

The Freethinker

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SUNDAY TRADING: KNOCK-OUT BLOW FOR THE SABBATARIANS

"We in the secularist movement do not often find ourselves in agreement with the present Government, but we give them top marks for grasping this sorry old sabbatarian nettle", declared Barbara Smoker, president of the National Secular Society, after the House of Commons voted in favour of reforming the Sunday trading laws. "Now perhaps the busybodies of the Lord's Day Observance Society will keep their collective nose out of other people's business where it has been stuck for too long", she added.

Miss Smoker said that continuation up to the present day of the old puritan laws relating to sport, entertainment and trading on the first day of the week has made Britain the laughing stock of the world.

"But it has been no laughing matter for those whose livelihood has been affected by these archaic laws, especially when local authorities have been forced by informers to take court action.

"Nor has it caused much laughter among the British public whom these laws have denied many forms of innocent enjoyment and domestic shopping for half of each weekend".

The NSS president said that Parliament was acting in accordance with the wishes of the vast majority of the population on the question of Sunday trading.

"But the LDOS, which has been desperately holding back the forces of progress, liberalism and common sense since it was founded for that purpose in 1831, has always represented a small minority, and even that minority is dwindling away. Yet this vociferous organisation has contrived to keep the liberalisation of Sunday down to a snail's pace.

"In this it has been abetted by the unjust charity law, which, on religious grounds, gives the LDOS exemption from most taxation and from half the

local rates, while denying similar fiscal concessions to the National Secular Society which, for the last 119 years, has been its chief opponent".

Diana Rookledge, chairman of the British Humanist Association, drew attention to the position of shop employees. She said the confused debate on the Auld Report reflected mixed feelings in the country about the prospect of Sunday trading.

"While most people will welcome the abolition of past anomalies and liberalisation of the law, shop workers will also welcome the Home Secretary's promise to ensure that they will not be compelled to work on Sunday.

"They already work on Saturday, and Sunday is the only day of the week when they can be together as a family".

Mr Brittan, Home Secretary, told the House of Commons that the law on Sunday trading was being regularly and publicly flouted. Many local authorities had no intention of enforcing it.

The Government was faced with clear evidence that large numbers of shopkeepers and their customers act in a manner that is not inherently criminal. An attempt to enforce the law was impossible to contemplate.

Sir Ian Gilmour (Conservative, Chesham and Amersham), said they were being asked to defend a law that nobody in their right minds believed could be enforced. The Government had had an inquiry and its recommendations were unequivocal. There was no option now but legislation.

Alan Beith (Liberal, Berwick-upon-Tweed) said if the Government accepted the Auld Report it would be on the side of Mammon rather than God. It would be substituting the religion of the market place for

(continued on back page)

The Freethinker

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NEWS

THE BIG CHRISTIAN LIE

The 40th anniversary of VE Day was marked by spectacular ceremony (Westminster Abbey and Red Square) and shabby pettiness (a directive to United States servicemen in Oxfordshire not to support a charity dance "which might cause offence to a country that is now an ally"). Hymns of praise and thanksgiving wafted heavenward from thousands of church services; an unchanging rule of war is that God is always on the winning side.

It was evident from the speeches and sermons that Christians now have something of a guilty conscience over the fate of several million Jews at the hands of the Nazis. However, it was left to Pope John Paul II (who better?) to demonstrate how adept church leaders are at laundering the vile record of Christianity in relation to the Jews. He told a meeting of Christian and Jewish religious leaders that the holocaust before and during World War II was caused by "an absence of faith in God". A modern Dr Goebbels could teach little to the head of a church that was the theological dung-hill on which the foetid weeds of anti-Semitism flourished.

Throughout history the Jews have been victims of Christian oppression and atrocity. They have been at varying times banned from public office, deprived of their property and children, forbidden to build synagogues, assaulted and massacred. Attacks on Jews and their places of worship were actively encouraged by Christian zealots, notably Justinian and Martin Luther. The Fourth Lateran Council decreed that Jews must wear a distinctive mark and clothing, thus setting an example that was followed in the Nazi concentration camps centuries later.

Jew-hating Christians have never been at a loss for a biblical text to defend their position. The New Testament contains many scurrilously anti-Jewish passages, like when Jesus tells the Jews: "You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies". (John 9, 44) Thus spake the Prince of Peace, and his vituperative tirade has provided justification for Jew-hating Christians throughout history.

Anti-Jewish sentiment has been fostered in the church liturgy. The intercession, *Por Perfidis Iudais* ("for the perfidious Jew"), was dropped only a few years ago, and the Book of Common Prayer still

AND NOTES

sneeringly lumps Jews with "Turks, Infidels and Hereticks".

By the time Hitler came to power in Germany, the Cross and the Swastika were interchangeable. Pope Pius XI and his successor Pius XII were on the friendliest of terms with every Fascist dictator in pre-war Europe. The latter's career included long spells in Germany and he knew perfectly well what the position of the Jews would be under the Nazis. In March 1933 the two Catholic political parties acquiesced at Hitler's assumption of unlimited powers. Four months later the Vatican concluded a concordat with Hitler, thus conferring considerable prestige on his New Order.

The Catholic Church bravely threatened dire consequences on poverty-stricken peasants who voted Communist. But it never excommunicated Adolf Hitler, the architect of the holocaust.

German Protestants, following in the footsteps of Martin Luther, were for the most part as viciously anti-Jewish as the Catholics. In 1941 a group of influential church leaders issued a declaration stating that "the Jews are responsible for this war and its world-wide magnitude . . . the Jews are the enemies of the German nation and of the world".

They recalled that "it was necessary for Dr Martin Luther to demand, on the basis of his own bitter experience, that the severest measures should be taken against the Jews and that they should be expelled from all German countries. . .

"Christian baptism does not change in any way the Jew's racial character. . . It is the duty of a German Evangelical Church to foster and to promote the religious life of the German people. Christians who are Jews by race have no place in that Church and no right to a place".

Of course there were individual Christians who opposed the Nazis and abhorred Hitler's "final solution" to the Jewish question. But they were notable and courageous exceptions. The Christian churches and the vast majority of church members did not protest against the persecution of "inferior" racial groups; they remained silent about the concentration camps; they supported Hitler on all fundamental questions right from the beginning of the Nazi era until Germany was defeated.

And now, only forty years later, Pope John Paul II blames one of the greatest atrocities in human history on "an absence of faith in God". This is a monumental distortion of the historical fact that Christian hatred of Jews has been surpassed only by faith in God.

The Rev Sun Myung Moon, currently the world's best known tax evader (he is serving a prison sentence for the offence in the United States), has been awarded a Doctor of Divinity degree by the Shaw Divinity School of North Carolina. This is the second award by a Christian institution to the top Moonie. Earlier this year he received an honorary degree from the Roman Catholic University of La Plata, Buenos Aires.

Announcing the award, the Shaw Divinity School described Moon as "a fighter and champion of peace and justice". It also praised his commitment to Christianity. No doubt the award and the Moonies' donation of £25,000 to the Shaw Divinity school were coincidental.

In Japan, Mr Yoshikazu Soejima, former editor of the Moonie newspaper, *World Daily News*, has exposed some of the techniques which Moon's Unification Church uses to raise money and control its members. Since leaving the church, he has had to make frequent changes of address.

Mr Soejima estimates that over the last ten years the equivalent of £746 million has been sent out of Japan to finance Moonie activities in other countries. Much of it has gone to the United States where the church's investments include the *Washington Times* newspaper. It also owns land, hotels, a bank and a fishing fleet.

Nevertheless Moonie membership has not increased to any noticeable extent in the United States. It is estimated that there are about 3,000 activists.

