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FUNDAMENTALIST SECTS POACH MEMBERS FROM "HISTORIC CHURCHES"

Concern of the mainstream churches over the upsurge of religious fanaticism known as "charismatic renewal" is reflected in the annual report of the Methodist Church's Home Mission Division. What began as a wave of emotional Jesusism has become a threat to the "historic churches" whose members are being poached by the "house church movement", described in the report as "a sect on the way to becoming a denomination".

The Rev. William R. Davis, Principal of Cliff College training centre, claims that some extremists argue the house church movement is the "one true church". History is littered with such groups as the Exclusive Brethren and other fundamentalist sects which have made similar claims. The new movement is characterised by intolerance, authoritarianism and fostering of emotional dependence among its adherents who must adopt an attitude of "uncritical, unquestioning obedience".

Dr Davis says that "submission" is the key word in the house church movement. He writes: "Apostles submit to each other, elders and pastors submit to apostles, deacons and house group leaders submit to elders and pastors, ordinary members submit to their house group leaders. . .

"Nowhere in Scripture is a members told how much he must give . . . and nowhere in Scripture has a member to ask permission of others to change house or job or to marry, but in some areas of the House Church this very legalistic practice is certainly the case".

The Rev Jeffrey Harris, divisional secretary, asserts that "supreme arrogance" is a disturbing element in the house church movement. But he is doubtful if the movement will last for "more than a generation or so".

Of course there is nothing new in all this. The

Christian Church itself started as a secretive minority movement, but unfortunately it lasted for "more than a generation or so". In the course of its sordid history it has spawned a vast number of sects and groups which have exercised a disastrous influence on individuals and on society.

Since the house church movement and other maverick groups emerged in Britain there have been many cases of broken families, mental breakdown and suicide among their dupes. Some have drifted into non-Christian sects like the Moonies and the Children of God.

Small groups tend to attract the unstable and emotionally insecure. The groups are usually dominated by a few strong-minded, authoritarian individuals. Their beliefs are entirely "Jesus-centred" and their reading is confined to the bible and other religious works. They are often discouraged or even forbidden to communicate with non-members.

Some groups dabble in exorcism, occasionally with disastrous results. Probably the most bizarre case occurred in 1975 when a Yorkshire man, Michael Taylor, murdered his wife in a most horrific manner. They both belonged to a Christian fellowship group. It was stated in court that a member of the group who "spoke in tongues" and claimed to be possessed by the holy spirit played a part in bringing about Taylor's derangement.

• David Beech, a member of the Exclusive Brethren, left his wife after he had been a smoker for many years. They and their three children were members of the sect which has a strict no-smoking rule. Mrs Beech told the Stockport coroner that her husband said he "wanted to be alone with his God". She did not visit him in hospital last year when he took an overdose of tablets. His decapitated body was found on a railway line. Verdict: suicide.

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NEWS

IRISH SCHOOLS: A BATTLE AGAINST THE BISHOPS

Thirty-five years ago Dr Noel Browne, an Irish Government Minister of the time, was the central figure in a fierce controversy the outcome of which reflected no credit on either the Roman Catholic Church or his political colleagues. As Health Minister in the Costello Government, he introduced the Mother and Child Bill, a modest measure to provide free care for mothers and children under 16. The Church was horrified. The Archbishop of Dublin imperiously summoned the Prime Minister to his presence and denounced the Bill as being "contrary to Catholic morals". Dr Browne was vilified by the church and its pressure groups, deserted by his colleagues and forced to resign.

Noel Browne's name will always be an honoured one in the annals of the struggle to smash the power of Ireland's ultra-conservative, dictatorial and sex-obsessed priesthood. So it was gratifying to see it in the Book section of Dublin's *Sunday Tribune* last month, as reviewer of E. Brian Titley's *Church, State, and the Control of Schooling in Ireland, 1900-1944*.

This work examines in detail the harmful influence of the Roman Catholic Church on Irish education. The author is justifiably scathing about the politicians' spineless acquiescence that has enabled the bishops to maintain their grip on the country's education system. For instance, Sean T. O'Kelly, a prominent Republican politician, insisted on the rejection of an amendment to the Democratic Programme that "the State would be responsible for providing food, clothing, shelter and education" for children. Such a provision would have improved immeasurably the health and lives of Ireland's young, the majority of them from large families. But, like Dr Browne's enlightened Bill, the proposal was "contrary to the teaching of the Church".

Noel Browne quotes several significant passages from Titley's book. The Roman Catholic Church succeeded in establishing the insolent misconception that "the only satisfactory system of education in Ireland is one where Catholic children are taught in Catholic schools, by Catholic teachers, under clerical control".

The Dale Stephens report on Catholic schools recommended that teachers should have "agreed qualifications and registration, security of employment, salary scales and pension rights". The Church retorted that "clerical garb was a sufficient credential for those who were to instruct the young". Instruction, not education, was the general rule in schools where sadists in clerical garb conducted a reign of

S AND NOTES

terror against generations of Irish children.

The book's author, Dr Browne writes, "reminds us how the Church insisted on that most damaging partition of all, when they rejected inter-denominational education with religious pluralism". It may be added that segregation along religious lines of children during their most formative years is one of the very few questions on which the Catholic and Protestant churches in Ireland have always agreed.

The Church's much-trumpeted concern for the young is utterly phoney, and her contempt for ordinary people is illustrated in a statement by the chairman (a priest, of course) of the Catholic Headmasters' Association: "The majority of people must be engaged on less skilled work, over-education totally unfits them, if only making them discontented".

This attitude helps to explain why the Catholic Church in Ireland concentrates on the education of the middle classes. E. Brian Titley states that the primary function of secondary schools is training recruits for the clerical ranks. Dr Browne describes them as "missionary mercenaries with the Papal Army, in defence of the Vatican's tottering empire in the Third World and elsewhere".

In Ireland itself, Titley writes, the Church has created and preserved a xenophobic peasant society in which religious values are rarely questioned".

Well, they are being questioned now, and not only by people of Noel Browne's and E. Brian Titley's intellectual calibre.

ASKING FOR MORE

The Rev Geoffrey Good, Vicar of Thornes, Wakefield, has come up with a bright idea that should put him in the running for the Bloody Cheek of the Year Award. He has called for the reintroduction of a church tax to boost the Church of England's income. Otherwise, he laments, many parish churches will be unable to function.

According to Mr Good, the non-Church man in the street benefits as follows: "His parish priest is available in the middle of the night if he wants him; the church is there for his weddings, his funerals, his baptisms and his children's school carol service".

Mr Good does not indicate how many times the non-Church man in the street is likely, for whatever reason, to send for his parish priest in the middle of the night. True, the church is available (at a price) for weddings, although the majority of marriages now take place at a registry office. Not many complaints are heard as officiating clergy pocket their fees when on duty at the local crematorium. The unfortunate infant does not choose to be sprinkled

by the parish priest. And conducting an occasional school carol service may be considered part of the privilege accorded Christianity under the religious clauses of the 1944 Education Act.

It is estimated that if a tax of a penny in the pound were levied — the Vicar of Thornes would graciously allow atheists and non-Anglicans to opt out of the scheme — it would raise about £100,000 a year for the Church. This is, of course, mere chicken-feed when compared to the Church of England's enormous wealth. Last year the Church Commissioners undertook a survey which revealed that the C of E's national assets amount to £1.4 billion. The value of investments, gifts and collections in parishes around Britain up to December 1982 amounted to £136,031,000.

