent spokesman are certainly faithful observers of the latter.

The farce concluded at 2.30 pm when the House divided. Renee Short and John Parker joined Julian Amery and Sir Angus Maude in the "Ayes" lobby. Michael Foot and Tony Benn exeunt with Enoch Powell, the Rev Ian Paisley and other "Noes". Mr Whitney's Bill was soundly defeated. The Lord's Day Observance Society rejoiced. Curtain.

JIM HERRICK

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Forging the Canons

BARBARA SMOKER

In January this year, the Vatican published its new Code of Canon Law, to replace the Code enacted in 1917-18—itsself only the second version in the history of Christianity. In this article, the President of the National Secular Society looks briefly at the history of the canons, the changes now made, and their failure to reflect modern, liberal opinion within the Church.

The much-trumpeted new version of the Code of Canon Law—in seven volumes, all in Latin—was signed on 25 January, the 24th anniversary of the announcement by Pope John XXIII that it was to be updated in association with the Second Vatican Council, which he convened at the same time and which finished sitting 20 years ago. There must obviously have been some dragging of feet—particularly, one imagines, those of Pope Paul VI—to account for the 20-year delay in finalising the new Code. And there is now a ten-month interval (until 27 November) before it comes into effect—possibly because it takes that long to plough through it.

Although the Latin version is to remain the sole official text, authorised translations are to be permitted—"for the first time", according to the Catholic press. However, it seems that an English translation of the previous version appeared in America in 1918, though (according to Joseph McCabe) "the text was almost smothered under a tactful running commentary". Even so, because of the Code's violent opposition to civil law and the modern spirit, it was apparently decided that "the less it was obtruded the better for the Catholic propagandist", and it was never published in this country.

McCabe is also interesting on the original *Corpus Juris Canonici*, which codified the rulings (canons) of Popes and Councils up to the 13th century. "This work", he says (in *A Rationalist Encyclopaedia*) "contained, and still contains, a mass of forgeries, especially about the powers of the Pope, as even Catholic scholars are now forced to admit" (for instance, the 9th-century forgeries used by Nicholas I to boost his own position). McCabe then refers to "a distinction which Catholic authorities draw between Public and Private Canon Law", and states that the revised (1917-18) Code, which covers the Private Law only, "does not contain the death-sentence on heretics and other monstrosities of Church Law, and the impression is given that they have been abandoned", but "the Public Law has several times been reissued, for the training of Priests, in the present century".

McCabe was writing, of course, 35 years ago, and no doubt all this has been quietly dropped by now—the Roman Church is in the habit of dropping embarrassments without fuss, while maintaining its pretence of immutable infallibility.

The fact that the first *Corpus Juris Canonici* held sway for seven centuries and its successor for less than seven decades reflects the increased rate of social change in modern times. Indeed, it would not be surprising if the new (1983) Code were to be superseded in about seven years, especially as it already lags far behind the more progressive sections of RC opinion in many countries.

The titles of the seven volumes have been translated as: *General Norms, The People of God, The Teaching Church, The Sanctifying Church, Temporalities, Church Sanctions and Procedures*.

Participation Extended

The two most noteworthy revisions in the first book (which is mainly technical) are both delegations of authority: (a) extending the power of governance to lay people, when so authorised, and (b) giving powers that were formerly vested in Rome to the Episcopal Conference or to individual bishops. For instance, it is now left to the bishops to decide which days shall be holydays of obligation—with the sole exception of Christmas Day, which is to be universally recognised throughout the Church. This exception seems somewhat ironic, remembering that in the first few centuries of Christianity the Church actually penalised any nominal Christian who dared to celebrate the old mid-winter festival!

The second book (as its new title shows) spells out the emphasis of Vatican II on the community and participation of all Church members—even the laity, even women: though it stops short of allowing girls to be altar servers, let alone allowing women to be ordained as priests.

The next two books deal with the prophetic and priestly offices of the Church, while book five is concerned (and how!) with the "stewardship" of church property and accountability in financial matters—a topic that is all too topical.

The last two books are similar to those of the previous Code, but in the reverse order—possibly to avoid attracting too much attention to the penalties set out in the penultimate volume, though these have been drastically reduced. The final volume, dealing with ecclesiastical court procedures, simplifies the marriage court procedures as set out in the previous Code, but not to the extent of those actually used in the USA in recent years, which will have to be dis-

continued after November.

This is just one example of the way in which local bishops have already, for many years past, anticipated the relaxations of the new Code, and even exceeded them. Another example is the practice of cremation: this was strictly forbidden in the 1917 Code, yet has been allowed now in most countries for well over a decade. Cremation is officially permitted under the new Code, though burial is still preferred.

The practical effects of implementing the 1983 Code will therefore be negligible, except for the fact that its publication has drawn public attention to it, and many practising Catholics are aware of these laws for the first time.

Excommunication

Naturally enough, it is the sixth volume, containing the RC penal code, that has received the greatest press coverage. The number of "crimes" which carry the penalty of automatic excommunication has been drastically reduced—from 37 to a mere six—but to the modern mind that is six too many. Three of them deserve special interest: the illicit ordination of a bishop, physical violence to the pope, and (of course) induced abortion.

Inclusion of the illicit ordination of a bishop among the crimes that carry the penalty of automatic excommunication means that the conservative dissidents (adherents to the Tridentine Mass and so on) led by former Archbishop Lefebvre will be unable to have any new priests ordained once Lefebvre dies; so their days seem to be numbered unless Lefebvre (who sees himself as the only bishop true to the faith) is willing to sacrifice himself to the extent of suffering excommunication, papal threats of which have so far not been carried out.