The Unification Church is a registered charity and claims to promote the highest Christian ideals. One of its most lucrative activities is the manufacture of armaments, including M16 rifles for the Korean army.

Moon has a large following in Japan where women comprise nearly 80 per cent of the church membership. Moon's instructions have been obeyed mainly because of members' fear that he is the new Christ and could condemn them to hell. Mr Soejima says: "Seventy per cent of the membership don't oppose anything that the Rev Moon says because they fear that something might happen after their deaths".

Nevertheless disaffection is spreading among the Japanese faithful. And Moon's latest command — that women members must not marry until they are 35 — has added to the members' disenchantment. So has the news that many of the marriages that took place at mass-weddings conducted by Moon have already broken down.

The Rev Sun Myung Moon will have to carefully avoid banana skins in future. There are plenty of rivals among the Moonie Mafia for control of the commercial empire which he created by exploiting gullibility and fanaticism.

WITH THE EDITOR'S COMPLIMENTS

Every month editorial largesse in the form of complimentary copies of *The Freethinker* is dispensed to deserving cases like religious journalists. Paul Burden, who writes a column for the Roman Catholic weekly, *The Universe*, was among the recent recipients of this bounty. Being unaware of a *Freethinker* editor's tribulations, he was surprised that *Universe* readers include the present occupant of the editorial chair.

Mr Burden described *The Freethinker* as "a curious publication", produced by people who pride themselves in their rejection of religious bigotry. Such rejection is not a matter of "pride". The consequences of religious bigotry the world over are terrible enough to justify its rejection by rational and humane people.

The *Universe* columnist did not care for our reference to "the moronic majority". However, it would be interesting to know how many of those who signed petitions at church doors supporting Enoch Powell's Unborn Children (Protection) Bill have the slightest knowledge of embryology.

Mr Burden is wide of the mark when he asserts that the *Freethinker* editor "should have guessed that, as a Catholic bigot, I might have come from a large household". Not so; it is clear that many Roman Catholics in Britain ignore the Pope's denunciation of contraception, and are disinclined to follow the noble example set by that pious and prolific breeder, Mrs Victoria Gillick.

POPE BACKS NEO-FASCISTS

The recent elections in Italy have not altered the balance of power to any great extent. One sinister development, however, was an increase in support for the Neo-Fascists headed by Giorgio Almirante. They collected 20 per cent of the vote in South Tyrol where racial tension between German and Italian speakers was exploited to the full.

Almirante is a resolute defender of puritanism, authoritarianism and religious observance. So it is not surprising that after being received in audience by Pope John Paul II he could boast that the pontiff had encouraged him and his party to carry on their work.

The Pope's blessing on the Neo-Fascist leader has been described by the *Daily Telegraph* as "extremely unwise". But it is hardly surprising that the most reactionary pope since Pius XII has given encouragement to a would-be dictator of the far Right. In doing so, John Paul II is simply following an example set by nearly all his predecessors this century.

John Paul II's career has included a spell as an

actor. It is easy for him to turn on the waterworks when holding forth about Solidarity and human rights in his native Poland. But he has no qualms about encouraging a racist, dictatorial party which, should it achieve power, would put an end to freedom of expression and organisation.

"IN GOD'S NAME"

Exactly a year ago author David Yallop put a squib down the knickers of Holy Mother Church. His book, *In God's Name*, could not have come at a worse time for the Vatican, still badly shaken by the Roberto Calvi—Banco Ambrosiano scandal.

After several years' intensive research, David Yallop made the startling assertion that the Pope's immediate predecessor, John Paul I, who occupied the Chair of Peter for only 33 days, was murdered. The book caused consternation in religious and political circles. Attempts were made, not only by Roman Catholics, to pooh-pooch its contents.

During the last twelve months *In God's Name* has enjoyed considerable international success. It has been published in many countries outside Britain, and attempts to ban book and author have been singularly unsuccessful.

In God's Name will be republished in Britain this month as a Corgi paperback (£2.95).

Freethinker Fund

This month we record another excellent list of donations. A regular contributor, who goes under the name of Iconoclast, has contributed a further £100 and another anonymous supporter has sent £30. Following Edinburgh Humanist Group's example last month, the Glasgow Humanist Society has donated £40.

Contributions large and small are much appreciated. They help to meet the deficit that is inevitable when a journal has limited resources and no revenue from advertising.

The latest list of contributions is given below with our thanks to all concerned.

G. R. Bigley, D. R. Buckingham, A. R. Cannon, J. B. Coward, D. Eaton, F. V. Ellmore, M. D. Gough, E. V. Hillman, C. Honeywell, L. James, M. F. Kerr, B. N. Kirby, D. M. Rookledge, J. Westerman and K. Wootton, £1.40 each; H. Lalor, £2; R. J. M. Tolhurst, £3.35; P. Kennedy, £3.75; J. Paterson and C. P. Tott, £4 each; P. Ponting Barber, £5; P. J. Gamage and L. Stapleton, £6.40 each; J. Simpson, £7; N. Sinnott, £7.40; In memory of Harry Pearce, £10; Glasgow Humanist Society, £40; D. A. Higgs, \$1.60; J. D. De Jong, \$2.80.

Total for the period 4 April to 6 May: £250.30 and \$4.40.

Cause for Concern

MICHAEL DUANE

Readers will be aware that Dora Russell, the 91-year-old socialist, feminist and peace campaigner, was recently attacked while asleep at her home in Cornwall. Concern for her welfare is deepened by the mysterious murder of another peace campaigner, the elderly Hilda Morrell. A close friend of Dora Russell has written this account of the incident.

On 3 April I visited Dora Russell on her 91st birthday and was shocked to see her looking so unwell, when for months she had been better than I had seen her in many years. Her face was scratched and puffy with incipient bruises appearing on her forehead and cheek. She complained of soreness on both sides of her body and of pain in her ankle. Later X-rays confirmed heavy bruising and a broken ankle.

In her bedroom the bed had been pushed out of its usual place. In her study her card-index had been rifled and scattered over her desk as if someone had been looking for names and had been careless about concealing the act. From her purse something over £10 had been taken — a paltry prize for a burglar. There was no sign of forcible entry, since in Penwith only those with something to hide lock their doors at night. Lights had, unusually, been switched on and the back door was open as if someone had left in a hurry. A near neighbour had observed a car without lights "hanging about near the house in the dark" during the evening, an evening when there were no men in the house.

Dora's injuries were at first attributed to her having had a nightmare, and her account of having had a struggle with an intruder dismissed as fantasy. She, of all people, is not given to morbid imaginings. She has a remarkably clear and accurate memory for detail and is anything but neurotic. While she is irritated, as many of us are, by the political narrowness and subservience of most newspapers, she is not paranoid because she has always been open in her views and in her public expression of them.

The police have now stated that they are to take the matter "more seriously". Do they now accept that there was an intruder? But what ordinary burglar would search through a file-index, cover the face of a sleeping woman with a cloth as if to suffocate her and, when she awoke and fought with him and shouted, would punch her in the face so that her pillow was covered with blood and inflict such widespread injuries? When his victim — the ferocity of the attack suggests a male — fearing that she would be murdered feigned unconsciousness, he ran out of the bedroom as if his mission had been accomplished, but left the lights on and the back

door open as if his haste was desperate. Lights and an open door in the middle of the night invite attention.

What had happened that might have some connection with the "burglary"? Was her letter on the Korean war in *The Listener* a matter of anxiety to someone? Or perhaps the fact that she is writing a book which covers the period during and after the last war when she was working for the Ministry of Information and her duties included exchanging scientific information with the Soviet Union?