Many "poor" parishes may be feeling the inflationary pinch, as are voluntary organisations which do not enjoy the benefit of charity status. No doubt some vicars, like other people, find it difficult to make ends meet. The established Church has never been over-generous to its lesser clergy, even after it was compelled in the 19th century to end their gross exploitation by deans and bishops. But that is no reason why religiously indifferent taxpayers should be called upon to subsidise them now.

By all means let Mr Good and other gentlemen of the cloth ask for more — from the Church Commissioners.

The vicar of St Andrew's, Portslade, Sussex, has scrapped the 8 am holy communion service on Sundays because the congregation had dwindled to one. He says that churches in the area are poorly attended.

LUIS PALAU, CHRISTIAN TERRORIST

With Billy Graham getting a bit long in the tooth and, worse still, less aggressively conservative than of yore, investors in the international Jesus industry have been casting around for a suitable successor. And they seem to have found one in Luis Palau, the Argentinian evangelist. His appearance is clean-cut, his Christianity crudely fundamentalist and his politics far Right.

Palau, who has been conducting a £1 million Mission to London, was seen in a recent BBC 1 *Everyman* programme. Interviewed by Peter France, he responded to questions with the glib assurance of one who has a hot line to the Almighty. But Palau's forthright affirmation that "someone who is in all respects a good person but has not found a Christian faith is going to hell", must have discomfited and embarrassed many viewers. For this is one

of the "biblical truths" that most British Christians would prefer to forget.

The doctrine of hell and eternal punishment, proclaimed over the centuries in millions of sermons, books and pamphlets, is about the vilest product of the human imagination. It is a telling example of how Christian teachings have warped, terrorised and brutalised millions.

Attempts have been made by more sensitive and humane Christians to explain away the doctrine of bliss or blisters. But they are always brought down with a bump by fundamentalists such as Luis Palau—like Calvin, Wesley and Spurgeon before him—who believe implicitly that the bible is the inerrant word of God.

We are often accused of being negative—unable to put anything in the place of religious belief. But atheists have rendered a very positive service to humanity by extinguishing the fires of hell. Luis Palau seems determined to stoke them up again.

CHARITY LAW

The ways of the Charity Commissioners, like those of the deity on whose agencies they look favourably, are mysterious indeed.

For instance, they stipulate in their guidelines that "charities, whether they operate in this country or overseas, must avoid . . . seeking to eliminate social, economic, political or other injustice". Another of their rules is that "political propaganda in the guise of education is not charitable" — to which they might have added "unless it seeks to promote anti-labour, pro-Right, political witch-hunting and employers' interests".

That uncharitable thought was prompted by reading a booklet entitled *Tracts Beyond the Times*. Charles Elwell's muddle of smears, inaccuracies and innuendo has been published by the Social Affairs Unit which describes itself as "an independent education and research body". Actually it is an offshoot of the Institute of Economic Affairs and the author of *Tracts Beyond the Times* displays the independence and political detachment to be expected from someone who has worked at the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Defence.

There are 69 journals on Mr Elwell's black (or should it be red) list. They range from *Anti-Apartheid News* to the *Quarterly Bulletin* of the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers. The latter organisation is affiliated to the International Association of Democratic Lawyers "which according to the Permanent Committee on Intelligence of the US House of Representatives is an International Soviet Front".

Right-wing critics of *The Freethinker* will be flabbergasted to learn that it is not included in Mr Elwell's "Brief Guide to the Communist or Marxist Press".

BISHOP'S MOVE TO END WEDDING DISPUTE

Stephen Rigby, a paralysed ex-soldier, and his fiancée, Ilona Eradhaun, a nurse, have announced that they will marry in Derby registry office next month after a Roman Catholic priest refused to perform the ceremony.

Father Edward Walker, of St Hugh's RC Church, Nottingham, said: "This may be a very loving union between this couple, but it cannot be a marriage within the terms of the Church if it cannot be consummated. I do not see that we could overlook the impotence on humanitarian grounds".

Jack Ashley, Labour MP for Stoke South, described Father Walker's ruling as "unfair and discriminatory". But Barbara Smoker, President of the National Secular Society, said that while the refusal of a Church wedding is inhumane, it is hardly fair to blame the individual priest.

"It is the whole authoritarian teaching of the Catholic Church that is to blame—taking upon itself the right to dictate to its members in their personal lives.

"Its obsession with sexuality and procreation results in the Church overlooking the fact that marriage is also for companionship and support, and that many marriages are mainly or even solely for non-sexual purposes.

"When the Church, on biblical authority, ruled out all divorce, it was forced to recognise the annulment of unconsummated marriages. It follows that marriages which cannot possibly be consummated could, in theory, be solemnised and then immediately annulled. Since this would make a mockery of the sacrament, such marriages cannot be allowed.

"The ruling ought, in all logic, to apply in every known case of impotence, infertility and post-menopausal brides".

The Bishop of Nottingham reversed Father Walker's ruling. It was reported that he was influenced by a medical report which indicated that Mr Rigby could father a child. It is more likely that the bishop was influenced by the adverse publicity.

An object claimed by its devotees to be the foreskin of Jesus has disappeared from the Italian village of Calcata, north of Rome. The inhabitants are understandably upset by the loss of such a treasure, but the Church authorities do not share the villagers' grief. In fact the Holy Prepuce, as it was known, has long been a source of embarrassment to the Vatican. Like all holy relics, the foreskin of the infant Jesus multiplied in number over the centuries. So many churches claimed to have one that he must have had the operation performed on all his fingers and toes in addition to the usual part of his anatomy.

Jesus or Britannia?

T. F. EVANS

Increasing numbers of Christians are questioning the role of the Church as a department of State. The Rev David Prior, Vicar of St Aldate's, Oxford, recently published his contribution to the debate that is going on at all levels of church life. T. F. Evans considers some of the issues raised in "Jesus or Britannia: the Christian Dilemma Over Patriotism", Grove Books, Bramcote, Nottingham, 75p.

A central theme and indeed possibly the most important thing that is being said in this odd little publication is stated in the words of the Bishop of Salisbury and quoted in the *Guardian* of 16 October 1982: "I firmly believe that the Christian attitude to war since the fourth century—when the Church began to accommodate its doctrine to the political needs of the rulers it had converted—has done more to discredit the Gospels than any other single thing".

The author tells us in the foreword to his booklet that it "is intended to provoke thinking, discussion and action in local churches on the neglected subject of patriotism". He says this is "an emotive and divisive subject" but that "recent events in, and the United Kingdom's attitude to the Falkland Islands have forced patriotism back on the agenda". Because widespread concern about the prospect of nuclear war and the issues of disarmament should compel Christians to look closely at "the legitimacy of patriotism", the author hopes that the booklet, which has "a pastoral aim", will be discussed in churches and by home groups of Christians. Even those who are not adherents of any particular church or feel themselves totally outside the Christian community, may think it is a small step in the right direction to suggest that these matters at least be thought about.

The booklet is divided into four sections. The titles of the first three are: "The Call for Patriotism", "Jesus and Patriotism" and "The Convictions of the Early Church". Unless the reader happens to be a close and well-informed student of Church history, there is not much to provoke argument in these pages. There are quotations in the first chapter from, among others, Dr Johnson, Fred Catherwood, George Orwell, Che Guevara and Sir Cecil Arthur Spring-Rice, Foreign Office secretary, ambassador and hymn-writer, known for ever for his words in *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, no 579:

I vow to thee, my country, all earthly things above,
Entire and whole and perfect, the service of my love:
The love that asks no questions, the love that stands
the test,
That lays upon the altar the dearest and the best;
The love that never falters, the love that pays the

price,

The love that makes undaunted the final sacrifice.