The threat of excommunication is a dire penalty—but only to those who care about it. It is therefore strange that it should be retained for a physical assault on the pope, since anyone likely to want to injure or kill the pope is (unless insane) unlikely to be a practising Catholic anyway. This threat would certainly have been no deterrent to the would-be assassin of May 1981—a Turk, whose religious background was presumably Muslim. (Incidentally, his trial made no mention of the motive, and there is a persistent rumour that the Russian KGB was behind it.)

Finally, abortion. It is not, perhaps, surprising that this most puritan of popes, who so often rails against abortion, should have insisted on its inclusion in the list of "crimes" for which excommunication automatically follows, but it is the most appalling single ruling in the whole seven-volume Code—for it must certainly affect many women who, driven by circumstances to seek an abortion, will have a

psychological need for absolution and for continued membership of their church community. And the publication of the new Code, with all the press comment it has received, has brought the penalty to the attention of many Catholics who were unaware of it before. One wonders how many suicides will result from this. It is true that Catholic commentators have tried to hedge it about with contextual qualifications that would, in practice, let most of these women off the hook—but not all of those who have heard of the penalty will have heard of the provisos.

Special Protection

RC spokesmen, quizzed in the media as to a scale of values that demands automatic excommunication for aborting an undeveloped foetus but not for murdering an actual person—with the sole exception of the pope—have explained that there are other (secular) sanctions against murder, but not generally against abortion. However, since the pope is protected from physical violence by the ordinary criminal code like anyone else, yet is given extra protection by canon law, this argument is a rather leaky one.

Double deterrence having been introduced to protect the person of the pope, there can be no valid reason for failing to bring it in also for terrorism. One hesitates to suggest any extension of canonical penal law, but it might well have proved effective against some of the bomb-happy IRA, with whom the certainty of excommunication might carry more weight than the possibility of life imprisonment or even an early death. However, Rome can hardly be expected to alienate a community of such "good" Catholics as those prepared to murder for their identity in religion.

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Sex Education—Forbidden Territory!

MICHAEL DUANE

The need for sex education is not new. Children's knowledge and values are distorted by the lack of simple truth, while honesty on the part of the teacher leads to trust and openness. Religious pressure groups, in the tradition of those which were opposed to adults receiving information about contraception, have been campaigning against sex education. Unfortunately they are being encouraged by politicians who prefer ignorance to knowledge on the subject.

We can no longer, it seems, answer our pupils' questions simply and truthfully in State schools if they fall into the dangerous area of "sex education". Dr Rhodes Boyson of the DES would have parents withdraw children from such classes. On what grounds, you may ask? That on this single topic the principle that the teacher must act *in loco parentis* should not apply? That information about this important sphere, the very well-spring of life and of human motivation, is, for Dr Boyson, somehow dangerous and corrupting? What kind of god does he adore that the act which comes nearest to the act of creation itself should cause a blush to rise to the pure, if bewiskered, cheek of the learned Doctor?

Yet, according to a recent survey of parents' views (*Woman*, 20 November 1982) 50 per cent found that lack of sex education had caused problems for them; between 85 and 92 per cent wanted their children to have by the age of 15 or 16, information about pregnancy, childbirth, menstrual periods, masturbation, intercourse, contraception, abortion, homosexuality, sexually transmitted diseases, and to have some moral guidance on sex. More than 50 per cent wanted their children to know about pregnancy, childbirth, menstrual periods, masturbation, intercourse, and to have moral guidance on sex by the age of 11 or 12. More than 30 per cent wanted information on contraception, abortion, homosexuality and sexually transmitted diseases by the same age.

Honest Answers

Sex education in any full sense cannot be gained from lectures or books, though both may be a necessary part in such an education. As I see it there are at least eight conditions required for a broad-based education. They are:

1. The answering of all questions posed by children from their earliest years in the fullest and frankest manner consonant with the child's ability to understand intellectually and imaginatively and to absorb emotionally. The work of Susan Isaacs at The Malt-

house School and that of Dora Russell at Beacon Hill showed how such education flows naturally and without difficulty when adults respond directly to children's questions.

2. That children grow in families where there is affection and mutual respect, not only between the adults but between adults and children; where curiosity and plain speech are not restricted and where natural modesty is accepted.

3. That school children are instructed in the rudiments of biology and anatomy, including the processes of reproduction in humans and animals.

4. That children take part, as they are interested, in discussions at home and school of the personal, social and ethical problems raised by the exploitation of sex in modern life. That human relationships and their bearing on the development of healthy and autonomous individuals should form part of the normal secondary curriculum.

5. That the study of a wide range of literature should be basic to the curriculum and that, for adolescents, it should include literature dealing with the relationships between men and women. That works of art in all media, inspired by such relationships, should be the object of study by secondary pupils; such study to include acting and singing in mixed groups.

6. The expression of feelings in writing, painting, sculpture, dance, music or any other medium felt to be appropriate by the pupils.

7. The sharing from infancy of work and play by boys and girls under both men and women teachers.

8. The freedom for boys and girls at all ages to form friendships with members of both sexes.

The Role of Teachers

The Western world has relegated women to the ignominy of a chattel; has turned sex into a commodity to be bought and sold and to be used in the promotion of the sale of other commodities like alcohol, tobacco or motor cars. Sex has become a consolation for the tired businessman or a bribe for the potential customer.

So long as we exploit class, race, religion and sex, we ask a great deal in expecting young people to grow with clear feelings about one another, whether of the same or of different sex. Parents who try to set an example of openness find that their children, soon after entering the school system, public or private, either are rebuked by other parents for being "dirty", or have to snigger at sexual jokes or be

(continued on page 47)

The premise that religious beliefs, including Judaism and Christianity, are based upon astronomical mythology is not new. But it has never been popular even with authors who have asserted that Jesus of Nazareth is a mythical figure.