By early May the police had acknowledged that Dora's injuries indicated pretty clearly that she had been attacked. They examined the postcard sent to Dora, which linked the attack with the murder of Hilda Morrell and the break-in at the premises of a London publisher. We do not yet know what they have concluded. It may be, of course, that they are working on important leads and cannot yet make a statement if the issues are sensitive or their enquiries not yet complete.

Halfway through May no statement had been taken from Dora herself, from the three other people in the house on that night, or from the neighbour who saw the car without lights. Tam Dalyell, MP, has visited Dora and is *au fait* with what has happened.

Meanwhile Dora Russell is confined to the ground floor of her house. Her mail now arrives having been unsealed and then sealed up again with sellotape. I thought the professionals had, by now, learned to be more skilful! Or have they reached the point — remember 1984 — when they don't any longer bother to hide what they do?

The Rev Willard Fuller, an American Baptist minister who has been on a faith healing mission to Britain, specialises in curing dental afflictions. He recently demonstrated his abilities before an audience of 500 who had each paid a £10 fee. But when a BBC radio interviewer pressed him on the sensitive point of how much he was making from his "miracles in the mouth", the Rev Fuller's teeth were clearly on edge.

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The Princess and the Prince

T. F. EVANS

Members of the Royal Family have recently been at the centre of controversy. Argument over Princess Michael's father and his membership of the notorious SS has already abated. But the question of the future monarch's ecumenical and even possibly Catholic leanings will continue to cause consternation and confusion among Christians of all persuasions.

It is often said, possibly most frequently by those in the highly profitable publicity industry themselves, that no publicity is bad publicity. It would be surprising if some publicity agents in Buckingham Palace and other Royal Family establishments have not had doubts about this in the last few months. It is all very well, they might think, when magazines and newspapers are content to print articles on the endearing qualities of members of the ruling house and their various appendages, even to second and third cousins twice removed, on their impeccable dress sense, their favourite dishes and their dogs. It is quite a different thing and very dangerous when they are treated as real human beings and totally inexcusable when facts or suspicions are made public that it is the duty of publicity managers to keep hidden.

Thus, we have just had the lively, if unedifying, controversy about Princess Michael of Kent, or, more accurately, about her father. This German gentleman, not of the greatest importance to anyone except his nearest and dearest, was revealed to have been a member of the SS. A great row blew up. Fleet Street, always eager for the public to know as much as possible about the things that Fleet Street would like people to know about, made a large splash. Different opinions flew back and forward. He had been a member of the SS. He had not. Finally, it seemed, it was settled that he had been a member but, if truth can break through the confusion, this had been on a "limited liability" basis. As far as can be understood, he wore the uniform but did not exercise the functions connected therewith. What made it even more confusing was that a short time before the SS row blew up, it was categorically stated in a reputable newspaper that "in the autumn of 1944, the Baron was put in a concentration camp". (You don't believe it? Refer to the full-page article by Anne de Courcy in the *Sunday Telegraph* on 6 January 1985.)

The significance of all this may be expressed quite simply. It does not reflect on Princess Michael in any way. She behaved with dignity throughout a difficult situation and seems an intelligent and charming young woman. What is appalling, of course, is that we are given the impression by the aforementioned publicity managers that we know all there is to know

about royal personages, their private virtues as well as their public accomplishments, their goodness as husbands and wives, as fathers and mothers, as well as their superlative skill in cutting ribbons to open bridges or in smashing champagne bottles to launch ships. (At the moment, it is unfortunate that the recession in British industry gives them little opportunity for the exercise of these gifts.) In reality, of course, we know no more than we are told.

The fact that things have always been more or less like this is no excuse. Kipling, who, with all his faults, was a great writer, was so besotted with royalty that he could write to his son on the death of Edward VII saying that it was largely the fault of his ministers "with their squabbles" that he had died, and that he was "a great king". We now know that the writer and cartoonist Max Beerbohm was committing a very different view of the monarch to paper in poems and drawings that he had to limit to private circulation. It is probable that at least as many people, whether trained historians or not, would now agree with the Beerbohm view of Edward VII as with the Kipling view.

As with all other departments of human life, the whole situation is made much more difficult, more complicated and, it is very pleasant to find, more amusing as well, when religion is involved. Thus, we have had a splendid row in the last few weeks over the visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales to Italy. Of course, the natives of that republican land went mad. They could not keep their emotions, nor, according to some reports, their hands, to themselves when the royal pair came near them.

The capital city of Italy is the capital city of the Roman Catholic Church. The Prince of Wales, as heir to the British throne, might properly have been expected to pay a courtesy visit to the Pope who, in addition to being Head of the Church, is also a Head of State in the Holy See. (This may well show the remarkable propensity of religious dignitaries to have it both ways at once. There are good grounds for thinking that it is possible to serve both God and Mammon, as they might put it.)

The row seems to have begun with an article in *The Times* on 30 April, in which three reporters combined to write a "story" with the arresting headline, "Prince Indignant Over Cancelled Mass With Pope". All statements on such a subject must be made with great caution (which is presumably why the article was written by a trinity), because here again, we are only being told what some people want us to know and we have no means of deciding whether what we are told is true.

It has been said elsewhere that the Prince of Wales has shown "ecumenical leanings" in the past and that he asked especially that he should be present

when the Pope visited Canterbury Cathedral some time ago. In this particular article it was suggested that "the Prince's personal desire to exceed the customary formalities and to add a religious dimension to the current royal tour of Italy had been dropped on the express wishes of the Queen". The British Ambassador to the Holy See told the *Catholic Herald*, however, that while a suggestion that the royal couple should attend Mass with the Pope had been considered when the visit to Italy was first being planned, it was dropped later. The private secretary of the Prince of Wales was quoted as saying when the party had reached Rome that "there was no question of the Queen vetoing the Mass". It was all a question of time and "it was a logical rather than ecumenical decision". In the excitement of the moment, the secretary or the reporting trinity may have confused their terms. A decision to attend the Mass would have been ecumenical, not the other way round.

On the reverse side of the argument, there were theories that for the heir to the throne and future Supreme Governor of the Church of England to attend Mass with the Pope could have been seen as a contravention of the Act of Settlement. This statute was passed in 1704 to ensure that the British throne would never be occupied by descendants, or co-religionists, of the deposed Catholic James II. In addition, it has been said, in almost as many words, although without any authority being given, that the Queen withheld permission for her son to attend the Mass because this would give grave offence, not simply to non- and anti-Catholics in England but to the Presbyterians in Scotland (where the monarch does a double act by being Head of the Presbyterian Church as well as of the Church of England) and, of course, to the Protestants in Northern Ireland. It came as no surprise to anyone when the voice of Rev Ian Paisley was heard loud in the land to declare that it was "a disgusting sight to see the future Queen of England dressed in black and veiled curtsying to the man who claims to be the sole figure of Christ on earth. It is particularly disgusting to Irish Protestants who are being murdered by members of the Pope's church".

There was never any real point in going into the matter at great length because the decision had been taken and there was nothing that anyone could do about it. That is the kind of situation, however, that drives some people to put pen to paper and it is the kind of situation for which the correspondence columns of *The Times* are always waiting. The readers of that newspaper were accordingly reminded that 30 April, the day on which the Mass might have been attended by the Prince and his consort, had a particular piquancy because it was the feast of Saint Pius V, the Pope who excommunicated Queen Elizabeth I. Most readers of *The Freethinker* would have noticed this piquancy without a reminder. It

was also thought appropriate to note, while all this was going on, that there was a campaign to canonise a nineteenth-century ancestor of the Princess of Wales, Father Ignatius Spencer. We will watch, with great interest, the progress, if any, of this campaign.

