
The Freethinker

secular humanist monthly

founded 1881

Vol. 106. No. 11

NOVEMBER 1986

30p

FEAR AND IGNORANCE THE FAMILY'S ENEMY, SAYS FPA CHAIRMAN

"Although the vocal minority still rages against the provision of sex education, it is abundantly clear from all research — which increases with every year — that children want and need guidance on sex and personal relationships and that parents want their children to receive sex education at school", Dr John Dunwoody, chairman of the Family Planning Association, writes in his introduction to the Association's annual report. He adds that teachers should be appropriately trained and sex education should acknowledge "the wide diversity of cultures and family structures in society, and give young people the support and care that they need".

Dr Dunwoody castigates pressure groups — which, as *Freethinker* readers will know, consist in the main of religious zealots — that are constantly harping about a threat to the family. He accuses them of being totally ignorant of the facts.

The greatest threat "is the lack of recognition that there are so many different kinds of family, that all are valid and that family stability depends not on rigid family structures but on enabling all members of families to develop and grow in caring and supportive personal and sexual relationships.

"The Family Planning Association has always supported the family — we would have changed our name long ago had that not been the case. But we are also aware that families and societies are made up of individuals and that it is their hopes and fears, their emotional and sexual fulfilment and the quality of their relationships that contributes to the health and well-being of all.

"The greatest threats to this well-being are from fear and ignorance. The greatest strengths with which to combat these threats, to dispel ignorance, are knowledge, understanding and perseverance".

The report states that during the year the FPA faced a series of threats to its work. These included legal battles arising from what has become known as the Gillick case. And there were threats to

fertility research in the future from Enoch Powell's Unborn Children (Protection) Bill. The Obscene Publications Bill endangered the availability of sex education material and family planning information leaflets. The provision of family planning clinic services was threatened by District Health Authority budget restrictions.

In a foreword to the report, the Secretary of State for Social Services pays a tribute to the Family Planning Association's "important role in health education and promotion". This includes projects like the "Health Care in the High Street" scheme which is operated by the Family Planning Information Service and the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain. Under the scheme, free family planning information leaflets are distributed in 12,000 pharmaceutical outlets.

Mr Fowler writes: "The scheme has now been used for leaflets not only on contraception but also on cystitis, breast and cervical cancer and giving up smoking — and my Department has used it for distributing leaflets for parents about drug misuse, as part of our own major campaign. Thus FPIS's work has made family planning information easily available to those who may not currently be using the services and has helped to develop a new route for the supply of other valuable health education material to people who might not be aware of it or normally seek it.

"The Government and the FPA share a common objective — to enable people to make informed choices about their lifestyle and health".

The FPA operates in eleven regions, working in collaboration with medical, health and community-care professionals. Local FPA workers arrange education courses, exhibitions, information and literature distribution. Over 150,000 inquiries a year are received at the Association's national and regional offices. Between six and eight million items of free literature are distributed.

The Freethinker

UK ISSN 0016-0687

Editor: WILLIAM McILROY

The Freethinker was founded in 1881 by George William Foote and is published mid-monthly. The views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Publishers or of the Editor.

Articles, Reviews, News Reports, Obituaries, Letters and Announcements should be sent by the 10th of the preceding month to the Editor at 14 Coundon Road, Coventry CV1 4AW, West Midlands (telephone Coventry 20070). Unsolicited reviews should not be submitted.

Vol 106 No 11 CONTENTS November 1986

FEAR AND IGNORANCE THE FAMILY'S ENEMY, SAYS FPA CHAIRMAN ...	161
NEWS AND NOTES ...	162
The Blight of the World; No Sects Please, We're Chinese; Competition Not Welcome; Fighting Back; Gilbertian Anniversary; A Century of <i>Freedom</i>	
SERIOUS MANPOWER SHORTAGE HITS THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND ...	165
THE WINDSORS—AN EVERYDAY STORY OF PALACE FOLK ...	166
T. F. Evans	
THE VICAR OF JESUS CHRIST ...	168
David Tribe	
FREETHINKER REVIEWS ...	170
BOOKS	
Religion Inc: The Church of Scientology Reviewer: Karl Heath	
"Don't be a Soldier!" The Radical Anti-War Movement in North London 1914-1918 Reviewer: Andrew Whitehead	
Wild Berries Reviewer: Michael Duane	
MUSLIM SCHOOLS IN ENGLAND ...	172
H. J. Blackham	
THE EVANGELICAL PROBLEM FAMILY ...	173
John Campbell	
LETTERS ...	174
SCHOOL RELIGION THE MOST BORING AND LEAST USEFUL SUBJECT ...	176
ABOLISH OATHS, SAYS DEAN ...	176
SUNDAY PUBS FOR NI ...	176

Postal subscriptions, book orders and donations to the Freethinker Fund should be sent to:

G. W. FOOTE & COMPANY,
702 HOLLOWAY ROAD, LONDON N19 3NL
(Telephone: 01-272 1266)

SPECIAL POSTAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES

UK and overseas: twelve months, £3.60. (UK six months, £2). USA: twelve months, \$8. Overseas subscribers are requested to obtain sterling drafts from their banks, but if remittance is in foreign currency (including Republic of Ireland), please add the equivalent of £5 sterling or USA \$7 to cover bank charges. Alternatively, send at your own risk currency notes convertible in the UK, plus bank charges equivalent to USA \$2.