It is almost two centuries since Charles Dupuis wrote his *Origine de tous les Cultes*. The author, a professor of Latin oratory and an ex-priest, maintained that religious belief systems were based upon astronomical mythology. It was not a new theory, but the book was the most scholarly and detailed work on the subject that had so far appeared.

Dupuis' thesis as applied to Judaism and Christianity was taken up in Britain by an apostate minister of the Established Church, Robert Taylor. Barred from preaching in church, Taylor hired the Rotunda in London's Blackfriars Road, where the novelty of a clergyman in full canonicals savaging Christianity drew large congregations. Taylor's "astronomico-theological discourses" given at the Rotunda were issued as pamphlets and later collected into a book, *The Devil's Pulpit*.

The "sun myth" theory of Christian origins is decidedly out of fashion these days, and it must be admitted that Dupuis as expounded by Taylor does not always satisfy. A few examples will illustrate the strong and the weak points of the system.

If astro-mythology is the basis of the Bible, a constantly recurring number such as 12 may refer to the signs of the Zodiac or the months associated with them. Genesis 49 looks promising, for here we have Jacob, otherwise Israel, blessing his 12 sons, four of whom are addressed in unmistakably zodiacal terms.

Reuben, the first-born, is "unstable as water". Aquarius is the heavenly waterman and the genius of January, the first month. Judah, "a lion's whelp", is Leo. Dan is "an adder in the path that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward". This is Scorpio, which appears to sting the archer-centaur Sagittarius immediately behind it. Joseph, "his bow abode in strength", is Sagittarius.

The remaining signs are less obvious. "Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations". These are the two fish of Pisces, cruelly caught with hook and line. "Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea". This is Capricorn, the sea-goat with a fishes' tail. "Issachar is a strong ass". There are two stars called the Asses in the neighbourhood of Cancer. "Gad, a troop shall overcome him". Aries is astrologically the domicile of the planet Mars, god of war.

Asher, "his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties". Deuteronomy 33:24 adds: "Let Asher be blessed with children . . . let him dip his foot in oil". The children are the Gemini, whose corresponding month is May. The oil, fat and royal dainties are poetic descriptions of the good and abundant food produced in this month. "Naphthali . . . he giveth goodly words". Virgo is the domicile of Mercury, god of eloquence. "Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf". Taylor remarks only that Lupus is outside the Zodiac. But this constellation is level with and almost touching Libra, one of our two remaining signs.

The 12 sons of Jacob have been accounted for, but only 11 signs. We need another son, but must make do with a grandson, Ephraim. "His glory is like the firstling of his bullock" (Deuteronomy 33:17), supplying us with our final sign of Taurus.

The 12 disciples of Jesus, says Taylor, are only another edition of the sons of Jacob. If so, their leader Peter must be Aquarius or January. January is named from the Roman god Janus, leader of 12 deities representing the months. Janus, like Peter, carried keys and had power to bind or loose all things in heaven and earth. As Peter was a fisherman, so Janus had a ship among his symbols. Janus as god of wells and streams connects him with the watery sign Aquarius.

Andrew is March or Aries. He is said to have died on a cross shaped like the letter X, representing the sun's oblique crossing of the equatorial plane in March. Matthew is April or Taurus. According to Taylor the apostle is represented with a bull's head at his feet. If so, he cannot be Matthew the Evangelist, of whom more later.

Thomas, called Didymus or Twin, is May or Gemini. John, whom Jesus loved, may be the pleasant month of June, whose sign is Cancer. Taylor has these two transposed, but the present arrangement seems more probable.

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, are called by Jesus "Boanerges" or Sons of Thunder, for which he gives no reason. The Church fixed the festival of St James on 25 July. July and August, whose signs are Leo and Virgo, are the months when thunder is most likely. James and John ask leave of Jesus to bring fire down from heaven, but he rebukes them. Taylor calls this a "beautiful fable of the sun holding the thunder and lightning of July and August in check, in order to preserve the harvest".

James the Less is surnamed "the Just" in the apocryphal Gospel of the Hebrews. He corresponds to September and Libra, the scales of justice. Nath-

PUBLICATIONS

aniel is October or Scorpio. Jesus twice remarks that he saw Nathaniel under a fig tree. Why this should matter is not explained in the gospel, but October is the month in which the last fruits of the fig tree are gathered. Philip is November or Sagittarius. His name means "lover of horses", which the centaur of the Zodiac ought to be, being half a horse himself.

In thus accounting for ten of the 12, the zodiacal theory is at least plausible. But Taylor gives no good reason for assigning Judas to February and Pisces, and no reason at all for Simon the Canaanite being December and Capricorn. Judas has a better claim than Nathaniel to Scorpio, for in solar myth this sign is the betrayer, stinging the sun-god in October so that he declines and dies at the winter solstice.

If astro-mythology is not entirely convincing when applied to the Apostles, there can be no doubt whatever in the case of the four Evangelists. They proclaim their zodiacal identities in countless churches, where they are portrayed in stained-glass windows and on fonts each with his sign. Matthew's companion is the lion of Leo. Mark has a young man, Aquarius, looking over his shoulder and apparently dictating his gospel. This explains the Church tradition that Mark wrote under the direction of Peter. Peter, we have seen, is Aquarius.

Luke is accompanied by the bull of Taurus, John by the eagle of Aquila. This constellation is outside the Zodiac, but it is near Scorpio and was often substituted for that evil sign. The so-called evangelists are equally the four beasts of Ezekiel and Revelation.

Aquarius, Taurus, Leo and Scorpio stand at the four cardinal points of the Zodiac, as witnesses and recorders of the sun-god's annual progress through all 12 signs. This is what was meant by Irenaeus, the second-century Bishop of Lyons, when he wrote that the gospels could not be more or fewer than four, because there were four quarters of the world and four universal winds. He added: "The Cherubim also are four-faced, and their faces are symbols of the working of the Son of God . . . and the gospels, therefore, are in harmony with these amongst which Christ is seated". The cherubim are those of Ezekiel, chapter 14, whose faces are those of the four cardinal Zodiac signs. Scholars have treated his words with contempt, but Irenaeus knew the astronomical truth about Christianity and stated it as nearly as he dared.