Regrets have been expressed at the failure of what, in the words of a *Times* leading article, "might even have given impetus to the next phase of doctrinal dialogue between Canterbury and Rome". Leading political Catholics had their say. Lord Rawlinson, a former Attorney-General, said that if the Prince of Wales was to be prevented from visiting the Pope at Mass but would be allowed to visit a synagogue or a mosque, then "very many loyal subjects . . . will be very very saddened". The formidable figure of Mr Norman St John Stevas joined in. As something of an authority on both Church and State and, it may be, so regarded by others beside himself, he told the *Catholic Herald* that he regretted a "lost opportunity". But the visit, as a whole, had been a happy occasion. He thought it encouraging that the question of the royal couple attending Mass had been raised.

There, with great regret, we have to leave this fascinating subject. No doubt the question will come up again. We have been told that the Catholic newspaper, *The Universe* believed that "the Holy Father showed great interest in the couple's children, William and Harry". We were reminded more than once that Edward VII and Queen Alexandra visited the Pope and attended a requiem (in England) for the murdered King of Portugal. We may ask how much, if anything, all this matters. Nothing much was affected when the United States had a Catholic for President: the assassination of Kennedy had no connection with his religion. A king who attended Mass, or even became a Catholic would do no great harm. On the throne or elsewhere, people may be allowed to worship as they like, as long as they do not bother others. Of course, the intertwining of Church and State can cause a few complications, but the spectacle of their tying themselves in knots has its amusing side.

LUDOVIC KENNEDY

AN END TO BELIEF?

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Malthus: the Report of His Death Was Greatly Exaggerated (Part I)

DAVID TRIBE

Once centenaries were hailed as occasions for hero-worship. Now they are likely to emerge as dates for debunking. To me it seems that the great seminal names in history that have attracted centennial notice remain seminal, though I usually prefer to mingle tributes with reappraisals.

It was, I suppose, inevitable that Thomas Malthus should suffer much the same fate as Charles Darwin. One was a rational reverend whose death sesqui-centenary was celebrated last year, the other a reverent rationalist whose death centenary was in 1982. Both were pioneers in population theory; one within the human species, the other throughout the living world; and one influenced the other. In their lifetimes and with renewed vigour recently, both have been attacked from different angles by religious fundamentalists, doctrinaire socialists and sentimental humanists. One reason for the attacks is that both, against their wills and largely after their deaths, have been thought of as *gurus* of "immutable laws of nature".

The true place of Malthus will here be considered in the light of a book by a neo-Malthusian sociologist (J. A. Banks's *Victorian Values: Secularism and the size of families*, which appeared without fanfare in 1981, an article by a "sentimental" historian (Edward Royle's "Is Malthus Dead?" in the December 1984 *Freethinker*) and some reflections of my own. Light will be sought on what Norman Himes, in *The Medical History of Contraception* (1936), and the 1949 Report of the Royal Commission on Population called the "democratising revolution" or the "Vital Revolution", when parents collectively decided to have smaller families.

It must be remembered that Malthus was really a theologian and not a mathematician, a philosopher and not a demographer. As a theologian he was more or less a deist, believing in God as a Great Architect of the universe and man as its maintenance engineer on earth. Thus he fought a running battle with religionists who followed a variant of the "where the Lord guides He provides" school: "where the Lord breeds He feeds". As a philosopher and political economist he opposed the Jacobin school of French and English utopian socialists and revolutionaries, and he wrote his famous *Essay on the Principle of Population, as it affects the future improvement of society* in 1798 to rebut the views of the Marquis de Condorcet and William Godwin.

In terms of the modern "nature versus nurture" controversy, he was largely on the side of nature and they wholly on the side of nurture. While they believed that a radical transformation of society would transform mankind and solve all human ills,

he pointed out that in an ideal society of peace and plenty people would start to breed without restraint (geometrically) and eventually run into problems of food supply, which — in a finite world where the best land was always cultivated first — could expand only arithmetically. He might have countered the utopianists by asking how, if man were really made corrupt by corrupt society and nothing else, would a sufficient number of people (or, indeed, anyone) escape that corruption enough to be motivated and able to change it. Fortunately he concentrated on the population theme; for, with the decline of mediaeval scourges like the plague and the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, the world was on the threshold of a population explosion.

Malthus said the consequence of population pressures was either misery or vice. If his "principle" is accepted, there was — and is — no debate over what "misery" entails: famine, disease and war. Much more controversial is "vice". In the genteel language of the period, Malthus defined this as "promiscuous intercourse, unnatural passions, violations of the marriage bed, and improper arts to conceal the consequences of irregular connexions". The first three are at least clear in meaning; the last could have been artificial contraception or abortion. Presumably James Grahame thought it meant the latter, but in an appendix to the fifth edition of the *Essay* Malthus put him right: "I should always particularly reprobate any artificial and unnatural modes of checking population, both on account of their immorality and their tendency to remove a necessary stimulus to industry." As a quasi-deist Malthus was presumably not opposed to putative interference with the wishes of Providence (a consideration which, by the way, rarely prevents religionists from consulting their doctors or taking antibiotics). Doubtless he was concerned — as were some secularists in 1861 and 1877, when the issue surfaced within the movement — that contraceptives were a passport to profligacy. His argument on "industry", applying to married couples, reflected a fear that total control over fertility would lead to parental self-indulgence and underpopulation.

Godwin countered the *Essay* with the argument that Malthus's dire projection would be averted by "prudence" and "remedies" as people perceived that Eden was coming under threat. This induced Malthus in his second (1803) and later editions to move away from abstract natural theology and social theory towards a more practical consideration of man in society: what became known as Malthusianism. Following on Godwin's lead, he urged people to adopt later marriage and exercise restraint within it.

Most freethinkers did not object to these recommendations on principle, though George Drysdale, anonymous author of the free-love *Elements of Social Science* (1854), declared sexual abstinence to be more unnatural than artificial contraception. Interestingly, Drysdale was strongly opposed to abortion, which he roundly declared to be murder and defined in such a way as now to include those pills which prevent implantation after fertilisation. Generally, freethinkers regarded Malthus's counsel as one of perfection and advocated — or at least adopted — more realistic “artificial” means. As Professor Banks puts it, “Only in freethinking and secularist circles did birth-control propaganda flourish, and it was in these circles that it became so much a part of the general philosophy of life without religion that the two movements seem to have become identified in the public mind”. To designate the growing departure from the *Essay's* advocacy, in the late 1870s Samuel Van Houten coined the expression “neo-Malthusian”.

This was the time of the famous Knowlton trial of Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant for republishing the contraceptive *Fruits of Philosophy*, of the latter's production of a bestselling *Law of Population* and of the successful relaunching of the Malthusian League (all 1877). Most writers, including myself, relate the decline of the large Victorian family to this sequence of events. While conceding that “the average annual crude birth-rate per thousand of the population in England and Wales rose, apparently, . . . until 1876-80, and then declined rapidly”, Professor Banks disputes this hypothesis. As a sociologist, he seeks socioeconomic rather than ideological causes, and his *Victorian Values* is a refinement of views he put as early as 1954 in *Prosperity and Parenthood*. Though often accused of being an ideologue, I am in fact sympathetic to this viewpoint and believe it deserves full consideration.

• To be continued next month.

NSS and “Pernicious Influence” of Religion

Although 1984 was awaited with curiosity because of Orwell's pessimistic predictions, society does not, on the whole, consist of a majority of zombies under the control of a sinister minority, declares the National Secular Society in its annual report. Nevertheless, “there can be no doubt that our lives are becoming increasingly controlled through computers and other modern methods of surveillance”.