David Neil & Co Printers South St Dorking

NEWS

THE BLIGHT OF THE WORLD

The news that an American "whites only" church is planning an expansion of its bad work to Britain has caused some alarm in religious and political circles. The Church of Jesus Christ Christian displays a photograph of Adolf Hitler next to the altar and preaches that only white people go to heaven. It has over a hundred branches in the United States where members include the "Grand Wizard" of the Ku-Klux-Klan.

It may seem odd that this country, where churches are closing by the score and membership is declining, should attract religious odd-balls from all over the world. The answer may lie partly in the fact that our obsolete charity laws strongly favour religious organisations. Any charlatan can set up what is in fact a business, claim that it is dedicated to "the advancement of religion" and enjoy the considerable fiscal benefit of charity status.

Simon Coombs, Conservative MP for Swindon, one of the areas selected by the Christian neo-Nazis, describes the Church's message as "pure racism and pure evil, nothing to do with Christianity at all". The first part of his statement is true, the second part is mistaken.

The pure evil of racism has a lot to do with Christianity. Biblically inspired Christian beliefs caused some of the worst racist crimes in nearly two thousand years of inhuman history. The Church ordered forced baptism, confiscation of property, deprivation of legal rights, abduction of children and the enslavement of entire Jewish communities. Popes, bishops, priests and Protestant reformers alike reviled the Jews, blaming them for every affliction and disaster. John Chryostom, an early father of the Church, denounced the Jew as "a murderer of prophets, a murderer of Christ, a murderer of God". Christian teachings inspired pogroms and extermination crusades in which countless thousands of Jews perished.

The pure evil of racism is still being fostered and promoted by Christian zealots. Another American group, the Word of Christ Mission, recently published a manifesto in which it stated: "The evil hate is worse than any the world has ever known. They have no Christ. . . They are leeches, parasites, liars, thieves, murderers, and spread a terrible plague on mankind by their mere presence . . . to tell the evil of the Jews is an impossible task . . .

"With Christ there is eternal light and joy, but without Christ there is eternal darkness".

AND NOTES

Britain also has its Christian groups with programmes to stir up race hatred and division. Typical of these is CHOICE, one of several organisations set up by that Christian stalwart, Lady Birdwood, whose motto is "Racialism is Patriotism". She has been closely associated with neo-Nazi groups for many years and has been described by one newspaper as "the gently smiling face of the ultra-Right in British politics . . . responsible for the launch of at least two fiercely racist propaganda campaigns in London".

One CHOICE leaflet denounces the World Union of Churches and the Catholic Commission for Racial Justice as "ecclesiastical madmen and traitors who equate Marxism with Christianity and brotherly love with mixed marriages". It goes on to say that "race-mixing runs contrary to the natural order. . . The different races were separated by divine wisdom and purpose".

Membership of far-Right religious groups overlaps to a considerable extent with the more restrained (or cautious) organisations which campaign on "moral and family issues". Right-wing Christians are the most consistent supporters of capital punishment, religious indoctrination, censorship and "Victorian values"; there are no more relentless opponents of abortion, sex education and divorce. They spearhead the opposition to married clergy and the ordination of women in the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches respectively.

If the odious Church of Jesus Christ Christian jackboots its way into Britain, it will find that the ground has been well prepared by Right-wing followers of "gentle Jesus".

NO SECTS PLEASE, WE'RE CHINESE

The Chinese people are certainly flexible. The aberration and excesses of the Cultural Revolution are almost forgotten and have been replaced by an "open door" policy. The prospect of renewing friendly relations with the Soviet Union is brighter than would have seemed possible five years ago. Strangest of all, millions of Chinese have just given an ecstatic welcome to Queen Elizabeth, monarch of a country which, in its imperialist heyday, plundered and humiliated China.

Even before the Communists came to power in 1948 the Chinese seemed to wear their religion rather lightly. Less than fifty years ago the *Chinese*

Year Book stated that the number of bona fide believers "has been, and is, comparatively small". The number of Christians in the country at the end of the 1930s was estimated at three and a half million, the vast majority of them Roman Catholics. However, the Vatican's close links with Japan did not make life easier for Catholic missionaries.

China has a post-revolution generation which passed through the ranks of Communist youth organisations and imbibed the thoughts of Chairman Mao. Nevertheless the Chinese authorities have a problem that has been familiar in Western countries over the last three decades. Religious sects which hoodwink dupes with extravagant claims and promises have been active in several cities. Ostensibly English language teachers, they have been working in hotels and educational establishments, recruiting mainly youthful converts.

The Children of God have apparently been the most active. Their success must at least in part be due to the fact that female members offer sexual favours to attract new members. Such "missionary work" is frowned on by the puritanical regime. Four members were recently expelled from the country and 115 missionaries left voluntarily after police warnings about their activities.

China's tradition of secret societies, together with an upsurge of youthful scepticism, makes fertile ground for mystical sects. Young people are no longer conformist and compliant, an attitude that was reflected in a survey published in the magazine, *Society*. Half of the 250 interviewees expressed dissatisfaction with their lives. Many young Chinese are not interested in the Communist party or impressed by the country's economic achievements.

In such an atmosphere, almost anything Western has its attractions. And that, unfortunately, includes harmful religious sects.

COMPETITION NOT WELCOME

Over the next few weeks the dog-collared fraternity will be indulging in their annual whine about Christ being left out of Christmas. Rankled, no doubt, by the growing unpopularity of religious education, some of them have already been letting off steam about Hallowe'en activities in schools.