Many books have been written to prove that Jesus of Nazareth never existed, but few have had much use for astro-theology. Getting rid of the entire *dramatis personae* of the Bible is a bit much even for rationalists. Yet we have the highest authority for treating Scripture as mythical, for does not the Apostle Paul, in the fourth chapter of Galatians, tell us that the two covenants, the religions of the Old and the New Testaments, are allegories?

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HUNTING THE PAST. FOSSILS, ROCKS, TRACKS AND TRAILS: THE SEARCH FOR THE ORIGIN OF LIFE, by L. B. Halstead. Hamish Hamilton, £10.95

One of the numerous depressing phenomena of our times is the resurgence of creationist beliefs in the supposedly advanced countries. This has, of course, been particularly marked in the United States, where a recent survey showed that 44 per cent of Americans believed that Man was created by God within the last 10,000 years. Even in this country, however, the *Guardian* and *The Times* have recently both carried anti-Darwinian articles, in the latter case strongly implying that the centenary of Darwin's death coincides with the death of Darwinism. A book such as this, which gives an admirably clear account for the layman of the major findings of geology and palaeontology concerning the history of this planet, is therefore extremely welcome.

Dr. Halstead's beautifully illustrated book starts with an overview of the basic geological processes responsible for the formation of rocks and fossils. There is an entertaining brief history of the study of fossil remains, including an account of the painful struggle that was needed to achieve a correct understanding of dinosaur remains. (The first known discovery of a dinosaur bone was in the 17th century, but the thigh bone in question was described as the fossilised scrotum of a giant man.)

He then describes the succession of life as revealed by fossils, starting with the remains of fossilised bacteria and blue-green algae from some 3,000 million years ago, through the first remains of primitive multi-cellular animals 680 million years old, and the appearance of the first vertebrates (jawless fishes, related to the modern lamprey), to the evolution of man from ape-like ancestors over the last four to five million years. Halstead makes it clear that, although the fossil record is full of numerous gaps and biases due to the haphazard nature of the fossilisation process, the historical record of life is wholly consistent with Darwinian evolution, and indeed bears no other interpretation.

One of the outstanding features of the book is Halstead's concern to give the reader a feel for the observational and experimental methods that are used by scientists to interpret the rocks, and for how our knowledge of present-day geological and biological processes make it possible to draw inferences concerning events that took place hundreds or thousands of millions of years ago. In particular, the use of dating methods using the abundance of certain radioactive elements has enabled exact dates to be assigned to evolutionary and geological events that formerly could only be dated very roughly.

Dr Halstead makes it plain that attempts by

FREETHINKER

Biblical creationists to explain away embarrassing facts such as the existence of fossil shells of marine organisms on mountain tops, by appealing to Noah's flood, are either muddle-headed or simply mendacious. He points out that, as early as the 15th century, Leonardo da Vinci was well aware of the inadequacy of such diluvial interpretations. In an unpublished MS, Leonardo wrote: "And if you say that the shells . . . were left there by the Deluge, I answer that if you believe that this Deluge rose above the highest mountain by seven cubits, . . . these shells, which always inhabit the seashores, ought to be found lying on the mountain sides and not so little above their bases, and all at the same horizon, layer upon layer".

It is remarkable that views which Leonardo dismissed as "impossible for a brain capable of thinking" are still flourishing. I hope that this excellent book will be widely read, and will be as effective an antidote to unscientific nonsense as it deserves.

BRIAN CHARLESWORTH

THE INFLUENCE OF PORNOGRAPHY ON BEHAVIOUR. Edited by Maurice Yaffé and Edward C. Nelson. Academic Press, £14

If confronted with a book about the influence of Horlicks on behaviour, what should we expect? We might start by feeling surprised that Horlicks, that noted soporific, had any influence at all on behaviour. Then we would reflect that because someone has written a book on the subject there must be something in it. People do not write books for nothing. So we would look forward to reading a balanced treatment, setting forth the good things about Horlicks and (if any) the bad.

A reader with such expectations about this book will be disappointed. It is solely concerned with the bad things about pornography. We all know what they are. Porn (or so the law maintains) depraves and corrupts the consumer. That is no doubt his own fault. But then porn affronts and outrages those who unwillingly encounter it. That is not their fault, and they need protection. Finally, and worst, porn (so it is said) may inflame the consumer to such an extent that he is impelled to rush forth and commit a rape or other violation.

Are there any good things about porn? If there are, or even if there might possibly be, you won't find them discussed here. There are ten learned contributors, but not one of them tells us how the quality of porn might be improved so as to

REVIEW

increase the consumer's sexual satisfaction, or further abate his neurotic disorder, or even administer an increased quota of innocent pleasure. As ever, the impulse is either to attack porn mantled in virtue or defend it with ashen face, guiltily. In between it is true there are the scientists who discuss porn scientifically, as one might with averted eyes dissect a tapeworm.

Does it matter? Yes. It matters because here we are in the realm of oppression. We are in that area where interferers stop other people doing what they want. The interferers operate nowadays in one of two ways: the first respectable, the other disreputable.

The respectable way of porn-prevention is by democratically enacted law. You may not agree with the law—but at least you have the comfort of knowing that it is the product of the best system mankind has yet been able to devise for enabling a society to govern itself.

The disreputable way is by the fashionable but despotic medium of anarchic direct action. Self-opinionated busybodies in ever-increasing numbers take it upon themselves to bypass democracy. Theirs is a crude form of tyranny, and if it should succeed in establishing itself we can say goodbye to free government. No philosophic distinction is to be found between a lynch mob of the Ku-Klux-Klan and a sex-shop burning mob of Women Against Rape.