The conclusion reached by the author after reflecting on the thought of such authorities is that "it is vital to discover a biblical approach to such a developing situation, and to work it through in each local church". By the "developing situation" is meant especially the way in which, as Bernard Crick, the biographer of Orwell, put it: "Patriotism does strange things to a fellow". The second and third chapters seek to establish, by a fairly simple process of reasoning, that Jesus sought to range "the kingdom of God, which he embodied, against all earthly kingdoms" and to show that an interpretation of the New Testament points in the direction of dismantling the self-conscious nationhood of the Jews. (The present day attitude of the Jews to their nationhood is not discussed.)

Political Expedience and "Christian Principles"

In the final chapter, with the title, "Seek first the Kingdom of God", the author tries to look at the dilemma of Christians at present torn between adherence to their faith and allegiance to their country. He praises Kenneth Kaunda, the president of Zambia, "a convinced Christian" for the value which he places on prayer when there is conflict between his political responsibilities and his duties as a Christian. Surprisingly and perhaps enigmatically, David Prior declares: "One of the most encouraging facets of the Falklands saga emerged with the issues raised before, during, and after, the service of thanksgiving and remembrance in St Paul's Cathedral. For the first time in many years, the leaders of the churches publicly confronted those in government on specifically Christian principles".

It is hard to shatter another man's illusions, especially when they are based, if not on fact, at least on noble and worthy aspirations. Yet, if there was such a confrontation, it was not a really serious one. And while there was no doubt a certain amount of heart-searching among some clerics and lay members of the churches, the displeasure shown by the Prime Minister and some of her colleagues that such a trivial thing as religion should presume to interfere with patriotism was much more striking and longer-lasting.

David Prior's conclusion—and because he is clearly a modest man he would probably not wish to invest his findings with any greater significance than they can claim in their own right—is that Christians throughout the world are, or should be, united in prayer. It is this which makes, or could, or should make Christians everywhere into "a living

community of love, hope and faith", and only such a living community "can challenge the false god of nationalism and the subtle allure of patriotism". Those of us who are not within a million miles of sharing his faith in the power of prayer may nevertheless share his aspirations, while remaining unable, alas, to take too seriously his somewhat tentative suggestions of a remedy.

The Great Dilemma

The trouble is that Christians do not really believe what they say. (They probably differ very little from non-Christians in this respect, but that is another subject.) Thus it is hard to see how the Queen of England can be at the same time Head of the State (including the so-called defence forces) and the Head of the Church, unless one recalls that the whole unconvincing compromise had its origin in the unbridled sexual desires of one of her distant forebears, King Henry VIII. (It must be unusual for a writer or a reader of *The Freethinker* to say a good word for the Catholic Church. But there is at least a certain sense in the idea that, if all men are children of the same father, it is logical for that father, who is, of course, at another address, to have a single representative on earth.) Thus, to return to the hymn already quoted, the second verse is as follows:

And there's another country, I've heard of long ago,
Most dear to them that love her, most great to them
that know;
We may not count her armies, we may not see her
King;
Her fortress is a faithful heart, her pride is suffering;
And soul by soul and silently her shining bounds
increase,
And her ways are ways of gentleness and all her
paths are peace.

It must be impossible for anyone to take both verses seriously at the same time. This is the dilemma over patriotism. Not all the bravery of young men in the Falklands or elsewhere can justify the fight between Christian Argentines and Christian British—and look to Ireland for another example. As the horrors of nuclear war become nearer and nearer, and preparations for civilian defence against the holocaust make nonsense of our so-called defence spending on Cruise missiles and similar weapons, many of us, Christians and non-Christians, may feel that the road to salvation must lead to the protest lines at Greenham Common, rather than to St Paul's Cathedral or 10 Downing Street.

The Catholic Church of Christ our Peace is being built at a NATO base in Sicily where 112 Cruise missiles will be deployed later this year. Bishop Rizzo, who laid the foundation stone, said: "We are very happy that Americans professing our faith can have a place of worship inside the missile base".

Freethinker Fund

Every month a list of contributors is published and during 1983 a grand total of £1,635.56 and \$27.10 was donated to the Fund. Voluntary organisations and journals like *The Freethinker* have been seriously affected by increasing costs and look to their supporters to meet the inevitable deficit between income and expenditure. Warm appreciation is expressed to all readers who have rallied around during the past year. The final list for 1983 is given below.

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Total for the period 6 December until 31 December: £57.85.

The Melbourne, Australia, offices of a charity have been closed and the 21 members of staff sacked. Let's be Aware of the Disabled was the trade name of the Universal Life Church Ltd whose employees were paid up to 40 per cent of the money they collected. A former employee said that they spent some of the money on drink and prostitutes. Another Australian charity, Drugline, run by the Rev Douglas Spencer of the Church of the Covenant, has been trying to recruit high school pupils as street collectors. A State-funded organisation, Jobwatch, has called on the Minister for Education has warned schools about this which dabbles in witchcraft and the occult.

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Ernst Haeckel, 1834-1919

H. J. BLACKHAM

Ernst Haeckel, who was born 150 years ago this month, is best known for his "Riddle of the Universe". He wrote about 40 other works and was honoured by many scientific bodies. His 80th birthday was marked by a symposium arranged by over a hundred leading European scientists and educationists. H. J. Blackham pays tribute to a man who contributed "a new stream to the radical freethought movement".

It was in the last year of the nineteenth century that Haeckel published his *Riddle of the Universe*, which Joseph McCabe translated, as the third volume in The Thinker's Library in 1929. The first two on the list had been H. G. Wells' *First and Last Things* and Herbert Spencer's *Education: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical*. In his Preface to his book, Haeckel said: "I am wholly a child of the nineteenth century, and with its close I draw the line under my life's work". The book was the mature fruit of a lifetime of research and study and thought, in order to learn what science meant for an understanding of the world that had produced mankind. The vast progress of empirical knowledge in the "century of science", he said, had not been accompanied by a corresponding advance in theoretical interpretation. His venture into philosophy in this book was a broadside against dualism, jettisoning all the questions which had preoccupied philosophers since the sixth century BC. Standing on the high ground of modern empirical natural science, he looked back to the pre-Socratics, and invoked their names. He thought of the universe as continuously evolving transformation processes, physical and organic. Such processes were governed by one supreme law, which he called "The Law of Substance", a union of the two laws of conservation of matter and of energy, something, following Einstein, known in a more sophisticated form as the law of conservation of mass-energy. This law he took as the underlying constant that regulated and contained all the varieties of phenomena and variations of events, the sufficient determination and explanation of all things, which at the same time shattered the "three central dogmas of the dualistic philosophy—the personality of God, the immortality of the soul, and the freedom of the will". "The great abstract law of mechanical causality . . . rules the entire universe, as it does the mind of man". This potentially contains all the explanation we can ever get of all the world-enigmas that have puzzled the human mind.

Although Haeckel's "monism" was manifestly a thoroughgoing materialism, and the term was adopted to exclude recognition of anything that was not a material organisation, he insisted on a

distinction between "monism" and what he calls "theoretical materialism". This was to avoid "reductionism". He saw his "Monism" as a connecting link between religion and science", and that was his purpose in founding the Deutsche Monistenbund in 1906 in Munich. An international congress was held in 1912. Everything is invested with life in different degrees, and God is identified with the world in the kind of impassioned science of a Spinoza, whose "unequivocal monism" and spiritual fervour made him Haeckel's prophet, along with Goethe. Ordinary people could not raise themselves to this level of insight and intensity, and "our monistic religion" was to aid in this elevation. (Identification of God with the world was, anyhow, an improvement on the current concept of God, which he called "the paradoxical picture of a 'gaseous vertebrate'"—at least, a material entity, all the same.)