One Norfolk clergyman urged schools not to take part in a Hallowe'en painting competition. And another gentleman of the cloth in the same county, the Rev Geoffrey Unwin, rector of Mulbarton, warned readers of his parish magazine "not to trifle with unseen powers". He commented: "Most people seem to think that spirits, devils and witches don't exist, but they do".

The warning about "trifling with unseen powers" sounds rather strange coming from a Christian priest. What is he doing when performing rituals,

offering prayers to an "unseen power" or denouncing false (non-Christian) gods?

We trust Mr Unwin's assertion that most people don't believe in spirits, devils and witches is correct. It was such biblically-based beliefs that inspired the witch-hunting activities of his fifteenth-century predecessors. Unfortunately there are still many people who have a vested interest in fostering superstitious nonsense.

FIGHTING BACK

We have Alcoholics Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous and other similar groups dotted around the country. So it is probably just a matter of time before there is a British branch of Fundamentalists Anonymous, formed in the United States as a support group for those who have escaped from the clutches of the godly.

Richard Yao started Fundamentalists Anonymous just over a year ago and already it has over twenty thousand members. All fifty States are represented in the membership.

Mr Yao belonged to and eventually escaped from a fundamentalist Christian group, and is well aware of the fight he has on his hands. Resources are minimal, and most of the organisation's work is done by volunteers. But it has made an impressive media impact and developed a therapy programme for ex-fundamentalists who face much the same problems and harassment as do those who escape from the Moonies and similar cults.

As a member of a fundamentalist group Mr Yao's life was strictly controlled; now it is frequently threatened. Death threats are a serious matter in a country gripped by Christian mania, and where there are virtually no restrictions on the sale of guns.

Fundamentalists Anonymous has, however, been accorded one signal honour. The Rev Jerry Falwell — he of the Moral Majority — has described it to be Enemy Number One. Fundamentalists Anonymous thus replaces the American Civil Liberties Union on the roll of honour.

The ex-fundamentalists are understandably concerned by the political ambitions of some Christian fanatics, particularly those known as televangelists. Richard Yao commented: "We have escaped the kind of life they will impose on others if they get into office".

Of all the religious ravers in the United States today, the Rev Pat Robertson — who is widely believed to have presidential aspirations — is the most fundamentalist and Right-wing of the lot. He claims that one of the many gifts bestowed on him is the ability, under divine inspiration, to cure piles. It is more likely that his fundamentalist rantings will cause rather than cure a pain you-know-where.

GILBERTIAN ANNIVERSARY

Jonathan Miller, the well-known humanist, is director of the English National Opera's acclaimed production of Gilbert's and Sullivan's *The Mikado*, which coincides with the 150th anniversary of the librettist's birth.

William S. Gilbert was already a successful dramatist when he and Arthur Sullivan joined forces to write what became known as the Savoy operas. Sullivan was England's leading composer, whose work was in great demand by choral societies and the public. His oratorio, *The Light of the World*, was regarded by many as a masterpiece comparable to Handel's *Messiah*, while *The Lost Chord* was top of the Victorian drawing-room pops. Another of Sullivan's compositions was sung in churches, chapels and mission halls throughout the British Empire. It was called *Onward, Christian Soldiers*.

Although Gilbert called himself a Conservative and was a member of the Junior Carlton Club, he was far from popular with "those in authority". His work contained too many digs at peers, politicians, clergy and even royalty. He abhorred blood "sports" which he once said will come to be regarded "as we regard the Spanish bull-fight or the bear-baiting of our ancestors". A martinet in the theatre and at times a cruel critic, the irascible Gilbert had his soft side too. And he was quite fearless.

Unlike Sullivan, Gilbert was not regarded with much favour by Queen Victoria. When *The Gondoliers* was given a Command Performance at Windsor Castle, Gilbert's name was omitted from the programme. Queen Victoria knighted Sullivan in 1883, but Gilbert had to wait another 24 years before he was tapped on both shoulders by King Edward VII.

The Mikado attracted the attention of censors and authoritarians right from its initial run when the Japanese ambassador tried to get it suppressed. His protest was ignored, but a projected revival in 1905 was forbidden by the Lord Chamberlain as the Japanese were our allies at the time. Three years later the boot was on the other foot; Britain and Japan were at war and Gilbert commanded large fees for permission to perform *The Mikado*. But as late as 1935 it was being denounced as "immoral, revolutionary and obscene".

The Mikado is being performed at the London Coliseum, a short distance from Southampton Street, Strand, where Gilbert was born, at Number 17, on 18 November, 1836.

The Irish Council Again Bloodsports has complained to the Pope about the number of priests who patronise hare coursing. No fewer than eight priests were seen at a recent hare coursing event in Clonmel.

A CENTURY OF "FREEDOM"

The anarchist paper *Freedom* has celebrated its centenary, joining the short list of radical periodicals which started in the 1880s and have survived until the 1980s.

Freedom began publication in October 1886, and soon became the leading voice of mainstream anarchism in the English-speaking world. It has always had connections with other progressive movements, including freethought. Its predecessor, *The Anarchist* was started in 1885 by Henry Seymour, also an active secularist. The main inspiration of *Freedom* was Peter Kropotkin, a frequent contributor for several decades and also a regular lecturer to ethical societies. Other well-known contributors were G. B. Shaw and Edward Carpenter in the early years and Herbert Read and Alex Comfort in later years.