The boom in sales of video recorders has enabled people to record and screen the programmes they wish to see. The new genre of sex-and-violence films led to the Video Recordings Bill. But whatever the Bill's supporters intended, “it sets up a new censorship facility which brings all video films, including educational and political material, into potential control”.

The report states that newspapers have “sunk even further into the gutter”, promoting avarice in order to achieve the largest possible circulation.

“With the tabloids searching for sensation and the quality papers, with few exceptions, linked up behind the Government, there is little likelihood of rational discussion of events and policies for the foreseeable future”.

Referring to the churches' influence on public affairs, quite out of proportion to their actual numbers, the report points out that only ten per cent of the population are churchgoers. And although presidential candidates in the United States have to be born-again Christians, a recent survey in Britain showed that fewer than half of the bishops believed in the basic tenets of the faith. However, “this does not prevent them from taking their stipends or living in palaces provided for prelates”.

Commenting on visits to Britain by leading American evangelists, Billy Graham and Luis Palau, it is observed that “neither of them ventured to Northern Ireland, thinking no doubt there was enough religion there for the time being”.

Pope John Paul's itinerary included tours of Canada, South America and the Caribbean.

“As usual, he has been photographed kissing the ground on his arrival and children during his tour. But the main object of the visits has been to re-affirm his opposition to any moves to introduce a sensible policy on birth control, or to the ordination of women or to marriage of the clergy. His public face gives the impression of benignity, but behind the scenes he continues to promote his authoritarian and reactionary doctrines”.

The report concludes: “At a time when most organisations are losing members and many small journals cease publication altogether, the National Secular Society and *The Freethinker* are able to maintain their numbers and continue to work for the promotion of freethought. The churches still have tremendous wealth and influence which they strive mightily to preserve, and the unjust charity laws give them an advantage over us. The fact that we are rated and taxed to the hilt means that we are effectively fighting with one hand tied behind our back. . .

“But there can be no doubt that the NSS still has an important part to play in reducing the pernicious influence of religion”.

• The annual report of the NSS is obtainable free of charge from 702 Holloway Road, London N19.

BOOKS

AGAINST THE FAITH: SOME DEISTS, SCEPTICS AND ATHEISTS, by Jim Herrick. Glover & Blair, £12.50 and £5.95

In the Preface, Jim Herrick explains his purpose and indicates the considerations which have governed the treatment of his theme. He set out to represent a diversity of those who had opposed or rejected the Christian faith as held in the traditional orthodoxy of Western Europe; at the same time, he recognises a diversity of traditions within Christianity, and even the critical independence of some Christian thinkers. He has written an essay on the variety of radical dissent, in terms of selected exemplars fairly and sufficiently represented. The narrative is entirely readable and reliable. The result is a highly competent and unpretentious piece of work which is not only a conspicuous service to the "Freethought" movement, but also a persuasive presentation of historical material to any fair-minded reader.

The Introduction is a summary of his theme through the long period which precedes the 18th and 19th centuries on which the book concentrates, when Deists, Sceptics and Atheists could and did appear more openly. This modern period brings together a score of representative thinkers from Pierre Bayle (1647-1706) to Bertrand Russell (1872-1970).

One prevalent idea woven into the theme as represented by the chosen exemplars, from closeted thinker to public activist, is that the types and roles are not necessarily as distinct as they seem. Yet they may be so. Of Thomas Paine:

Had he been more learned and acquainted with the ideas of the philosophers, his thought might have been taken more seriously by subsequent scholars. He worked out ideas from first principles and expressed them with the directness of a plain man. Therein lies his essential importance, for he laid the foundations of freethought among common men in the nineteenth century.

Jim Herrick shows himself learned and acquainted with the ideas of his selected representatives, and he is direct in expression, both in narrative and in his judgements; and sometimes pithy: "Christianity without mystery is rather like life without oxygen". Or: "The distinction between mocking and respectful criticism of religion was constantly raised in the nineteenth century; the acrimony and scorn of the Enlightenment were anathema at a time when religion was allied to respectability rather than respectable arguments". His own temper throughout is cool and fair, and his material is controlled by judicious and perceptive comment.

Two rare lapses in accuracy are a mistranslation

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of Voltaire on page 70, and one of the few misprints that might be misleading, "prevent" for "present" on page 129.

The bibliography is a useful (and reassuring) selection, and includes the monumental examples of American scholarship on Hume and on Diderot. Octavious Brooks Frothingham's *Transcendentalism in New England* would have provided Emerson's essential background. More regrettable is the omission of Condorcet's *Sketch of a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind* in a translation by June Barraclough, with an Introduction by Stuart Hampshire. For Condorcet had no bland idea of human progress, and had worked out the conditions on which it is feasible. Indeed, implicit in Condorcet's thesis is what E. M. Forster says explicitly in the quotation with which Jim Herrick concludes his study, and with which he identifies himself.

In his Epilogue, he makes the interesting point, almost as a throwaway remark although with an implied centrality to his whole purpose, that these lives of freethinkers are not merely the hagiography of humanists but are mainly comparable functionally with myth and ritual in helping people to arrive at a satisfying approach to life. It is indeed the bonding experience of ritual which maintains its hold even when belief in the myth wanes.

We have reason to be grateful for this impressive piece of work, and to be proud that it is the work of someone so identified with "Freethought".

H. J. BLACKHAM

JIM HERRICK

AGAINST THE FAITH

SOME DEISTS, SCEPTICS
AND ATHEISTS

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REVIEWS

A HISTORY OF THE IRISH WORKING CLASS, by Peter Beresford Ellis. Pluto Press, £5.50

As Peter Beresford Ellis shows, it is the churches, Catholic and Protestant alike, that are to blame for much of the bloodshed and for the failure of Ireland's common folk to combine to improve their lot. For, as he says, the Church was "the biggest and most active agency for the feudalisation of Ireland and the invasion of the Anglo Normans". Irish people who combine their patriotism with Catholicism should be made to realise that it was the Pope who gave his blessing to Henry II's invasion of Ireland just as at a later date the Pope supported William of Orange in his war with James Stuart. And the clergy had their reward, being placed above the old Irish clan law they could quite literally get away with murder.

Many of Ireland's present troubles have been traced back to the plantation of Protestant settlers in the 16th and 17th centuries. Yet, as this book reveals, this policy was begun during the reign of the Catholic Queen Mary Tudor. And when at the close of the 18th century the Catholic peasantry rose up for liberty they were led by a Protestant lawyer Wolfe Tone, who wanted an end to the "unnatural union between Church and State". The Church had other ideas, and the clergy urged the insurgents to surrender their arms. An eyewitness recalled a Catholic priest calling down damnation on his flock if they lifted a finger against "their lawful rulers".

The struggles of Ireland's poor continued into the 19th century with the Church bitterly opposing the secret societies formed by the peasants to defend themselves from the rack-renting landlords. And when Catholic landlords formed the Catholic Association it was the clergy who forced the poor into funding it. When the Young Ireland movement revolted in 1848 the clergy were found on the side of the Establishment because "they hoped for their church in a union with monarchical and aristocratic England rather than in an Ireland revolutionised and republicanised".

As the 19th century gave way to the 20th and the struggles of peasants gave way to those of workers, the Church continued to fight progress tooth and nail. Any attempt by workers to improve their conditions was branded "godless communism", Republicans were excommunicated, and Fascist Blueshirts blessed as they set off to aid Franco. The Irish Labour Party came out in support of a Workers' Republic with religious and civil liberty,

but was forced to change its mind by pressure from the Catholic hierarchy. Recently, some Labour TDs continued this spineless tradition by voting against the Bill to reform the contraception laws. At least the Workers' Party TDs, stern opponents of sectarianism, had more guts.