Ernst Haeckel was professor of zoology in the University of Jena. He followed Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859) with his own *General Morphology* (1866), and anticipated *The Descent of Man* (1871) with his *The Natural History of Creation* in 1868, followed in 1874 by *Anthropogeny*. The more "religious" side of his thinking appeared in *Lebenswundern* (Life's Marvels), published in 1904.

In the first chapter of *The Riddle of the Universe*, after referring to the spectacular achievements of science, Haeckel turned to a thorough indictment of contemporary society in its justice, its politics, and its education. He put this down to ignorance and indolence, a neglect of scientific knowledge, in the light of which such beliefs and practices could not exist, and should not continue. This kind of simple-minded "scientism" was the weakness of his strength. He was not of course an original thinker. He was an honest and bold and independent thinker. No doubt he influenced a great many of a younger generation, and helped them to find their way. His achievement was to contribute a new stream to the radical freethought movement, which had also other sources.

That is a sufficient reason to remember Haeckel 150 years after his birth. And the coincidence is a good reason to end with the final sentence of his own book: "Germany's greatest thinker and poet, whose 150th anniversary will soon be upon us—Wolfgang Goethe—gave this 'philosophy of unity' a perfect poetic expression, at the very beginning, in his immortal poems, *Faust*, *Prometheus*, and *God and the World*.

*By eternal laws
Of iron ruled,
Must all fulfil
The cycle of
Their destiny".*

Chinese Population Puzzle

GOVIND N. DEODHEKAR

The BBC presented recently a television documentary on China's population crisis and the Government's proposals to solve the problem. Its policy poses a moral dilemma for libertarians who put individual rights above all other considerations.

With the fall of Nanking in 1949 the Chinese civil war ended with the Communists in control of mainland China. The country's population was then 500 million. By 1979 it had reached 1,000 million, the result, presumably, of control over disease, floods and other natural disasters, together with increased food production. Population projections show that if every Chinese couple had only two children to replace them, the population would increase to 1,400 million by the year 2000. Incredibly, it would reach 1,200 million even if each couple had only one child. But one child per couple would at least reverse the trend, although it would take 100 years to halve the present population to 500 million. The difference between the two-child and one-child projection is 200 million—the present population of the United States.

In response to these disastrous statistics the Chinese Communists have undertaken the formidable task of pursuing a one-child policy. Their efforts are directed particularly at the urban population which is highly organised in factories and neighbourhoods. Couples are not allowed to marry before the age of 24 and trying for a child is on a quota basis. Contraception by intra-uterine devices is preferred to the Pill. Failure of an IUD is not regarded as the fault of the couple. But a pregnancy resulting despite the Pill is regarded as carelessness on their part and results in loss of bonus.

The one-child couple in China receives an extra £20 a year. The single child has priority in education and jobs over the child with siblings. After the first child is born, vigil is kept over the mothers by grannies who are organised on a neighbourhood basis and go around each day reminding young women of their duty to keep to the one-child quota. If for any reason a second pregnancy occurs, great pressure is brought on the woman to persuade her to undergo an abortion. If she refuses, and a second child is born, the couple must return the benefits received and accept a five per cent wage-cut.

During the great debate on abortion law reform in the West, radical or libertarian opinion has tended to accept the opposition view that abortion because of contraception failure is unethical. This is a Eurocentric view of morality. There are ample grounds on which societies in China, India or Japan should regard abortion as a logical and ethical step when

contraception has failed.

The Chinese Communists accept that in the countryside they may have to adopt a flexible attitude over the second child. This is one reason why they are so anxious that their population policy should be successful in the urban areas. They realise that a two-child policy would be much easier for people to accept. But they are endeavouring to avoid the disaster of 1,400 million and have to take the 1,200 million figure in their stride if there is to be a reversal of the trend to population expansion. Their resolve is admirable, although many Western libertarians will feel a strong aversion to the constant vigilance and nagging of the individual.

And yet several questions remain. Are the projections to the year 2000 reliable? How long may it be before legitimate exhortation becomes undue pressure, coercion and finally oppression? How can such a drastic policy be pursued persuasively for a hundred years? Could it lead to resistance, sabotage and rebellion? Rather than abort a child in the seventh month of pregnancy, would it not be better to accept the lesser evil of selectively aborting a certain proportion of female foetuses?

The pros and cons of a policy of deliberately reducing the number of females in any society must be debated calmly and rationally. Most importantly, we must consider the feminist objection that such a policy arises from hatred of women and will further promote such hatred. This fear is unfounded as will be seen from the parallel example of contraception.

The desire to control the number of children is not, obviously, based on hatred of them. On the contrary, the smaller number of children—desired children—has led to greater love, care and protection for them. Similarly the desire to decrease the number of women would not be based on any intrinsic hatred of women but on the necessity to reduce the population, which, for obvious biological reasons, is directly dependent on the number of women. Far from promoting hatred, the decreasing number of women must lead to cherishing and valuing them all the more.

Even in a Communist society, such as China, women leave the family to join their husbands, while the responsibility of looking after parents usually falls on the male children. This results in greater value being put on a male child, an emphasis which will slowly be corrected as society or the State organises the welfare of the old. So the preference for a boy will linger on for a very long time.

Under a one-child policy it would be a matter of luck which family had a male or a female child. The strong desire for a male child, if the first one

is a girl, would be the motivation behind second and third pregnancies. Since the procreation of the first child in China is on a quota basis, strange though that may sound, there is no reason why male or female births should not be on a quota basis also. Even if quotas were drawn by lot, those who "drew" a girl might feel hard done by. But in the long term people can be educated to understand the absurdity of regarding a girl child as a disaster. This will be an extremely difficult task, but it is one that cannot be avoided. Cases of female infanticide have been reported, although no mention of this was made in the recent BBC television programme.

It is difficult to see how the Chinese Communists can succeed in their 100-year one-child programme unless they supplement it with a policy of reducing the number of females by selective abortion. Such a policy may also have to be adopted by countries like India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Egypt, where measures to check the population

explosion have not been too successful.

This policy would appear to be unnecessary in the West—at present. But western countries may fail to maintain zero population growth. Increasing automation may lead to heavy and permanent unemployment. Much of this could be absorbed by reducing the working week. However, if people do not learn to use their leisure time constructively, preferring destruction, violence and anti-social behaviour, we may well reach a stage where the population will have to be reduced deliberately. This could be done through fewer male and female births in equal proportions, without discrimination. But in the last analysis, it is the number of women that will decide the size of the population.

Perhaps it is time we got one thing clear in our minds. Reducing the number of children, or women, or men, does not mean that we hate them. On the contrary, we might love them all the more because there are fewer of them.

Christian Nasties in God's Own Country

One of the more unpleasant aspects of the American way of life is the existence of neo-fascist movements inspired by religious fundamentalism. In the 1930s there were many such organisations. Gerald Winrod's ultra-fundamentalist Defenders of the Christian Faith imagined that there was a Jewish-Jesuit-Communist conspiracy to destroy Protestantism, while the Silver Shirts were led by another Protestant fundamentalist, William Pelley. Pelley called his scheme for a totalitarian society the Christian Commonwealth.

A Roman Catholic, Father Charles Coughlin, organised the National Union for Social Justice which reprinted in its paper that notorious forgery, *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*. In one of his numerous radio broadcasts, Coughlin stated that "Germany's war is a war for Christianity".