But most of the people involved with *Freedom* have been almost unknown. The first editor was Charlotte Wilson, also an active Fabian. (It was originally published from Annie Besant's office at the Freethought Publishing Company, until in 1888 Charles Bradlaugh objected to having anarchists on the premises!) The second editor was Alfred Marsh, whose father was G. J. Holyoake's son-in-law and an active rationalist. The third was Thomas Keell, who kept *Freedom* going until 1927, and produced an occasional *Freedom Bulletin* until 1932. (His companion Lilian Wolfe, who became involved in suffragist politics before the First World War, remained active in libertarian and anti-militarist politics until her death in 1974.)

A rival *Freedom* was started in 1930 by Ambrose G. Barker, an active rationalist, but this also closed in 1936. By then, however, interest in anarchism had been revived by the Spanish Civil War, and in 1936 *Spain and the World* was started by Vernon Richards, who is still active. (His companion, Marie Louise Berneri, was the main inspiration until her early death in 1949.) The paper's name was changed to *Revolt!* and then to *War Commentary* in 1939, and back to *Freedom* in 1945. The Freedom Press has published several other periodicals at various times, especially *Anarchy* from 1961 to 1971, and many pamphlets and books. The Freedom Bookshop has been the main outlet for libertarian literature since the Second World War.

Freedom has had trouble both from the authorities and from other anarchists at various times during the century. The editors were imprisoned for their opposition to both world wars, and the group has been subjected to verbal and sometimes even to physical attacks from more militant groups. But, despite all such difficulties, the Freedom Press has generally succeeded in giving both a clear voice to mainstream anarchism and a fair hearing to all other varieties of anarchism.

A special centenary issue of *Freedom*, which appeared in October, contains 92 pages and includes a large amount of historical and biographical material, as well as many articles on various aspects of anarchism today, together with poems and cartoons. The only woman among the nearly 50 contributors is Barbara Smoker, president of the National Secular Society, who argues that "Anarchism implies Atheism". Other contributors include Peter Cadogan, former general secretary of the South Place Ethical Society, and Nicolas Walter, managing director of the Rationalist Press Association. We are reminded that the traditional slogan of the old anarchist movement was: "No God, no Master!"

Freedom, Centenary issue, price £2 plus 50p postage, from Freedom Bookshop, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Serious Manpower Shortage Hits Church of Scotland

The Church of Scotland faces a crisis, and it will have to change its killjoy image if it wants to attract more men into its congregations. This warning is given in the October issue of the Church's journal, *Life and Work*.

The writer, Harry Dutch, is a newly ordained auxiliary minister in Dumbarton and a public relations executive. He says that men are deserting the Church in hordes and many of them say openly that sermons are of no relevance to their lives.

Mr Dutch writes: "It is an unfortunate fact that many ordinary, working-class men today view those who are regular church worshippers as killjoys. For these men religion has become an irrelevancy, a joke, something that one sees as necessary at baptisms, weddings and funerals.

"When the average man sees becoming a Christian as being stripped of his masculinity, humanity, sense of fun and pleasure in life, and being turned into some neutral pew filler, he will continue to walk past the Church door".

Increasingly, Scotsmen open the door to a minister with the greeting: "You'll be wanting to speak to the wife".

Another familiar sight in Scotland is a man dressed for the golf course driving up and depositing his children at the church door.

Mr Dutch says that the crisis is being faced with the most terrible apathy. And he concludes with a chilly blast up the Kirk's kilt: "Despairing hands continue to be wrung and pious platitudes uttered while the wholesale defection of men goes on".

The Windsors—an Everyday Story of Palace Folk

T. F. EVANS

Fifty years ago the House of Windsor was the centre of a crisis which caused alarm throughout Britain and the Empire. King Edward VIII had become enamoured of a lady named Mrs Wallis Simpson. Being both an American and a divorcee, she was unacceptable to all classes of British society. Few people, particularly the Archbishop of Canterbury, emerged with credit from the affair which culminated in the King's abdication and exile.

The late Duchess of Windsor proved to be most far-sighted and public-spirited in her choice of a time at which to die. The news of the event was given to the British people and the world on 24 April, the day after the celebration of the feast of St George, patron saint of England. Some unintended ironies might be found here, but for an associate of the Royal Family to die at that time could only have the effect of directing a sharper public interest on the royal house in general, thus beginning to prepare the way for an orgy of royalty worship to which we were all looking forward eagerly — the wedding of a younger son of the present Queen.

Finally, and most important, it was shrewd of the Duchess to die in this particular year, half a century after she was a central figure in what is widely believed to have been one of the greatest personal and constitutional crises ever to develop in this country. Whether by design or the result of a happy coincidence, the independent broadcasting authorities gave a second showing of the long television programme, *Edward and Mrs Simpson*, telling the story of the pair who subsequently became the Duke and Duchess of Windsor. There will now be no excuse for anyone to be surprised when the avalanche of newspaper articles, radio and television comment descends upon us next month on the fiftieth anniversary of the abdication of Edward VIII.

The bare bones of the story may be stated simply for the benefit of those who have forgotten or who never knew what it was all about. The eldest son of King George V established a reputation, when he was Prince of Wales, for great charm, with which he had won immense public and private sympathy. He had not married, although he was known by the kind of people who do know such things to have had intimate relationships with different women. At the time when he came to the throne on the death of his father in January 1936, he was a bachelor of 41.