All those who are trying to make some sense of the complexities of Irish history will welcome this new edition of a valuable contribution towards an understanding of that history. Poor Ireland, what a troubled history she has had; a history all too often written in the blood of her workers and peasants, patriots and scholars.

TERRY LIDDLE

OBITUARY

Mr L. A. Desorgher

Louis Arthur Desorgher died at his home in Cheltenham following a heart attack. He was 59. Mr Desorgher was a firm atheist, and there was a secular committal ceremony at Cheltenham Crematorium.

Miss V. Hassid

Vi Hassid was a well known and popular figure in London humanist circles for many years. Her death took place after a long period of poor health. She was buried at Golders Green Jewish Cemetery.

Mrs C. Lainchbury

Christine Lainchbury, of Bishops Itchington, Warwickshire, has died in hospital after a long illness.

Mrs Lainchbury undertook a considerable amount of voluntary work in the village where she lived. She founded a trust which raised large amounts of money to help the disabled. Although stricken by cancer, she carried on with this work until a short time before her death.

Mrs Lainchbury held no religious beliefs. There was a secular committal ceremony at the Mid-Warwickshire Crematorium, Leamington Spa.

Dr E. A. Sturt

Elizabeth Ann Sturt died following a road accident last month. She had already begun to acquire an international reputation for her work on genetic linkage and her early death is a great loss to science.

Dr Sturt did not belong to any of the humanist organisations. But she was an out-and-out atheist and there was a secular committal ceremony at Honor Oak Crematorium, London.

Mr J. H. Watson

John H. Watson, who has died at the age of 78, was a member of the Shaw Society. He was a non-believer. There was a secular committal ceremony at Golders Green Crematorium, London.

Jung and the Humanists

JAMES HEMMING

Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) was a distinguished psychiatrist and colleague of Freud until their partnership ended in 1913 following the publication of Jung's *The Psychology of the Unconscious*. James Hemming, in this review of Jung in *Modern Perspective*, a collection of papers edited by R. K. Papadopoulos and G. S. Saayman, and published by Wildwood House, asserts that those who dismiss Jung as being too mystical are mistaken.

The papers in this book were collected in order to celebrate the centenary of Jung's birth in 1875. But there is more to it than that. Over the past quarter of a century, the insights of Freud have been losing force whereas those of Jung have been gaining ground, as also have those of Adler, the third of the original great trio, and the originator of the concept "style of life". But Jung is our concern here. The time is ripe to reconsider his contribution.

Humanists have tended to discard Jung as too mystical for their taste. This is a pity. Jung was struggling with difficult material and working on complex theories. At times he was obscure. But the task he set himself was scientifically valid — to explore the origins of consciousness and how it has developed within the human psyche and became effective in generating purpose.

It follows that, in order to set this book in perspective, we need to make a preliminary excursion into Jung's fundamental thinking, especially into those parts of it which are liable to exasperate secularists. For example, the idea of a collective unconscious, and the role of what Jung called archetypes as factors in the emergence of the individual personality.

Let us, first, take a look at "the collective unconscious". What intrigued Jung was how, in the process of evolution, human consciousness became differentiated into conscious and unconscious aspects. Not only can unconscious fears, guilts, etc, influence our lives, but the unconscious is the source of much of our creative power: at the unconscious level, problems may be solved, ideas generated, and creativity stimulated. What Jung wanted to find out was the nature of both conscious and unconscious mental activity and in what way the two are related. He saw that as a dual problem: how did consciousness evolve in the human species as a whole, and how does the individual acquire the system of consciousness which underlies and sustains each unique personality?

These questions take us into fascinating areas of speculation. How, for example, in the evolution of apes, hominids and early man was basic biological

awareness — response to stimuli — transmuted into the elaborated consciousness of *Homo Sapiens*, with its unconscious substratum?

Jung believed that the basic structure of the anciently-evolved, unconscious element of our minds exists in all of us, just as we all have a standard basic pattern for our bodies — eyes, ears, limbs, organs, etc. This commonly-held mind-pattern of mankind Jung described as "the collective unconscious". This is a biological not a metaphysical concept.

What, it may be asked, is the neural basis for unconscious mental activity? We do not know. But this creates no obstacle to the concept of unconscious mental life since there are vast areas of the brain for which no functions are, as yet, known.

The concept of the archetype is rather more complex. The operative forces in primitive minds were likely to have been emotionally-charged ideas associated with pictures or symbols, rather like what we still experience in our dreams. Such ideas would have included ideas of dominant beings, the hero, the other sex, the loving friend, the benevolent seer, the wise old woman, the witch, the monster, the diabolic presence and so forth. Jung believed that such primitive, universal ideas, in their archetypal, symbolic form, are as old as mankind and are both deeply embedded in human unconsciousness and formative of our conscious responses. He found these archetypal thought-forms to exist in all societies, all religions, all myths, all dreams, all of us. The anthropological and psychological evidence for this is very strong.

One more concept of Jung's system must be mentioned here — Jung's idea of the Self. Jung saw the Self as the complete realization in living of each unique person. We must be careful, Jung believed, not to confuse the Self with the Ego (the busy, touchy, me-first element in ourselves), nor even with our overt personality or "persona" (which is the front we acquire with which to face the world), and certainly not with what he called the "shadow side" (the vicious bits of ourselves of which we are ashamed). The Self is the fully-realized totality of what we are, conscious and unconscious, good and evil, egotistical and socially-minded, an integrated personal whole, focused effectively on living and relating. To Jung the neurotic was, essentially, a lopsided, unrealized individual. Therapy lay in clearing the blocks and setting the person free to grow and to be. But the Jungian system is far more than a therapy; it is an attempt to explain what most psychologists have dodged — the emergence and nature of consciousness. I have a dictionary of psychology in which there is no entry whatever for "consciousness"!

After that long preamble, let us return to *Jung in Modern Perspective*. The fundamental questions that Jung was asking are now moving to the centre of the stage in contemporary science, psychology and philosophy. Hard science can handle efficiently and effectively the objective side of reality. It lays no claim to being equipped to deal with the subjective side. Between the objective and subjective aspects of experience, bridges must be built if we are not to become personally and socially fragmented. Jung's innovative strength was that he saw these issues before they were clearly recognized, and sought to make them explicit. In the present volume, we have 17 psychologists, analysts and philosophers, from various backgrounds, including a Humanist psychologist, coming together to acknowledge and comment on the contribution to thought made by Jung. The result is a challenging and informative series of papers, not all of which are as lucid as they might be, but which together make a firm claim for Jung's rising reputation as an original thinker.

"But what about", a secularist might well ask, "Jung's acceptance of God?" Such a question reveals a misunderstanding. Jung rejected the Judaeo-Christian God. But god as a powerful idea he could not, and did not, deny. God is the archetype of archetypes, at the core of much primitive thinking,

taking on scores of names and forms around the world and throughout history. The god-idea is, therefore, a part of the inherited psychic structure of our species. God as an idea persists even though god as an entity is fading from human thought. What is the modern equivalent of the original archetypal god idea? Jung left that question in the air. He undoubtedly did believe in some sort of universal creative principle — akin to the *élan vital* of Bergson and Shaw. But he never clarified precisely what he meant.