Today a host of groups such as the Church League of America, the Christian Anti-Communist Crusade, the Christian Defence League and the New Christian Crusade Church carry on this tradition. One of the most fanatical and violent of these groups is the Ministry of Christ Church, founded by William Gale. The Church is linked in 13 states with para-military groups believed to be well armed with rocket-propelled grenades and mortars.

Gale broadcasts regular sermons on a Kansas radio station. In one of these he proclaimed: "You're God's battle-axe . . . they're going to clean this land and they're going to cleanse it just the way it was cleansed in symbolism—with blood because that is the way it is going to be". Other broadcasts gave advice on how to garotte people and how to set up ambushes. If ever the Jews moved against him, said

Gale, "every Rabbi in Los Angeles will die within 24 hours".

Gale's church members are adherents of "Identity Theology". Central to it is the odd belief that Britons of Anglo-Saxon origin and their relations in the new world are the descendants of the lost tribes of Israel and therefore God's chosen people. Blacks are viewed as inferior and Jews as the "seed of Satan". Part of the evidence to support this British Israel theory is the claim that the word Saxons is a corruption of Isaac's sons! To confuse the matter further, other extremists have accused British Israelites along with Theosophists of being a part of the conspiracy against Christianity.

The frequent exhortations to violence have borne tragic fruit. In California a deputy was shot when Gale's supporters tried to prevent union organisers entering their fields. In Arkansas a church member was killed in a shoot-out after having killed a sherriff and two marshals. Meanwhile, Gale and his friends continue to conduct para-military training with other extremist groups, and have threatened opponents in Kansas with lynching. In the America of born-again Christian Reagan, the wages of fanaticism are undoubtedly death.

TERRY LIDDLE

Anita Bryant, one of America's foremost opponents of gay rights, is now promoting a new line of Christian sun-glasses which she claims are divinely inspired. They are decorated with gold religious symbols of either a dove or a fish.

BOOKS

THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOONIES, by Erica Heftmann. Penguin, £2.50

Erica Heftmann, a young American woman who became a member of the Unification Church, or Moonie cult, and was captured by her family and deprogrammed, tells her story in this book. It makes pretty depressing reading. She devotes the last 50 pages to analyses of the technology of mind control, to deprogramming therapy and to a discussion of that "chronic social ailment—lack of critical thinking".

Her narrative begins with a description of her quest for an identity and a focus for her energies. Her life, at the time of her induction into the cult, consisted of "... working in an office, coming home to eat junk food in front of the television. . .". Self-parody (in all-too-meagre doses), self-pity and youthful bumptiousness struggle for supremacy in these pages, which makes them all the more revealing, but perhaps not in the way Erica Heftmann had intended. She was, on her own admission, very lonely, with no friends in her peer-group. She was also very pampered: "... the world has just been your playground" (she has an irritating habit of addressing herself as "you" and "Erica").

Unintentionally, Erica Heftmann makes it clear that it was because her ego was so inflated ("I had a way of touching [people's] lives with the golden touch of King Midas") that she needed to submerge herself in the mass identity of a group, paradoxical though that may sound. Hers is the problem explored by Erich Fromm in his *Fear of Freedom*; and her contention that "The cream of the crop are being picked off to undergo brainwashing. . ." would hardly seem to apply to her. If, however, the cult just exploits the vulnerability, the lack of balance and social adjustment of people like Erica, it adds cowardice to the list of its crimes.

The story starts with Erica's meeting with two wholesome young people who claim to be from the International One World Crusade, an organisation involved in youth work, who invite her to spend a weekend on a ranch with a large number of Crusaders. The weekend is one of smilingly enforced communal living, singsongs, and boring lectures on pseudo-theological subjects. It is during a propaganda filmshow that Erica experiences the revelation. "Pap-pap-pap: it felt as if my skull was peeling open like the dome of an observatory and a million sparks from heaven were raining down on my exposed brain. . .". She also writes of the fascination she, the Jewish daughter of a strict, rejecting German father, felt for Jurgen, the camp director, a fascination which embraced the "Aryan Dream" of clean-limbed, masterful men.

FREETHINKER

There is indeed an element of masochism in Erica's gravitation towards the cult, a need to stretch and punish herself, which must be typical of a large number of fanatical followers of ideologies and cults. Of her earlier life she writes: "No compromises when I perceived a weakness in myself. I would devise a way to meet the challenge head on . . . going into the wilderness without water".

After the weekend on the ranch, she attends a 7-day course of indoctrination in Divine Principle, the "Bible" of the Reverend Moon, a Messianic figure and Heavenly Father to the Family of the Moonies. It is not made clear to the reader what the tenets of Divine Principle are—except a belief that the outside world is satanic and that evil spirits are plotting to destroy members of the Family (sleep spirits would attack sleep-deprived Moonies, forcing them to crash their vans) and to seduce them back to the outside world. The cult also seemed to believe that "The Jews . . . have the most under-developed mentality".

Her indoctrination completed, Erica became a member of a fund-raising team, selling confectionery and flowers to people in offices and shopping centres under the guise of the harmless-sounding Unification Church. They would trick poor people into giving them their last cent. The purpose of this fund-raising was not, of course, to line the Reverend Moon's pockets, but because "Money is the symbol of Satan's kingdom. . . The amount of money you made was directly related to your spiritual purity".

It was fund-raising that answered the need of Erica and others like her to be stretched to the limits of endurance and to be dominated by a harsh leader. She was subjected to a punishing and degrading regime of sleep-deprivation and inadequate food, with "conditions" such as three-day fasts imposed for any deviation or protest. This period is vividly described, but thereafter the narrative flags and becomes rather confusing until we come to Erica's capture by her family and her deprogramming, when it becomes clear again, if a little earnest and lengthy. This earnestness also pervades the "From the Outside Looking In" chapters at the end of the book, which are like student dissertations on Mind Control and on Deprogramming Methods, but for all that they are invaluable for the personal insights they give us into the insidious workings of the cult and for the questions they raise about other forms of indoctrination — religious, ideological and commercial — questions the book goes some little way towards answering.

But the most interesting insights are those about

REVIEWS

Erica Heftmann, not those from her. The opening pages of the book are littered with references to external appearances (her own and others'), as though she perceives everyone, herself included, superficially, as crude stereotypes. "One of those ban-the-bomb types" she sneeringly dubs one of the leaders at the ranch. It could be argued that dismissing out of hand someone else's beliefs is the first step towards losing control of one's own.

VERA LUSTIG

HUMANISM, by Barbara Smoker. National Secular Society. £1.50

A reprint of the booklet first published in 1973 as part of Ward Locke's Living Religions Series, this is a brief, clearly written and quite admirable summary of the history and meaning of humanism from the time of Pericles and the Greek humanists of the fifth century BC.

Humanism is defined as "secular, scientific humanism — that is, a positive man-centred philosophy of life based on rationalism that is either atheist or agnostic, being concerned with life in this world, not with supposed gods or a hereafter". It therefore excludes the "humanism" of Renaissance Christians such as Erasmus or Thomas More, the 17th century Empiricists who were Christian, and the modern "humanist" Christians who still persuade themselves that God is more than a figment of their imaginations.

In justifying her active defence of humanism, as against simply describing it and letting it speak for itself, Barbara Smoker seems to underestimate the numbers of non-believers in European culture. Anyone who has lived in e.g. the Republic of Eire today or in recent years can form an impression of what it must have been like to live in England in the pre-industrial era when God was constantly invoked not only in the daily routine of work and meals, but in the normal functioning of public institutions. It now seems somewhat odd to see competitors from Catholic countries crossing themselves at the start of an event. When I was a boy every lesson began and ended with a prayer and every piece of work done was inscribed with AMDG (Ad majorem Dei gloriam) and ended with LDS (Laus Deo semper), and many Protestant schools began and ended the day with prayers. On the whole public reference to God, apart from religious ceremony, is confined to the opening of Parliament and the crowning of the Monarch. We have yet to see either the CBI or the

TUC call on God, though the singing of The Red Flag might seem to have something of religious significance about it.