For some time, he had been closely associated

with a Mrs Ernest Simpson, an American lady, well known in what is called London society. No categorical statement has been made about the exact nature of the intimacy between the monarch and his friend, but there had been a great deal of guesswork. In October of the same year, Edward told the Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, that he intended to marry Mrs Simpson as soon as she was divorced; the divorce action was about to be brought. Baldwin was put in an impossible position. He sought to persuade the King to give up the idea. The other members of the Royal Family were opposed, in particular Edward's mother, Queen Mary, widow of George V. Nothing had any effect. The divorce went through (with more than a suspicion of collusion and therefore illegality). Mrs Simpson was granted a *decree nisi* against her husband and in six months she would be free to marry again.

Edward, as head of the Church of England, realised the difficulties of expecting the Church to accept a twice divorced woman (there had been a husband before Ernest Simpson) as the consort of the sovereign. Edward's dilemma was widely debated. In the words of Harold Nicholson in his diary for 30 November 1936:

The upper classes mind her being an American more than they mind her being divorced. The lower classes do not mind her being an American but loathe the idea that she has had two husbands already.

Edward made it clear that if he could not have his beloved Wallis as his Queen he would be prepared to go. He went. The throne of the Empire rocked, but it did not collapse.

The story has been compared at different times with *Richard II* (the abdication of the King), *The Prisoner of Zenda* (love between royalty and commoner) and even with *Antony and Cleopatra* (all for love and the world well lost), but these need not be pursued. What is true, and it may be the highest praise that we give today, is that the story makes good television, a royal soap opera of the first rank.

Two main things emerged from *Edward and Mrs Simpson*. The first was, bluntly, that Edward was really a fool. He never seems to have had the slightest idea of the conflict between his personal inclination and public duties. To say this is not to share all the condemnation that was poured upon him. It is merely to say that if anyone consents to play a certain game he cannot object when the rules of the game that he knew all along are enforced against him. He was presented in the television story not entirely unsympathetically, but as a figure of little

substance. He moved in a trivial society and his strongest allegiances appeared to be, apart from Mrs Simpson, to the liquor trade and the tobacco industry.

As for Mrs Simpson, it is hard to say what her motives and expectations were. She insisted that she did not assume that she would become Queen, but it is almost impossible to believe that the thought never entered her head. If she did not lie to her legal advisers at the time of her divorce action, she misled them very seriously. Her friends would not hear of any criticism of her motives or her behaviour. Others were less certain.

One feature of the story was strangely neglected in the television version. This was the religious ingredient. Perhaps the reason for this being treated so briefly was that it was not thought to be necessary to cloud the romantic story of the not-so-young lovers with the interpellations of the Archbishop of Canterbury. That dignitary played a very small part on the screen. In fact the Archbishop figured largely in the real life drama and was cast as the villain by many who supported Edward. Some who were not closely concerned will recall the use made of the first syllable of the Archbishop's Latin name — Cantaur.

Another political diarist of the time, the wealthy Tory, Henry "Chips" Channon, wrote on 14 December 1936, only a few days after the abdication:

Of course the most conspicuous rat of all is the Archbishop of Canterbury, old Cosmo Cantaur, who, in a monstrous broadcast last night, poured scorn on the late King. . .

Many people, including some who did not defend the King — Channon did — found the Archbishop's behaviour difficult to forgive, but it is here as with the King himself. If the system was accepted, if the rules of the game were agreed, there were no grounds for ignoring them as soon as unforeseen difficulties arose. The many keen students of the relations between Church and State among readers of this journal will not need this aspect of the matter to be elaborated.

Was the episode as important as all that? Probably not. Some made much of it. Winston Churchill behaved as usual in such a distorted and exaggerated way as to raise doubts how such a master of bombast could ever have become Prime Minister. He took his leave of Edward at the end by quoting the lines from Andrew Marvell:

He nothing common did or mean
Upon that memorable scene.

Possibly, in his emotion, Churchill the great Parliamentarian overlooked that those lines were written of a king, Charles I, who set up his own "divine right" against the representatives of the people, and died on the scaffold.

Atheist Centre Honoured

At the recent World Humanist Congress held in Oslo, Mrs J. Mythri received the Humanist Award on behalf of the Atheist Centre at Vijayawada, India.

Mrs Mythri spoke of the Centre's work to representatives of the British freethought movement in London last month. She said the award honoured the world and sacrifices of atheists all over the world who were fighting against religious intolerance and superstition.

"In particular it recognises the work done by the first known atheist centre which was started 46 years ago in India, which is considered to be a land of gods, religion, superstition and cults.

"In this darkness, the torch of reason and social progress was kept burning, on the one side by social reformers who challenged contemporary religious beliefs and rituals; and on the other, by the open declaration of atheism by Charwakas and Lokayatas in ancient India and by Ramaswami and Gora in modern times.

"Under the influence of Gora, the Vijayawada Atheist Centre developed as an example and as a model for the post-religious society.

"The various activities of the Atheist centre have clearly demonstrated that gods and religion are not necessary to do good or to be good. In its humble way the Centre is creating an alternative to the religious way of life".

A religious leader has asked devout Hindus not to throw relatives' bodies into the badly polluted River Ganges. They believe that cremating the dead and scattering their ashes on the river ensures salvation. But many are so poor that they cannot afford cremation.

Freethinker Fund

The latest list of contributions is acknowledged with thanks.