One of the tasks of contemporary Humanists is to find an equivalent for god by a convincing elucidation of the exuberant, impersonal creativity of the universe, and the profound richness of subjective experience. This has not yet been achieved, as modern scientists freely admit. Atheists, then, would be wise to include Jung in their perspective. His thinking is not alien to theirs; it is complementary. This book is, however, not a book for beginners in Jungian thought. I cannot advise readers to buy it for themselves on spec — certainly not at the going price of £25! But to get a copy from the library and browse, following the papers that appeal and letting the others go, should be a rewarding experience for those who wish to keep in touch with important trends in modern thought.

Christian Nationalism in South Africa BARRY DUKE

Over the past eight years or so, *The Freethinker* has carried several in-depth articles chronicling events in South Africa. These have mostly been penned by an ex-South African journalist, Barry Duke, who takes up some of the points made in the Letters column last month by Peter van Wermeskerkan.

In previous articles I have written for *The Freethinker*, I have sought to demonstrate, often by quoting material produced by the Nationalist regime itself, that institutionalised racism, or apartheid, is firmly rooted in fundamentalist Christianity.

The South African regime has taken great pains over the years to refer to its noxious style of oppressive rule not simply as nationalism but "Christian Nationalism". The rigidly State-controlled education system is built on Christian National principles, and the same principles are applied to the State-controlled radio and television services. Furthermore, Nationalist politicians are constantly reminding the world that "Afrikaner society is the most religious on earth". This blend of Christian fundamentalism and nationalism has produced — as our television screens demonstrate virtually every day — a uniquely malevolent political system.

Unfortunately, because most Afrikaners tend to offer unquestioning allegiance to either the Nation-

alist regime, or, more recently to political organisations even further to the Right, the world at large has little choice but to see the Afrikaner as a bigoted, boorish, god-addled racist who is as patriotic as two short planks. This of course is unjustified. Peter van Wermeskerkan quite rightly points out, there are liberal Afrikaner elements at work in South Africa, and, indeed beyond the laager. It is also true that the Nationalists draw support from other sections of the white population, particularly from recently settled racists from Europe, who, particularly in the late 60s and early 70s were drawn to the Republic by the twin attractions of a high standard of living, and the knowledge that not only could they treat Black people with cruelty and contempt, *but were actually expected to do so*. An added bonus was the discovery that the Nationalist regime was overtly anti-Semitic, and it was hardly surprising that neo-fascist groups, comprising disenchanting Right-wing fanatics from such countries as Germany, England and Belgium sprang up in the bigger centres. In Johannesburg, for example, the Deutsche Bierkellar was the setting one day each April for a jolly celebration of Hitler's birthday.

Mr van Wermeskerkan is right too in pointing out that the 60-40 split between Afrikaner population and other white groups would produce statistics

showing that the Afrikaner was more likely to assault, or commit other crimes against Black people, but I can assure him, as someone who spent five years as a senior court correspondent for *The Star* newspaper, that the vast majority — a great deal more than 60 per cent of those indicted for such crimes — were Afrikaners. And this was in Johannesburg, the least Afrikanerised of all South African cities. I must also add that a great many assaults by Afrikaners on Blacks — several of which I have witnessed — never came to court because the victims, quite sensibly, feared the police and had no confidence in a judicial system which was rapidly becoming a rubber stamp for Nationalist policy.

Where Mr van Wermeskerkan is wrong is in thinking that the opposition press deliberately set out to publicise only those Immorality Act cases that involved Afrikaners, be they policemen or domineers. This law was, quite rightly, regarded as iniquitous by the English press, and the policy was to report every case in order to demonstrate to readers what a foul bit of legislation it was. That the act is now to be scrapped does not mean that the Nationalists have suddenly adopted a tolerant line towards sex across the colour bar. It simply means that they plan to rid the country of a law which has proved more embarrassing and harmful to themselves than anyone else. The scrapping of the act is seen by some as a major blow against bedrock apartheid. It is nothing of the sort because — apart from the many other inhumane laws that exist to prevent people of different races living a normal life together — the social stigmas so deeply entrenched in South African society in regard to mixed relationships are quite sufficient to prevent almost all forms of fraternisation.

The accusation that *The Freethinker* piece “was unhelpful in its criticism, and indicated a lack of insight into South Africa’s problems” was an oh-so-familiar response. “You don’t understand our difficulties”, and “Leave us to solve our problems our own way” are the oft-repeated cries one hears from that part of the world. Over the past few months in particular we have seen on television, and heard on radio precisely how they solve their problems — by murdering unarmed schoolchildren and beating black leaders to death in police custody.

At a time when we have witnessed Western leaders congratulating themselves on having snuffed out fascism in Europe forty years ago by destroying the Nazis, we need only to look towards South Africa to see that Fascism most certainly did not die. Like some awful virus it travelled abroad to re-establish itself in a virulent new form.

Finally, all I can say in response to Mr van Wermeskerkan’s somewhat fatuous statement that Afrikaners spend about a third of their lives sleeping is that one hopes that during these prolonged periods of unconsciousness they have extremely bad dreams about what is currently happening in South Africa.

LETTERS

EUTHANASIA LEGISLATION

May I thank Barbara Smoker for the general restraint of her reply to my article, *The Case against Euthanasia Legislation*, despite the rhetorical hyperbole of “as many non-existent bogies as a mediaeval monk”. The latter provoked a wry smile since I am a lifelong atheist (68), born of atheist parents, and I have before me, at this moment, my father’s membership card of the National Secular Society, dated 25 September, 1910.

My case was against legislation, and I would have thought that my three points, however arguable, were in the rationalist tradition rather than “non-existent bogies”. They were: first, that governments cannot always be trusted, Secondly, that legislation can subsequently be misused, abused and distorted, Thirdly, that many old people would be alarmed by euthanasia legislation.

The first two can readily be demonstrated by the historical record. I acknowledge that the third is a matter of opinion, but nothing in Barbara Smoker’s article would cause me to modify it. In fact, her curt comment—“Sick people ought not to be in the care of relatives who do not want them”—reinforces my opinion.

With regard to re-interpretation of legislation Barbara Smoker writes: “But these were all laws which increased governmental powers”. This is just not true, and not true in the very instance I quoted, the Fourteenth Amendment to the American Constitution, 1868. It said “nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty or property without due process of law”. In practice, life and liberty were forgotten and all subsequent cases were about property. Furthermore, “person” became the legal fiction for a business corporation. The Amendment was never once used to protect those whom it was intended to protect, the newly-emancipated negro citizens. Instead, over a period of seventy years it was used invariably by greedy corporations to defeat progressive state legislation in the field of welfare. Over 230 State Laws intended to regulate minimum wages, maximum working hours, and health and safety at work were declared invalid after business corporations had argued that the Fourteenth Amendment allowed them to do as they pleased. In 1938 Supreme Court Justice Black, in a dissenting judgment, said: “The history of the Amendment proves that the people were told that its purpose was to protect weak and helpless human beings, and were not told that it was intended to remove corporations in any fashion from the control of State governments”.

May I repeat that my case was against legislation. The 1965 opinion poll of doctors quoted by Barbara Smoker does not refer to legislation. I sent my article to some doctors of my acquaintance. A geriatric specialist replied:- “We DO practice euthanasia to some degree and on our own terms, but attempts to codify our practice by legislation would be disastrous to us”. A retired neuro-surgeon wrote: “I fully endorse your views on the question of euthanasia. It would be extremely dangerous to legislate on this matter, for the reasons you state. It would open the door to all kinds of abuse, and in any case, would be strongly resisted by the medical profession”. He continued: “After all, doctors are NOT in the business of killing people deliberately”. He ended: “Finally, may I say that I cannot recall a single case of a patient in full possession of his/her mental faculties who has asked for life to be terminated”. And this in more than forty years of practice.