This collection of essays is directed to behavioural psychologists, criminologists, social scientists, lawyers, art historians and politicians, among others. A mixed target indeed. So we have Peter Webb telling the art historians that most large museums possess (but of course do not display) trays of stone penises hacked by Victorian curators from dug-up classical statuary. We have Edward C. Nelson explaining to the behavioural psychologists that some fortunate males can consistently produce fairly large erectile responses to self-induced sexual fantasies. Neither fact, absorbing though it is, has much to do with the influence of pornography on behaviour. This is true of a great deal of the material assembled here.

There are other disparities. The content of many of the pieces overlaps, and the editorial control is generally lax. Some of the contributions are well-written (for example an elegant defence of freedom of speech by Antony Grey); while others are not (here one might pick out a piece on sex education by Dorothy M. Dallas, whose prose style resembles but

is slightly inferior to that of Mary Whitehouse).

Nevertheless there are some good things. The most substantial contribution, taking up nearly one-third of the book, is an impressive review of the psychological literature by Edward C. Nelson. One of his findings as to the effect of pornography on behaviour should cause the direct action brigade to ponder:

... these studies suggest that individuals who deal with provocation and stress through some form of direct action rather than thought are more likely to be adversely affected by portrayals of sexual violence and to engage in actual assaultive behaviours such as rape.

The book is short on conclusions. Pornography (defined by one contributor as "books you read with one hand") does not have a single set of consequences. Even for those who use it frequently, it can form only a tiny proportion of the mass of their lifetime experience. The book does not succeed in answering the question implied by its title, but that failure should surprise no one.

FRANCIS BENNION

IRON BRITANNIA by Anthony Barnett. Alison and Busby, £2.95

About the only things on which there is any wide agreement in connection with the Falklands war are that the young men on both sides fought bravely and that the deaths and maiming are to be deeply deplored. On everything else, there is continuing controversy. The issue of the Franks report which says, in effect, that when two runaway cars are within five yards of each other a collision is inevitable, may be taken by some to exonerate the British Government from all blame and thus to put an end to any further discussion. Yet it is far more likely that the bland reassurances of the report will serve only to feed growing suspicion that the truth was other than that with which the public has been presented.

Anthony Barnett, in his short book, with the subtitle, "Why Parliament Waged its Falklands War", attempts to get behind the official hand-outs and the newspaper smoke-screens, to analyse the state of mind that was engendered, first in the House of Commons, and then in the entire country, by the swift succession of events at the end of March and the beginning of April last year.

Anthony Barnett exposes the weakness of the Government's feeble efforts to dress itself up as the champion of international law and order and the enemy of dictatorship. All that the Falklands war has really showed is that, when it comes to a crisis, the most civilised British Government is just as ready to resort to armed force and to claim that victory means the triumph of right as is any Junta of colonels in Latin America or elsewhere.

To any impartial observer it is patently clear that

one day the Falklands will be returned to Argentina or some solution of joint sovereignty will be worked out. More people will then ask exactly why all the blood was shed.

Anthony Barnett's book is sharp and sardonic, provocative and disturbing. Nobody emerges with much credit, not the Government, not the Opposition, certainly not the Press, from the obscenities of the *Sun* to the glib generalisations of *The Times* about the "evil" of the Argentinians. As "evil" is a word applied by *The Times* to any foreign power that dares to find itself in disagreement with this country, its use today — and to say this, it is not necessary to defend Argentina — provokes ribald mirth rather than any other emotion.

Yet the prevailing emotion is sadness. It is sad that armed force should still be so venerated. It is even sadder that the impression should be given that, if only we applied the Task Force method to other problems we could solve them all—labour problems, economic problems, the exchange rate, the trade unions, the cost of living, the social services and the nationalised industries. If only it were so easy. Unfortunately, hard thinking is still necessary and that thinking is likely to prove that the South Atlantic episode was fundamentally irrelevant as well as potentially dangerous.

T. F. EVANS

THEATRE

MESSIAH by Martin Sherman. Aldwych Theatre (transferred from Hampstead Theatre)

The Jewish community in early 17th century Poland, after appalling slaughter from marauding Cossacks, thought the Messiah was about to arrive. Like much religious obsession it was turning away from the suffering of harsh reality to the hope of a false delusion. After daunting hardship, Rachel the central character in Martin Sherman's new play, decides that salvation lies—if anywhere—within ourselves. But does it need such desperate experience to reach this conclusion?

At the beginning of the play she is lobbing sceptical questions at Jehovah. The conundrum of her ugliness, her kind but unattractive merchant husband, her mother lost in dumb memories of Cossack violence, are pushing her towards a womanly, down-to-earth realism. Stories of the imminent Messiah overtake the community. Her husband throws away all his wordly goods and jumps from a rooftop so that he can fly to Jerusalem. She follows her husband's nephew in a gruelling pilgrimage trek to Constantinople, more certain of the erotic power of his young body than the authenticity of the messiah. Unsurprisingly, the messiah fails to deliver the new world and she

loses the nephew with whom she has realised the loveliness of her body. At the end she is alone, accusing the deity, with whom she has been chatting all her life, of not existing. The effectiveness of the acceptance of human responsibility for the human situation is undercut by her repetition of "I don't know. I don't know" as she turns to walk away.

As with his former success, *Bent*, a study of the persecution of homosexuals in a Nazi concentration camp, Martin Sherman helps himself to a dramatic historical situation. He tosses in ideas about sex and religion, persecution and suffering. But, for me, the play never really came alive. The endless conversations with god are good-humoured, yet to resort to monologue with a nonexistent entity is indicative of Sherman's weakness at writing dialogue, let alone creating a sense of the interchange between a group of people. The play's best moments are points of disembodied intensity appearing between disjointed episodes which verge on banality.