A. D. Gore, £1; A. Williams, £2 M. C. Ansell, S. Beer, J. L. Broom, A. J. Carswell, A. Chapman, D. J. George, W. R. Grant, B. Gray, Y. Gugel R. Humphries, H. Jack, L. T. Johnson, D. T. Kear, P. G. Lownds, P. Paris, C. G. Roberts, R. W. Simmonds, J. A. B. Spence, W. A. Stuart, J. D. Verney, A. B. Watson and J. M. Woodman, £1.40 each; W. H. Brown, J. R. Hutton, W. N. Ramage, W. G. Stirling and J. A. Stratford, £2.40 each; C. F. Ablethorpe and S. Hancock, £4.40 each; G. A. Airey, S. Exley, T. Haas, E. Haslam, E. Henderson, M. V. Hoare, C. F. Jacot, E. J. McCann, S. D. McDonald, A. W. F. Negus, G. Spiers and J. Warren, £6.40 each; P. Willig, £16.

Total for September: £147.40.

The Vicar of Jesus Christ

DAVID TRIBE

It was fresh and still in St Peter's Square, Rome, one September morning just after daybreak. And empty — save for a few derelicts shivering themselves back to sleep at the bases of Bernini's columns, and a youngish man wandering aimlessly and admiringly round the centre of the vast piazza.

He was in his early thirties, full-bearded and swarthy, about 165 centimetres tall and slim, dressed in a homespun woollen gown that, from a distance, might have been a peasant's smock or a faded hippie's kaftan.

Gradually his wandering grew less aimless as he advanced to the portico of the cathedral. All its bronze gates were shut to the world, so he moved sideways along the wall of Vatican Palace. At last he found a small wooden door with an iron spy grille, and knocked loudly on it.

A face appeared at the grille. "What do you want?"

"Is this where my Vicar lives?" asked the stranger.

"Vicar? Vicar? Know of any vicar around here?" the face demanded of an associate out of sight, before returning to its visitor. "In here we've got monsignors and bishops, archbishops and cardinals, princes and patriarchs of the Church — but vicars? — Hang on a bit". He consulted his friend, then returned. "Emil thinks you must want the Anglican College. That's where all the vicars hang out".

"No, not an Anglican vicar. The Vicar of Jesus Christ!"

"Bless my soul, you mean His Holiness the Pope, Bishop of Rome, Primate of the One Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Rome, Patriarch of the West, etc., etc. We hardly ever speak of him as the Vicar of Jesus Christ — though he is, of course".

"So I'm told. Well, can I see him?"

"You can't just bowl up here out of the blue demanding to see His Holiness. He's a very important man, and a very busy one. He's most unlikely to want to see you".

"Oh, he'll see me, all right".

"Who the hell are you?"

"Jesus Christ".

"Jesus Christ!" The face let out a roar of derision. He turned to his mate. "This loonie here says he's Jesus Christ".

A second face came to the window. "I must see this — Jesus Christ!"

The stranger nodded gravely. "Yes. But you may call me, 'Master'".

"I like his nerve", said face two to face one, more in admiration than annoyance. "He looks sane enough — even sincere. Must be an actor down from Cine Città. . ." He spoke through the grille.

"What's your stunt, then?"

"Stunt?"

"Yes. Why knock us up at this hour of the morning with a cock-and-bull story like this? You can't expect us to believe you?"

"Why not? It's the truth".

"Well, for a start, you don't look as if you've been dead 2,000 years".

"You forget I've been resurrected 2,000 years".

"Yes, well. . ." The voice sounded embarrassed. "Anyhow, you don't look a bit like your pictures. In fact, you don't even look Italian".

"I'm not Italian".

"That's what I say. Everyone who's anyone in the Church is Italian".

"Not any more. Even my Vicar isn't".

"He's got you there", said face one with a chuckle.

"Okay. So your Vicar is Polish. At least he's European — but why am I carrying on with this 'your Vicar' nonsense? He's no more your Vicar than the Queen of England".

Face one became businesslike again. "Me mate's right. The party's over. Good day to you, whoever you are". He slammed the grille shut.

It immediately flew open again.

"That's funny. It's never done that before".

"It's never been confronted with the Lord of the Universe before".

Face one struggled with the grille. "Now I can't move it . . . Lend a hand, Emil".

The two guards struggled in vain with the grille.

"You won't budge it", said the stranger mildly.

"You'd better let me in".

"What'll we do?" whispered face one to face two.

"We could ask the Gorilla", was the reply.

"You keep gorillas instead of watchdogs?" asked the stranger.

"Big ears, haven't we? Me mate says we'll have to ask permission of Archbishop Marcinkus, and I agree with him".

"Oh yes, Marcinkus. The Pope's bodyguard".

"Certainly not".

"No, he didn't make too good a job of protecting John Paul I".

"I meant, His Grace is far too important a personage to be called a bodyguard".

"Well, he is . . . in a way", observed face two.

"Shut up, Emil". Face one glared at the stranger. "Archbishop Marcinkus is Mayor of Vatican City, president of the Institute for Religious Works".

"You mean the Vatican Bank".

"Are you some sort of atheist?"

"Why do you say that?"

"Well, you're so literal with everything. In here everything's symbolic".

"How do you mean?"

"Errr. . ."

Face two came to the rescue. "Like calling the Pope the Vicar of Jesus Christ".

"What's symbolic about that?"

"Well, I mean, it sounds sort of —er— temporary. You don't imagine anyone in here actually believes Jesus Christ is going to spoil everything by coming back, do you?"

"I see what you mean".

"If you'll stay quietly there, I'll see if Archbishop Marcinkus is willing to see you".

"I've kept quiet for 2,000 years. A few minutes more won't matter".

A messenger was dispatched to the private apartments of the Archbishop. The door was shut and a good-looking personal chaplain was keeping guard. Inside could be heard the sound of a shortwave radio giving the latest report from Wall Street, punctuated by the odd grunt and the crash of barbells hitting a sprung wooden floor.