What is true is that "Christian belief", however vague, has been instilled through persistent repetition and some degree of fear into the psyche of our children and their parents as a kind of fearful substratum of anxiety, so that, in times of crisis or when pushed to reveal their own position, most people fall back on the stance that aligns them with what they have been persuaded is the majority view, however nonsensical that stance may be in relation to their daily lives. Belief in God operates as a kind of insurance for a future life. The degree to which belief in God and in heaven and hell saturates our unconscious is revealed by any analysis of the mass of religious words, images and concepts that form part of our normal use of language.

In this sense Barbara Smoker is absolutely right. Non-believers who are consciously and unconsciously unburdened by belief in God are relatively few. Non-believers who simply do not attend church regularly, but who go there to be married or to have their children baptised are a form of "silent majority" who have been conditioned well enough to jump when the whip is cracked.

Other aspects of humanism covered in the booklet are: morality in relation to sex and marriage, the morality of suicide or euthanasia, censorship, and the ways in which humanists deal with the need for ceremony, social service and counselling without reference to religion.

This booklet should certainly be in every school and Public Library. Young people learn to think effectively much more readily when their emotions are engaged than they do in academic studies. They are more interested in aspects of behaviour and motivation than they are given credit for. I believe there is need for humanists to look more deeply at the drives in human beings that so often, in different cultures, express themselves in religious and ceremonial forms, and to examine why, as we near the last decade of the 20th century, so many people whose own lives are distinguished by goodness and love towards their fellow beings, find it necessary to assert that their chief reason for such behaviour lies in their belief in God.

I think that the root of belief in God is the tendency to "reify"—to assume that because we have given a name to a concept that that concept must now exist as something other than a form of words. Just as when mediaeval physicians did not have the means to discover the organisms and the physical conditions that gave rise to certain forms of behaviour of the body and attributed those forms of behaviour to "influenza" (the influence), "influenza" became a "thing" that "struck people down" or "swept across Europe"; so "God" was used to denote those subtle or complex responses of the

body and brain that could not be directly attributed to observed physical causes. Since Freud, we have become more aware of our inner world and, for instance, no longer attribute dreams to divine intervention. Joan of Arc's "voices" are heard by many people under stress, even when not formally classified as schizophrenic.

Once upon a time gods were everywhere. Greeks and Romans had lares, penates, naiads, dryads, nereids, along with the hierarchies from Zeus and Jove downwards. In time many of them diminished to become elves, fairies or "little people". I remember my grandmother who walked four miles to Mass every day, despite her bunions, telling me solemnly that my father had once been trapped on his way home from a fair by leprachauns. He found himself in a field without a gate and wandered around and around until daylight when the gate was returned and he could find his way home. "Sure, if only he had remembered to take his coat off and put it on inside out he would have broken the spell", she said in all seriousness. I was too young to be able to suggest that if he could have done that he would have been sober enough to find the gate.

MICHAEL DUANE

BARBARA SMOKER

HUMANISM

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THE BATTLE FOR BERMONDSEY, by Peter Tatchell.
Heretic Books, £2.95

It would be nice to think that the Bermondsey by-election of February 1983 marked the lowest point of British political scurrility and media skullduggery, but I fear that notion may be unduly sanguine. What is beyond doubt is that the Labour candidate, Peter Tatchell, became a byword for everything that the Tory-dominated Press, and large sections of Labour itself, alleged was wrong with the Labour Party. With Bermondsey—a traditional Labour stronghold which had for long been run on Tammany Hall lines—rocked by months of constituency and national party wrangling over his selection, rubbished by his supposedly "radical" party leader, Michael Foot, vilified and threatened with physical violence (live bullets through his letter box), pilloried as "Red Pete", the expatriate draft-dodging Militant Tendency-supporting unemployed parasitic revolutionary poof, Peter Tatchell went down to resounding defeat.

So what is Tatchell really like, and what are his actual opinions? If his own book is reliable

testimony, he has been the victim of the most outrageous character assassination of any British politician (not excluding Bradlaugh and Dilke); and this fact alone makes his book essential reading, posing most serious questions about the nature of our contemporary democracy—questions which he himself discusses with commendable good sense and detachment.

The only true charge in the almost endless string of calumnies is that he is gay, and proud of it: though as a matter of policy which with hindsight may seem of dubious wisdom, and which he obviously personally deplores, it was decided not to admit this during the by-election campaign. His references to this topic in his book, and his uncompromising assertion in its final pages of the central place of gay rights in any political platform which deserves to be called "radical", are candid, cogent and deserving of respect. (And he clearly loathes Militant for their anti-gay stance.)

Sincerity is the hallmark of his book. Its style is down to earth and refreshingly jargon-free (though grammatically he has a quirky preference for the reflexive pronoun). His political views are straightforwardly stated and intelligently argued. The fact that I don't agree with a good many of them (my own radicalism being pragmatically non-socialist and Labour's style of politics being uncongenial to me) doesn't detract from my regard and appreciation for the spirit of concern which animates Peter Tatchell and the dignity with which he withstood and survived all the vileness dumped upon him by people, some of whom should by rights have been his political, social and sexual allies. He emerged from this harrowing experience with his personal standing distinctly enhanced, and deserves a silver lining to that murky cloud.

Far from being a loony lefty lightweight, Tatchell, it's clear, is a robust and resourceful politician; a patriotic radical in the tradition of Tom Paine, Cobbett and William Morris (sadly, I feel unable to add "and of Michael Foot" or "of Neil Kinnock"). The Labour Party—which cuts an even sorrier caper in the Bermondsey story than the once-honourable profession of journalism—owes him a safe Parliamentary seat in the not too distant future, if he's quixotic enough to go on giving them his allegiance.

ANTONY GREY

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The Freethinker—Quoting From the Left?

ANTONY MILNE and S. E. PARKER

A letter signed by eight readers of "The Freethinker" complaining of "the increasing amount of Left-wing political propaganda that is appearing in its columns" was published in a recent issue. In this article, two of the signatories put their case in greater detail.

Sam Beer in his letter of December 1983 says that in our November letter protesting about left-wing propaganda we were not courteous enough to give examples. But it was because of our innate courtesy that we refrained from indulging in what would be a very space-consuming business. If we thought we could not substantiate our claims we would hardly have bothered writing the letter. We would now be happy to oblige.

First, we do appreciate, and welcome the fact, that *The Freethinker* is a radical and anti-Establishment journal of dissent, and that a large proportion of its contents should be devoted to challenging and criticising unjust and entrenched social norms rooted in privilege. But our letter specifically mentioned *political propaganda*. And there have been three clear areas in which this politicisation has become obvious: in vitriolic criticism of the Government's 1982 Falklands campaign, in unwarranted and uninformed anti-Americanism, and in fierce and persistent criticism of the Conservative Party as a party.

In addition, the level of discussion, with its intemperate use of language, has fallen well below the intellectual standards we see in other monthly journals of comment. Many of what we consider to be the worst abuses appear in the "News and Notes" column, such as that of May 1982 when an attack on the Falklands campaign also mentioned the "gutter press. . . war hysteria. . ." and "US puppet strings reaching to 10 Downing Street". The Falklands victory service at St Paul's was referred to in August 1982 as "this nauseating spectacle". And in July 1982 Jim Herrick made the surprising confession that he preferred the Pope's pronouncements on the Falklands war to those of Mrs Thatcher ("peace rhetoric" was compared to "war rhetoric").