Clive Swift turns the good-humoured, bluff merchant into an enjoyable character and Maureen Lipman is moving as she sobs with grief or shines with the beauty of her own humanness after making love. These are a tribute to the actors rather than the effectiveness of the play. At its worst, moments such as the old mother's supplication to the demon of night, struck me as portentous hoocy.

"Salvation is inside ourselves". The humanist message is rarely presented with passion, colour and resonance. I was therefore disappointed that this potentially exciting play failed, like the messiah's mission, to get off the ground.

JIM HERRICK

LETTERS

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The letters (February 1983) on my obituary for the word "humanist" mostly cancelled one another out. But I would just like to say that the capital "H" proposed by Roy Saich is not always audible, and even in print merely looks a bit old-fashioned.

Like Roy Saich, I have tried challenging self-styled Christian humanists to say whether they put their God first or human beings—but the more sophisticated among them tend to reply that in this life there is no relationship with God except through human relationships and that salvation depends on what one does in this world, not the next. And, irritating though it is that "our" word should be pinched by members of the opposition, we have to grant that their caring about the poor and the sick and the victims of war and violence, even supposedly for love of God or in hope of heaven, is better than the rich-man-in-his-castle sort of Christianity that plays down human suffering as merely temporal.

In some contexts, of course, where misunderstanding is unlikely to arise, I still use the word "humanist", without qualification. And even "secular humanist" or "non-religious humanist" is by no means foolproof, since neither gives any indication as to rationalist/mystic, collectivist/personalist, libertarian/authoritarian, or Right/Left-wing secular humanist. I am

thinking of ordering a large lapel button proclaiming "I AM A RATIONALIST, PERSONALIST, LIBERTARIAN, LEFT-WING, SECULAR HUMANIST ATHEIST". The necessarily small lettering might at least result in some Close Encounters of the Forth-right Kind!

Seriously, though, the problem would be solved if only we could bring the word "freethinker" back into popular usage and understanding, with our own distinctive connotation. But would even that be safe from religious theft? "It is because I think freely", one imagines the theologian insisting, "that I know there is a God".

You can't win against muddled thinking, because the muddled thinker never knows when he is beaten.

BARBARA SMOKER

VETERAN READER

It may be of interest that I have just completed 64 years as a reader of "The Freethinker", having purchased my first copy as a lad of 14. We had the paper regularly in our household, but I wished for my own copy.

Even during the last war I had a copy sent to me each week by my uncle, Harry Boulter, a well known freethinker. I believe that he would have been a stronger pillar of freethought movement had he been more moderate in his utterances, especially at public meetings that he held mainly on Clapham Common.

DAVID WRIGHT

A notice which was recently displayed at the parish church of Witney, in Oxfordshire, implored parishioners to "pray for the Church Council, which meets on Thursday. Copies of the accounts will be distributed at the meeting".

Freethinker Fund

The first list of donations for 1982 includes another extremely generous gift from a reader who prefers to remain anonymous. We thank him and others who have contributed to a very encouraging total of over £300.

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Total for the period 1 January until 2 February: £301.10 and \$2.

The Bishop and the Messiah

R. J. M. TOLHURST

The author of this article recalls the activities of Charles Webster Leadbeater, the renowned religious charlatan, in Australia 60 years ago.

I was a resident of Australia when Charles Webster Leadbeater was well known there. So James M. Alexander's review of *The Elder Brother*, in the January *Freethinker*, was of particular interest.

Bishop Leadbeater, as he was called, was a luminary in the Order of the Eastern Star, which, in 1923, set up its world headquarters in Sydney. Annie Besant and her young Messiah, Krishnamurti, were equally prominent in this bizarre enterprise.

Finance was no obstacle to their activities and the Order purchased some very choice land adjoining Sydney Harbour, in the suburb of Balmoral, erecting on it a substantial administration block surmounted by a large auditorium. The backdrop of its stage was a structure of Doris pillars and entablature. Here, in the open air, the white-robed devotees of the cult sat to watch for the "second coming of Christ".

who was supposed to emerge above the horizon of the Pacific Ocean, beyond Sydney Heads, opposite to which this structure was strategically erected. And the young Krishnamurti, with Bishop Leadbeater and Annie Besant, proclaimed their message from the stage.

The spectacle of the elect of the Order, dressed in glittering white robes, in the streets of Sydney was, perhaps, as flattering to the city as it was diverting. But with the unfortunate non-appearance of Jesus Christ, the euphoria gradually declined.

Then in 1929 a more mature Krishnamurti "did the dirty" on the Order of the Eastern Star by announcing that he was not the Messiah after all. It was said that this broke Besant's heart. She died, full of years, in 1933.

Meanwhile, the Order had moved on. After Bishop Leadbeater's death in 1934 interest in it disappeared, at least in Australia. But it left behind in Blight Street, Sydney, a sizeable building which housed the Aydar Hall premises (part of the Theosophical Society). The name adopted by the Sydney Theosophical Society was the Blavatsky Lodge. The

building also housed the Savoy Cinema which brought revenue to the Theosophists and enjoyment to the general public. It was demolished in the 1960s.

In Krishnamurti, Bishop Leadbeater and Annie Besant did indeed raise up a "prophet", though not of the kind they had intended. Krishnamurti became the guru of yet another Eastern philosophy. He returned to lecture in Sydney in 1939, and again in 1956 when he addressed audiences of middle-aged devotees who had set so much hope and faith in him as the young Messiah.