"I've got a message for Archbishop Marcinkus from the Swiss Guard", said the messenger.

"He can't be disturbed".

"Why not?"

"He's at his devotions".

After a few minutes the staccato announcer, the grunts, groans and crashes subsided. The chaplain gave a cherubic smile and announced that His Grace's devotions were over for the morning. He knocked discreetly on the door and entered the archiepiscopal precincts. Presently he returned to the passage and beckoned the messenger inside.

"What is it!?" demanded Marcinkus testily. "I've got a splitting headache".

"Did you fall out of bed again?" asked the chaplain.

"I didn't, but Wall Street did".

After a sympathetic pause the messenger said there was a man downstairs demanding to see the Pope.

"Tell him to write a letter in the usual way, beseeching His Holiness to grant an audience".

"He's not willing to wait".

"God damn and blast! What's he look like?" His eyes narrowed and darted round the room. "He's not an Italian court bailiff?"

"No".

"Or a CIA agent?"

"I don't think so".

"What's he look like?"

"Quite ordinary, I suppose. Short to medium, slim, dressed poorly".

"We're all God's children. Remember what Our Lord said, 'Blessed are ye poor'. Where did he seem to come from?"

"Well, he's — sort of — darkish; I mean, swarthy. Has a big nose. In fact, he looks, well, — er — rather like. . ."

"Out with it, man. Like a what?"

"Like a Jew", gulped the hapless messenger.

"Oh, my God!!"

The chaplain wagged a reproving finger. "I hope Your Grace hasn't forgotten that since Vatican II even Jews are regarded as God's children".

"Of course I haven't forgotten. But there are Jews — and Jews. . . He's not Simon Wiesenthal?"

"No".

"Or anybody else from the Jewish Documentation Centre in Vienna? No matter what the yellow press says, I'm not a Nazi. And the last Nazi I ever knew is now safely in Argentina".

"I don't think he's from Vienna".

"He's not from New York!? Not the Jewish Mafia? I'm sick of being hounded over those Ambrosiano debts. I've given my pound of flesh. . . Look, did the fellow give his name?"

"Yes".

"Well, why don't you tell me! ? Out with it! What is it?"

"Jesus Christ".

"Thank God for that!"

The chaplain looked startled. "You mean you were expecting him?"

"Of course I wasn't expecting the *real* Jesus Christ — whoever *he* was. I mean, the fellow downstairs is obviously a lunatic. I was frightened he might have been sane. — Why doesn't the Guard send him packing?"

"They say he's too strong for them".

Marcinkus flexed his biceps. "I'll settle this". By the time he reached the outer door, the stranger was walking away, sadly shaking his head. The Archbishop glared at the Guard. "Why don't you keep this grille shut!?" He slammed it to and strode back to his apartments.

Pope John Paul II's tour of Australia, which starts on 24 November, will be sponsored by a major brewery. This agreement with the South Australian Brewery Holdings Group has displeased some Protestant churches which have been fighting against any extension of the hours when alcoholic drink may be sold. But Fr Anthony Kain, director of the papal visit, says he cannot see anything unholy about a brewery paying a "significant" amount towards the cost of the tour.

**ATHEISM, FREETHOUGHT,
POLITICS, HISTORY**

Books, pamphlets, and back issues of
"The Freethinker".

For full list write to:
G. W. Foote & Co, 702, Holloway Road,
London N19 3NL.

RELIGION INC: THE CHURCH OF SCIENTOLOGY, by Stewart Lamont. Harrap, £9.95

It was almost sixty years ago that, having exhausted H. G. Wells and finding Jules Verne tedious, I discovered the strange American world of what was to become known as science fiction. My local Woolworths sold remainder copies of American magazines for threepence each. Piled on a counter, they were mostly *Snappy Stories* and *Breezy Stories* with leggy girls on the covers which did not then interest me. But, delving among them, I would unearth, if lucky, an *Amazing Stories*, *Astounding Stories* or *Science Wonder Stories*, prized collectors' items today among the aficionados if I had kept them. David H. Keller, Otis B. Kline, P. Schuyler Miller, A. Hyatt Verrill, Donald Wandrei, Willy Ley and Hugo Gernsback were the curious names in these magazines.

Later, in the 1930s, when the novelty was wearing off, the name L. Ron Hubbard began to appear. His stories were not memorable, and no one could have foreseen his weird metamorphosis. Unlike Isaac Asimov, who was to become a gifted polymath and eminent humanist, Hubbard was to invent a pseudo-science called Dianetics and a pseudo-church called Scientology.

Religion Inc is an acceptable title for this book on Scientology. In the United States the organisation called itself a church for tax exemption purposes and also to claim immunities under the First Amendment. Scientology is also a commercial operation. Freethinkers will find no incongruity in this. The association of religion with economic and political power is age-old. The discovery of agriculture produced fertility religions; the city-states had their patron gods and goddesses like Pallas Athene; Egypt had its theocracy and Rome its God-Emperors; when land, in mediaeval feudalism, was more powerful than trade and industry, the Roman Catholic Church was the greatest landowner; the Rhineland had its Prince-Bishops; Protestantism reflected the rise of capitalism, and, in the Counter-Reformation, the Jesuits responded with their massive commercial operations; in the age of Imperialism the missionaries, like trade, followed the flag, with the Africans lamenting: "You had the Bible and we had the land. Now we have the Bible and you have the land"; Mrs Alexander would instruct the poor with *The rich man in his castle, The poor man at the gate, God made them high or lowly, and ORDERED their estate*; Bishop Meade of Virginia could preach to slaves that their status was ordained, that God had appointed white men over them "as overseers in His stead" and would punish them in the next world if they did not obey their masters.