In February 1983 the entire front page was devoted again to the Falklands, and to attacks on Israel and the Government's Police and Criminal Evidence Bill. Inside were articles on unilateralism by Nicolas Walter and on cut-backs in education by T. F. Evans.

Again in the March 1982 *Freethinker* there was an entirely political article by Ted McFadyen (a regular writer) in defence of Ken Livingstone. "The gutter press", wrote McFadyen, "is for the most part Tory-

dominated. . ." and ". . . the fact remains that Mr Benn is, like Mr Livingstone, a deeply serious politician. . . and . . . an intellectually gifted man" (Anthony Crosland might have demurred on this point).

In May 1983 the "News and Notes" column also sprang to the defence of Tony Benn, who was "constantly vilified" by "Fleet Street guttersnipes who are not fit to wipe his boots". This was followed by another article by Ted McFadyen attacking the new Police Bill. The Bill was again heavily criticised the following month, when the remarkable assertion was made that Patricia Hewitt, latterly of the NCCL, was a lady "far more deserving of honour than Solzhenitsyn".

The Freethinker seldom misses an opportunity to attack not just Tory policies, but Tory MPs everywhere who are "blimpish" or worse. They are all members of an "unlovely party" (November 1982). "Liberals and Labourites are, for the most part, an amiable lot". In contrast, Tories attract "jingoists, racists, capital punishment freaks and other nasties like a dunghill attracts flies".

The problem, as we see it, is that *The Freethinker* nowadays considers itself to be a "campaigning" newsletter rather than an intellectual journal. It has become involved with the *minutiae* of Left social criticism, and regards itself as a voice of social reform. The danger here is that the "social ethic" of humanism and secularism will hardly differ from that of the established Church, which is also drifting leftwards, and which the movement is supposed to despise. Attention will increasingly be diverted away from the religious nonsense uttered by influential church leaders, but which it is *The Freethinker's* duty to rebut. What would the public and the media make of the sight of freethinkers and Christian pacifists marching together in an anti-nuclear demonstration? And would Left candidates for the presidency of the National Secular Society, like Terry Liddle, have offered themselves for election if they had not perceived that the radicalism in the journal has assumed a distinct political slant?

Yet there are many freethinkers and secularists, like ourselves, who lean far more to individualism as a social philosophy, and who are fast being disenfranchised by the leftward drift of the movement.

We feel that *The Freethinker's* approach to international affairs is quite distorted. The journal consistently fails to identify and attack the real enemies of freethought. Secularism has flourished

(continued on back page)

LETTERS

SUNDAY IN SCOTLAND

I was interested in the report (December 1983) that more than a hundred shops in Dieppe opened on three pre-Christmas Sundays to cater for day-trippers from England. Those in the north of that benighted country could have journeyed to Scotland, where most of the big stores were also open and doing a roaring trade on these Sundays. Moreover, had the New Inn opened by Mr Michael Montague, been in Scotland, instead of Shropshire, he would not have been breaking the law by charging for a pint after three o'clock, as most Scottish pubs now have afternoon opening extensions.

On a completely different subject, I disagree with your correspondent R. L. Scrase that the American invasion of Grenada can be fairly compared with the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. Though, as a pacifist, I deplore all military operations, the evidence seems to show that the vast majority of the people of Grenada welcomed the American troops, since their action put an end to the reign of terror which had been set up in the island following the murder of Maurice Bishop. Moreover, the invaders left after a few weeks, while the Russians are still in Afghanistan after four years.

JOHN L. BROOM

DOWN WITH CHRISTMAS!

I would like to congratulate John L. Broom for his excellent article, "A Brief History of Christmas" (December 1983). Excerpts from it should be reprinted on Christmas cards.

Christmas is the only time of year when I feel like changing my religion and joining the Jehovah's Witnesses. If it is socially acceptable for them to opt out of celebrating the annual craze, the same concession should be granted to others, who feel just as strongly but for different reasons. Perhaps it would be a good idea to start a "Scrooge was Right" campaign among like-minded freethinkers.

Incidentally, Prince Albert was just as responsible as Charles Dickens for introducing the commercialisation of Christmas. As for the Wise Men, there is no mention of their number in St Matthew's gospel (the only reference to them in the Bible). It is assumed that there were three because they carried three sorts of gifts. It would be interesting to know where the names Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar sprang from. In the New English Bible the Wise Men are very aptly described as astrologers. So much for Christianity trying to dissociate itself from Superstition!

MARIA TUGWELL

ABOLISHED

John L. Broom is wrong when he states that Albania is the only European country in which the Christmas festival has been officially abolished. Albania was a Muslim country and thus never celebrated Christmas. In any case, two other partly European countries—the Soviet Union and Turkey—do not celebrate it. The USSR is the only European country which has actually abolished Christmas as a public holiday. Its satellites in Eastern Europe have not.

TED GOODMAN

TURGENEV AND WOMEN'S LIBERATION

To Sam Beer's succinct sketch of Turgenev's life work for the liberation of serfs I would add "and of women", be they serfs of husbands and or of masters,

or "caged birds" brought up in the stifling atmosphere of an upper or middle-class milieu.

In the heroic, yet highly emotional Elena in "On the Eve" (published 1860), Turgenev portrayed a new type of Russian woman with an irrepressible taste for freedom "in order that the Cause should move forward" (his own words). Elena was the forerunner of a generation of middle-class idealists, the "Narodniki" (going to the people), as well as revolutionaries who were prepared to go into exile, as did Elena after the death of her beloved freedom fighter husband.

Peter Kropotkin wrote that Turgenev's "wonderful women" left a more lasting impression than any article for the defence of women's rights.

BEATRICE CLARKE

TWO STANDARDS?

In his "Watching Big Brother" (January), Mark Lilly should have developed his theory of justice further. Surely if a terrorist assumes the power of a State and kills people, are they too not "undermining the principles of natural justice and the rule of law"? And, unlike some states, they do not ever pay compensation when a "mistake" occurs and the "wrong" person is killed.

Also, if a terrorist group is Right-wing rather than Left-wing, why does it not seem to get such good support from champions of individual liberty as Left-wing groups may get?

BRENDA ABLE

"UNFAIR AND MALICIOUS"

I am really tired of reading Nicolas Walter's grouches about my book, "Freethought in the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth" (Letters, December 1983).

When I press him for an example of some of my "glaring errors", all he can come up with is the fact that I gave 1900 as the publication of a book, when he thinks it should have been 1899. My evidence shows that it should have been 1900.

I have previously replied to Walter (although I can't say that he understands what I am saying) that I do not consider the writings of Charles Darwin (or similar books) to be freethought works, even if he does. I gave my criteria for what a freethought book is in the beginning of my book and I stuck to it. I have told him that if he wishes to write a different book, using different criteria, he is perfectly free to do so, but to criticise a work for sticking to what it says it will do is both unfair and malicious. I believe that David Tribe is perfectly capable of writing a book review without any additional help from Walter.

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OBITUARY

Mr J. Barrowman

Jim Barrowman, a member of Glasgow Humanist Society and secretary of the old Glasgow Secular Society for many years, has died. In a tribute published in *Glasgow Humanist News*, Norman Macdonald writes of Mr Barrowman: "He belonged to that generation of freethinkers to whom we owe much, and who had in many ways to fight a different kind of battle. . .