The great building and auditorium at Balmoral

where Bishop Leadbeater and his followers waited for the second coming of Jesus Christ was for many years a landmark in the area and a monument to human gullibility. Unsuccessful attempts were made to present concerts and plays. Eventually it was demolished and a block of flats now stand on the site. The residents enjoy that splendid view to Sydney Heads and beyond to that same Pacific horizon from whence the risen Lord was expected to appear.

This wierd episode in the history of Sydney is now a fading memory. Other cults have come and gone, though none as spectacular and affluent as Bishop Leadbeater's Order of the Eastern Star.

Children: to Have or Not to Have

ANNE MURRY

An increasing number of men and women are consciously deciding that they do not wish to become parents. They are often under considerable pressure to conform, and this has led to the establishment of Non-Parents groups in Britain and the United States.

There are many childless couples in the Western world; estimates for individual countries vary from around ten to 15 per cent. Some of these couples are childless by choice and some are not. The first group experience pressure to conform and have children; the second group are pitied if they are women and laughed at if they are men. Consequently the first group feel resentment and the second group, the wives of infertile couples, will indicate that infertility is "their" problem, whether it is or it is not. Both groups feel pressure to conform and have children, but infertile couples are not pressurised in quite the same way. Social norms not only require that people should have children, but that they should also want children.

An organisation, the National Association of the Childless and Childfree, was set up in Birmingham to provide a meeting place and forum for both groups of childless people. Eventually the two groups realised that the social pressures that faced them were different. The childless received sympathy, and a considerable amount of research effort has been and still is devoted to overcoming the various problems an infertile couple might face.

The reaction to those who were childless by choice was quite different. Most reactions were negative and, as Janet Chadwick pointed out in the recent symposium on Childlessness at Exeter University, the pressures to have children come from many sources. These include parents wanting to be grandparents, friends who already have children, the pervasive, glossy media image of clean, loving and lovable children, and finally the medical profession which controls those resources which relate to reproduc-

tion.

This led to the establishment of the British Organisation of Non-Parents in 1978. The name is similar to the American equivalent which is called the National Organisation of Non-Parents. Membership is comprised of men and women from different political, social and ethnic groups, of religious and non-religious beliefs, parents and non-parents, single people and married and unmarried couples. All share one belief: that wanting children should be a matter of free choice and not the result of social pressure; and that a decision to live a life without children should be an informed and respected option.

The membership changes, and most people join because they felt "personally persecuted" and also "tired of the assumption that they were about to produce". These phrases were used by former chairman, Margaret Lally, in an article in a group newsletter. She also found that her friends were puzzled that such an organisation was needed, but they had not realised the pressures already described. Margaret gives an explanation of the changing membership when she realised that she no longer needed BON to help her resist the pressure. She finds now that she has successfully resisted the pressure and is concerned that others get the same amount of support and help. In this way couples and individuals can work out the right choice for themselves.

Childless by Choice

People who make this decision to be childfree usually do so over a period of time. It is now quite common for couples, whatever their final intentions, to delay the birth of the first child for some time after marriage. These are the temporarily childless and they may finally opt to be parents or non-parents. These temporarily childless couples are increasing quite dramatically. In 1961, 19 per cent of married couples were without children after five years of marriage. In 1971, 29 per cent of couples were without children. These statistics apply to

EVENTS

married couples only and do not account for unmarried couples. It is possible therefore that these figures are on the conservative side for there is also an increase in cohabitation rates.

Couples tend to make decisions about parenting in stages, although the factors that they bring to bear will vary. The first stage is definite postponement. Usually the marker is something like passing exams or buying a home. The second stage is indefinite postponement. This is when there is no marker and the decision is seen as something to be considered next year or the year after and so on. For women, the biological clock keeps ticking away and there comes a time when they have to decide one way or the other, which means weighing up the pros and cons of having a child. For some people this is relatively easy, but for others, where the pros and cons are more evenly balanced, it is more difficult. The final stage is the commitment to the decision, which ever one it was.

The factors that people consider vary with their particular situations. For some women, commitment to a career is a factor of great importance and the long-term responsibility of a child would be totally incompatible with that commitment. Another major factor is the couple's relationship; this is dramatically and irrevocably altered by the birth of the first child. Some women foresee the conflict between maternal feelings and erotic appeal. The demands of the roles of mother and wife conflict culturally. Mothers are seen as saintly, the extreme example being the Virgin Mary, and wives are seen as sexy. This is rather an impossible combination and can result in a number of problems.

Occasionally altruistic factors such as concern over already existing unwanted children, population problems and in one case the use of animals in experiments in the infertility programmes have all been mentioned. Whether these factors are major or subsidiary depends on the individual or the couple. Some decisions are relatively easy, and a few are difficult or painful. But no decision is taken lightly.

Until the assumption that every woman wants and should have a child is challenged, and the idealisation of motherhood is reduced, then the work of such organisations as the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children will continue to be very necessary.

Peter Marsden, a religious education teacher, has been sent to prison for having sex with a 15-year-old pupil in his car. Marsden, who is separated from his wife, also made up a foursome with colleague **Christopher Davies** and another 15-year-old pupil. Davies was also sentenced to imprisonment at **Bradford Crown Court**. The Recorder directed that neither the girls nor the school should be identified.

Belfast Humanist Group. York Hotel, Botanic Avenue, Belfast. Meetings on the second Tuesday of the month at 8 p.m.

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group. Queen's Head, Queen's Road (entrance in Junction Road, opposite Brighton Station). Saturday, 19 March, 8 pm. Silver Jubilee Celebration. Licensed Bar, Buffet, Admission free. Guest speaker: Jim Herrick. Sunday, 10 April, 5 pm for 5.30 pm. Keith Gimson: Moral Codes and Standards—are There any Absolutes?

Gay Humanist Group. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Meetings on the second Friday of the month at 7.30 pm.