KARL HEATH

A MYTHICAL FIGURE

Steuart Campbell's article, *The Empty Tomb and the Origin of Christianity* (May issue), while offering a "rational" explanation for the disappearance of the body of Jesus from the tomb, still makes the assumption that Jesus actually existed. Surely rational atheists should be arguing that Jesus never existed at all.

Taken in its proper context, the "prophecy" of Isaiah that "a virgin will conceive and bear a son" was, according to Thomas Paine in his *Age of Reason*, a response to the question "will the Kingdom of Judah win the war against the alliance of Syria and Israel?" Isaiah was not saying that a virginal conception was imminent. His answer was another way of saying "Pigs might fly", instead of "a virgin will conceive", he would have got the same message across (that Judah would be defeated) and there would be no Christianity today.

Christianity is an amalgam of beliefs current in many old religions (virgin birth, impregnation of mortal women by a god, etc) and Jewish prophecy. It would be more accurate to assert that Jesus did not exist, instead of trying to say that he did exist but was not divine.

TREVOR A. MILLAR

QUESTIONS

Steuart Campbell's article in the May issue made good reading, but contained some dubious propositions. Why does he date the crucifixion as AD 33 and not AD 31? What makes him think that Roman soldiers accompanied the Temple (Thought) Police when they arrested Jesus for blasphemy?

TED GOODMAN

"I Have Experienced God"

An inquest in Sunderland has heard how Peter Sawick, a 29-year-old biology teacher, killed himself after a period of religious torment. Shortly before his death Mr Sawick wrote a letter saying: "I have experienced God and he has called me".

Joseph Bamborough, a friend of the dead man, told the inquest that Mr Sawick held strong religious beliefs. When they met at a local library his eyes were glazed and he said "his good part was finding his bad part".

Three days later Mr Sawick ran into the street after cutting his throat with a bread knife. Mrs Lesley Reid said she was driving her car when Mr Sawick, who was covered in blood, jumped on to the bonnet. He punched the windscreen and then fell on to the road.

Recording a verdict that Mr Sawick took his own life, the Coroner said that the letter Mr Sawick had written indicated he intended to die. He killed himself "from some emotional religious experience or feeling".

According to the Roman Catholic weekly, *The Universe*, it is estimated that around 60 per cent of baptised Catholics in England, Scotland and Wales do not attend Mass regularly.

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. The Prince Albert, Trafalgar Street (adjacent to Brighton Station). Sunday, 7 July, 5.30 pm for 6 pm. Annual General Meeting.

British Humanist Association. Summer School, Debden House, Debden Green, Loughton, Essex, 19-23 August. Details obtainable from the organiser: Don Liversedge, 25 Chandlers Road, Harrow, HA1 4QX, telephone: 01-861 1730.

Edinburgh Humanist Group. Programme of Forum meetings from the secretary, 59 Fox Covert Avenue, Edinburgh, EH12 6UH, telephone 031-334 8372.

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.

Humanist Holidays. Exmouth, Devon, 20 July-3 August (either one or both weeks). Details from Betty Beer, 58 Weir Road, London SW12, telephone 01-673 6234.

Lewisham Humanist Group. Unitarian Meeting House, 41 Bromley Road, London SE6. Tuesday, 27 June, 7.45 pm. Punishment and Crime (Group Discussion).

Sutton Humanist Group, Friends House, Cedar Road, Sutton. Wednesday, 10 July, 7.45 pm. Colin Emmett: The United Nations Youth Year.

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

A Public Lecture by

PAUL KURTZ

Editor, Free Inquirer

HUMANISM IN THE UNITED STATES

Monday, 1 July, 7 pm

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,
Holborn, London WC1

Sponsored by the
British Humanist Association,
National Secular Society,
Rationalist Press Association and
South Place Ethical Society.

the religion which had sustained the country for so many years.

Gerald Kaufman, the shadow Home Secretary, was concerned that the interests of shop workers should be protected. He said that the recommendation of the Auld committee on Sunday trading was dependant on retention of wages councils. Abolition of this protection would seriously affect the most exploited group of workers in Britain. While the public might well wish for wider shopping opportunities, they would not want them at the expense of badly paid shop assistants.

The substantial Commons majority in favour of reforming the Sunday trading laws is a devastating blow for the sabbatarians. While the Lord's Day Observance Society spearheaded the attack against reform, a wide range of Christian organisations and journals did their bit to rally the faithful. But the vast majority of Christians have no stomach for a battle to defend outmoded laws. Many of them are embarrassed by the obvious fact that prosecutions of shopkeepers are initiated by informers.

With this crushing defeat, the outlook for sabbatarians is gloomier than a Victorian Sunday. Regarded with amusement by the general public and irritation or condescension by their fellow-Christians, they are now an oddity in a Britain moving towards the twenty-first century. The Lord's Day Observance Society still has a following in Northern Ireland — a dubious distinction indeed — but when the inevitable merger with the Republic takes place, then it really will be curtains for those who do battle for "Our Lord and His Day".

The Lord's Day Observance Society declares in the current issue of its journal, *Joy and Light*, (!) that it seeks to fulfil the prophet Isaiah's command: "Cry aloud, spare not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet". The certainty of reforming legislation on Sunday trading has damaged the sabbatarian trumpet beyond repair.

The freethought movement has long campaigned for Sunday freedom. And that means freedom to spend the day in accordance with a person's religious convictions, or to visit the theatre, play games or do the shopping.

Of course the protection of shop assistants should be a matter of concern. Freethinkers have always sought to improve the quality of life; they were doing so when shop assistants were working an 80-hour week. The sabbatarians have recently become interested in the welfare of workers in the retail industry. Their predecessors had little to say about the slave labour conditions in shops and stores in "the good old days".

In recent years there have been odd coalitions like the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers and the Lord's Day Observance Society

attempting to prevent reform of trading laws. Trade unions should be organising more strongly in the retail industry, not looking to anomalous laws for protection. And if shop assistants went on strike for higher wages or a shorter working week they would have very little support from the LDOS or any evangelical organisation.

Scottish Conference

This year's Scottish Humanist Council conference was held at the Cowan Centre, Stirling.

The morning session was addressed by the new chairman of the British Humanist Association, Diana Rookledge. The BHA had in the last eighteen months put its financial affairs in order and was now in a stronger position to step up its publicity. It intends to make its presence felt as a lobby with strong rational and ethical views on TV and radio as well as in the press. It also intended to increase pressure on local authorities to include in their syllabuses for religious education the study of "non-theistic life stances". Thirteen education authorities had already accepted this.

The highlight of this year's conference was a highly-charged debate on "Humanism and the Cold War". David Hume would have been fascinated by the complex interplay between reason and the passions which this challenging topic aroused. The debate was ably introduced by Norman Macdonald, Secretary of the Glasgow Humanist Society, who, after reviewing briefly the history of East-West relations since World War II made a number of suggestions as to how humanists might react constructively to the frustrations and irrationalities of the present world scene. He claimed that all humanists must unite in condemning and opposing the use of nuclear weaponry, whether they felt that unilateral or multilateral action provided the best route to disarmament.

Several of these suggestions received strong support from subsequent speakers. It was argued that humanists should try to expose the fallacy of interpreting world tensions in the naive religious terminology of good and evil; that they should dig out the facts about the arms race and about Soviet foreign policy, rather than swallow the biased tidbits offered by most of the British press; that they should encourage the British Foreign Secretary and the European Parliament to assert independent views on the present confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States.

The Scottish Humanist Council consists of representatives of Glasgow Humanist Society, Edinburgh Humanist Group and Edinburgh University Secular Society.

NIGEL BRUCE