"Their targets were the more absurd beliefs of the Christian religion, sabbatarianism, the then greater and more overt power of the Church, and one outstanding victory was and is the general acceptance of birth control. This was fought even more bitterly than abortion by the churches and particularly by the Catholic Church. They have lost that battle even among their own members.

"When Jim Barrowman talked of those days his eyes lit with pleasure, and we salute him as representative of his companions of that time".

There was a secular committal ceremony.

Mrs B. Bond

Betty Bond died in hospital at the age of 58. There was a secular committal ceremony at Woodvale Crematorium, Brighton.

Mr W. Bynner

The death of Bill Bynner, at the age of 83, has saddened his many friends in the humanist movement for which he worked in a voluntary capacity. He was a member of the British Humanist Association, National Secular Society and Secular Socialist Association.

Bill Bynner was born into a Birmingham working-class family and spent most of his working life as a civil servant except for breaks during the two world wars. He was a keen sportsman in his younger days.

Members of the family were joined by representatives of organisations to which he belonged when a secular burial ceremony took place at Putney Vale Cemetery, London, on 16 January.

Mr S. R. Legge

Sidney Rupert Legge, who has died at the age of 78, had a long record of public service including seven years' membership of Worcester City Council. He was associated with the Labour movement all his life, a former president of Worcester Trades Council and of Worcester Constituency Labour Party. He was an area organiser of the Amalgamated Society of Painters and Decorators until his retirement in 1970.

Mr Legge was a member of Worcestershire Humanists. There was a large gathering at Worcester Crematorium where the secular committal took place.

EVENTS

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

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group. Queen's Head, Queen's Road (entrance in Junction Road, opposite Brighton Station). Sunday, 5 March, 6.30 pm for 7 pm. Mark Lilly: 50 Years of the National Council for Civil Liberties.

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.

Hampstead Humanist Society. Meeting Room, Swiss Cottage Library, Avenue Road, London NW3. Saturday, 18 February, 3 pm. Keith Gilley: Masculinism, Religion and the Trap of Sweet Reason.

Harrow Humanist Society. The Library, Gayton Road, Harrow. Wednesday, 14 March, 8 pm. Diana Rookledge: Towards Equality—has Legislation Helped?

Humanist Holidays. Easter at Llandudno, North Wales. Yugoslavia, 27 May for two weeks (jointly with the Progressive League). Scarborough (August) and Poole (Christmas). Details from Betty Beer, 58 Weir Road, London SW12, telephone 01-673 6234.

Leeds and District Humanist Group. The Swarthmore Institute, Leeds. Tuesday, 13 March, 8 pm. Speaker: Bob Adsett, Ecology Party Parliamentary Candidate.

Lewisham Humanist Group. Unitarian Meeting House, 41 Bromley Road, London SE6. Thursday, 23 February, 7.45 pm. Mark Lilly: 1984 is Here.

Scottish Humanist Council. North British Hotel, Edinburgh. Saturday, 7 April, 10 am until 5 pm. Annual Conference. Guest speaker: James Hemming. Details from Robin Wood, 37 Inchmurrin Drive, Kilmarnock, telephone 26710.

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

West Glamorgan Humanist Group. Friends Meeting House Annexe, Page Street, Swansea. Friday, 24 February, 7.30 pm. Public Meeting. Speaker: Ivor Russell.

Worthing Humanist Group. Trades Club, 15 Broadwater Road, Worthing. Sunday, 26 February, 5.30 pm. James Sang: Uses of Genetic Engineering.

Under terms agreed by the management of the Duchess and the Phoenix, Sunday performances have been taking place at the two West End theatres. Equity has announced that it is waiting for the Society of West End Theatre to make proposals for a Sunday opening deal covering all London theatres.

Kincora Scandal Shakes Ulster Establishment

Yet another inquiry into what has become known as the Kincora scandal has been announced. It has been alleged that a homosexual vice ring operated for some years at the Belfast boys' home. Five people are already in prison for sexual offences against the teenagers in their care.

Kincora was opened in 1979 as a residential home for boys. In 1971 an Orange activist named William McGrath was appointed housewarden. He later

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in the West as a result of a growing liberalism and political emancipation. While the battle for free-thought has long been won in America and Europe, the rest of the world is receding further into the dark ages of oppression and doctrinalism. This includes much of the Third World, virtually all of the Middle East and the entire Communist bloc.

As the year 1984 dawns the freethinker is a very rare species indeed. And yet the January 1983 issue of *The Freethinker* seemed to believe that it is Britain that is fast becoming an Orwellian nightmare. Front-page prominence was given to Patricia Hewitt's declaration that Britain is no longer the home of civil liberty and that "surveillance of the entire population is now feasible" (nothing could be less feasible, as critics of Orwell's marvellous satire have been quick to point out).

Similarly, to publish articles attacking Israeli Zionism (August 1982) is to ignore the crucial fact (to a freethinker, but not necessarily to a Palestinian sympathiser) that Israel is a democracy, has a relatively free press, and its citizens are not stoned to death for adulterous acts as they are elsewhere in the Middle East.

The growing anti-Americanism of *The Freethinker* is also quite inappropriate. In March 1982 it stated that US agents had "murdered political and trade union leaders America doesn't like"; an unsubstantiated allegation repeated in the December 1983 letters column when we are led to believe, from R. L. Scrase, that the "CIA plots the murder of leaders America doesn't like". In the meantime an article by Anthony Milne on Catholic excesses in Latin America was rejected by the Editor on the curious grounds that lack of any mention of American involvement in the region was like "mounting a propaganda exercise for the White House".

We therefore think our criticism of the journal to be valid. We plead for a return to the more politically detached discussions of the recent past, and for a distancing of the movement from other radical groups who have their own organs of publicity.

received a total of 15 years' imprisonment.

McGrath was a Protestant fanatic, a lay preacher and the founder of an Orange Lodge. He was closely connected with an anti-Catholic group that wanted all education in Northern Ireland in the control of evangelical Protestants.

The Rev Ian Paisley, who led a campaign against bringing Northern Ireland's laws on homosexuality into line with Britain's, was among those who had been informed privately of McGrath's activities. He banned him from his Free Presbyterian Church pulpits but did not inform the police. Miss Valerie Shaw, a full-time worker in Paisley's church, resigned because he ignored her complaints, seven in all, about what was going on at Kincora.

This inquiry, like the others, will probably be balked by a wall of official silence. For it is widely believed that some of those involved are to be found in the highest circles of the Unionist establishment and the Orange Order.

"No" to Church Schools

A large majority of those who attended the Congregational Federation conference in London last month opposed any idea of the Free Churches setting up their own schools.

Those taking part were invited to comment on a paper submitted by Tony Ewens, co-ordinator of the Religious Education Handbook for Devon.

It was argued that "in view of the great decline in church-going, the schools have become the repository of our Christian heritage".

The opposite view was expressed by some who claimed that "the Christian faith has been damaged because it has been taught by those who do not accept it".

There was opposition to the religious provisions of the 1944 Education Act and a small majority favoured the abolition of church schools within the State system. Most of those present were opposed to separate schools for ethnic minorities. It was felt that such a policy would create racial tension.

• **Stanley Garnett, the recently retired headmaster of a Bradford school, has joined the fascist British National Party. He said the BNP wanted separate schools for white and Muslim children. Muslim religious leaders have also been campaigning for segregated schooling. Peter Gilmour, chairman of the Conservative-controlled education committee, said he was glad Mr Garnett had retired. The authority's policy to promote understanding between different groups in the community would not be advanced by separate schools.**