Glasgow Humanist Society. Information regarding meetings and other activities is obtainable from Norman Macdonald, 339 Kilmarnock Road, Glasgow, G43, telephone 041 632 9511.

Harrow Humanist Society. The Library, Gayton Road, Harrow-on-the-Hill. Wednesday, 13 April, 8 pm. Annual General Meeting followed by debate on Nuclear Disarmament.

Humanist Holidays. Easter, 31 March until 7 April, at a Clifton Downs (Bristol area) hotel. Details of this and other holidays from Mrs Betty Beer, 58 Weir Road, London SW12, telephone 01-673 6234.

Scottish Humanist Council. Mitchell Library, Glasgow. Saturday, 21 May, 10 am until 5 pm. Annual Conference. Details from Robin Wood, 37 Inchmurrin Drive, Kilmarnock, telephone 0563 26710.

Lewisham Humanist Group. Unitarian Meeting House, 41 Bromley Road, London SE6. Thursday, 31 March, 7.45 pm. Nicolas Walter, Humanism With Feeling.

Warwickshire Humanist Group. Details of activities obtainable from Roy Saich, 34 Spring Lane, Kenilworth, telephone Kenilworth 58450.

Worthing Humanist Group. Trades Club, Broadwater Road, Worthing. Sunday, 27 March, 5.30 pm. Nicolas Walter: George Eliot: From Deity to Duty.

Sex Education—Forbidden Territory!

jeered at by other children.

The difficulty of finding enough teachers to teach sex education is already great enough: it requires not only knowledge and sensitivity but experience founded on a love that accepts men and women as equal partners in the creation of healthy and unneurotic children. Children absorb from their teachers not only the formal knowledge being presented at a conscious level by those teachers, but the unspoken attitudes and feelings about the subject. If Dr Rhodes Boyson is concerned to get the subject of sex education taught only by the best teachers, then many might share his concern. Somehow this is not the message I get from his words.

The Sect That Breaks Up Families Loses Appeal For New Trial

The Rev Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church in Britain has lost its battle against the *Daily Mail* which had accused the sect of brainwashing converts and breaking up families. Three law lords turned down the Moonies' appeal for a re-hearing of their libel action against the newspaper.

The appeal was heard by Lord Justice Lawton, Lord Justice Dunn and Lord Justice Griffith. They said that the trial judge's summing up was fair and that there had been no miscarriage of justice. There were no grounds for ordering a re-trial and leave to appeal to the House of Lords was refused.

Denis Orme, former head of the British Moonies, was ordered to pay costs of the case which would be over £500,000. The sum of £350,000 had been paid into court as security for the *Daily Mail's* costs for previous hearings.

A spokesman for Family Action Information and Advice (FAIR) commented: "The media must be heaving a collective sigh of relief that they can now begin to print cult reports again without alarming their legal advisers. There is a general feeling of

gratitude to the *Daily Mail* for having stood firm and borne the brunt of this important legal battle.

"The next stage is the question of charitable status and we hope that in 1983 the Government will grasp this nettle firmly".

Now that the Moonies have lost the battle against the *Daily Mail* their charity status must be in serious jeopardy. But will the Government really "grasp the nettle" of charity law with all its injustices and anomalies? The churches and religious sects—many of them as harmful as the Moonies—enjoy considerable benefits under present charity law.

The Goodman Report of 1967 made some modest proposals for reform which have so far been ignored by the Government.

CHRISTIAN PROTEST

Freethinkers are not the only critics of a resident astrologer appearing in BBC Television's *Breakfast Time*. Peter Horrobin, writing in the evangelical Christian Weekly Newspapers, fulminates against the inclusion of star-gazer Russell Grant with the early morning news and weather reports.

Mr Horrobin finds it almost unbelievable that the BBC could have been seduced into permitting such a thing. "God hasn't even got a back seat", he laments.

The very idea of an alternative brand of superstition to Christianity getting an airing gets up evangelical nostrils. They whine and fuss as though Christianity is treated as a poor relation in broadcasting and television studios. In fact the national, regional and local stations churn out hundreds of hours of Christian propaganda every week. God seduced Auntie on the back seat a long time ago.

Mr Horrobin requests Christians to send "carefully worded" letters of protest to the BBC about the *Breakfast Time* astrologer. We hope that *Freethinker* readers will do so too, and at the same time urge that the astrology act is not replaced by yet another "God slot". Letters should be sent to the Producer, *Breakfast Time*, BBC Television Centre, Wood Lane, London W12.

There were red faces in the diocese of Chicago when it was discovered that a sermon on the theme, "Freedom From Futility" had been printed in a church bulletin as "Freedom From Fertility". To make matters worse, the sermon was followed by the hymn, "O Love That Wilt not let me go".

Mrs Thatcher Challenged

Metropolitan Police Commissioner, David Webb condemns police use of their "discriminatory" powers. And when police raid such establishments, "it is totally unnecessary for hundreds of thousands of items to be impounded. . . Such police practices were strongly condemned by Judge Cassel in Knightsbridge Crown Court on 5 March 1981 in a case (*R v Browlie*) under the Obscene Publications Acts concerning 8 mm films. He said 'To repeatedly raid and take away similar films was a decision which, in fact, is an act of censorship. It is an attempt to put a man out of business and I deplore it'. Judge Cassel's sharp rebuke to the police has obviously gone unheeded by your officers involved in the operations of the first week of February".

Mr Webb also condemned Scotland Yard's stage-managed Press conference and general handling of publicity over these raids "which could gravely prejudice the right to a fair trial of any defendant who may subsequently be charged".

NCROPA has welcomed the initiative of Sir Michael Havers, the Attorney-General, who has issued new guidelines to chief officers of police and which are specifically aimed at reducing unnecessary prosecutions, particularly of those concerning so-called "obscene" publications. In no other area of law are there so many unnecessary prosecutions, it declares.