Capitalism is a system of commodity production

and there is nothing surprising about religion being marketed and packaged as a commodity. Sinclair Lewis's Elmer Gantry lives on in Jerry Falwell and the electronic television churches. Sometimes it is old wine (more likely, the dregs) in new bottles. "That old-time religion" is sold to the "Moral Majority" of ignorant, ill-educated and deeply conservative American bigots. Fake "swamis" and "gurus" sell Asiatic mysticism to "hippies" and "drop-outs", and accumulate fleets of Rolls-Royces.

L. Ron Hubbard's approach was somewhat different. He set out to appeal to the millions of Americans who seek personal success, those who read Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People* and Norman Vincent Peale's *The Power of Positive Thinking*. Scientology was a slick and polished product, as up-to-date as the black and chromium gadgetry which was beginning to embellish transistor radios. Hubbard attacked the psychiatry upon which affluent Americans squandered fortunes, but he appealed to the same class by offering them a similar product, packaged with pseudo-scientific jargon and fake machines called E-meters, employing pyramid-selling to attract more clients and hinting at esoteric secrets, which, when revealed, turn out to be the most feeble science fiction.

Stewart Lamont has written a competent exposure of a trivial and sordid operation, with all its intrigues, quarrels and in-fighting. His subject perhaps deserves no better than his journalistic style, which, nevertheless, I found rather irritating. The Prologue, for instance, purports to describe the disposal of Ron Hubbard's ashes by five of his colleagues. One of them began to read a memorial address "his strong deep voice trembling with emotion". Another "let a tear glisten on her face". Then the author writes: "what you have just read is mostly fictional". Why? Why waste the reader's time?

Stewart Lamont is described on the dust-cover as a Religious Affairs Correspondent. One might therefore have expected him to know more about Gnosticism. He draws a parallel between the higher-level "secrets" of Scientology, and the claims of the early Gnostics to secret knowledge. This is fair enough, but he then goes on to swallow the Vatican slanders about Gnostic licentiousness. In fact, most Gnostics, Carpocrates perhaps excepted, were ascetic, and their belief in the conflict of good and evil, though unacceptable to freethinkers, was morally superior to the orthodox doctrine of Original Sin.

I was surprised to find Lamont attributing "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" to J. S. Mill. Many would say Jeremy Bentham but, in fact,

REVIEWS

it was Francis Hutcheson in the early eighteenth century.

Finally, Lamont recalls an odd episode. He was staying at a Scientology hotel in Clearwater, Florida, and was required to grade the staff's services with marks out of ten. He found that the chambermaid had left his "toilet" unflushed. Might one ask who was the last to use it?

KARL HEATH

"DON'T BE A SOLDIER!" THE RADICAL ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT IN NORTH LONDON 1914-1918, by Ken Weller. The Journeyman Press, 97 Ferme Park Road, London N8 9SA, £3.25

War was declared on 4 August 1914. The next day the North London Herald League held its first anti-war meeting at a street corner in Haringay. It maintained its agitation throughout the years of carnage, in spite of the Defence of the Realm Act in 1915 and the introduction of conscription in the following year.

While many of the grand institutions of the Left, from the British Socialist Party to the Trades Union Congress, backed the war effort, the North London Herald League acted as a local focus of resistance to war and to conscription — and of opposition to restrictions on servicemen's wives, of support for industrial struggles and tenants' grievances, of sympathy for the Easter Rising in Dublin and the revolution in Russia. Their rooms were used by the Islington branch of the police union, invigorated by a successful strike in 1918, as well as for socials and entertainments.

The League was founded in 1913 to give succour to the *Daily Herald*, which had been established two years earlier as the strike paper of London printers. Once the war was over it was no longer a cohesive force and disbanded in the early 1920s. Ken Weller has not written an institutional history; he has done something much more valuable. Using local and political newspapers and the reminiscences of those involved, he has built up a portrait of all the cross-currents, the "tangle of personal and political relationships" in the socialist and anti-war movements in north London. His lively narrative is complemented by skeleton biographies of dozens of those involved, chronicling their shifting political allegiances but also emphasising the element of continuity in popular politics. It's a pity that a book so rich in biographical detail lacks an index.

It was out of the "rebel milieu", Ken Weller argues, that the anti-war movement was shaped. He means by this that it owed more to what are often

regarded as the "odds and sods" — industrial unionists, anarchists, the radical wing of the women's movement — than it did to worthies of the parties of the Left. He traces some of the main strands: the ex-members of the doctrinaire Socialist Party of Great Britain (described as having "perhaps a wider influence than it would like to admit"); Sylvia Pankhurst's Workers' Socialist Federation with its leaning towards anarcho-syndicalism; and the Christian socialism of the Brotherhood Church which met on Southgate Road until as late as 1934.

They may have been a "motley crowd", as one of their number recalls, but they were an effective force, never monolithic but always brimming with energy. Open-air propaganda was pursued with vigour, and pitches defended against bigoted "patriots" and more sinister gangs.

In the months and years after the War, the British Left took on a more institutional form. The Communist Party was established in 1920, and it seems about 30 members of the NLHL joined. Many more became active in the Labour Party, which had introduced individual membership in 1918. Others stuck to libertarian principles, devoted their energies to campaigns such as the birth control movement, or bowed out of political activity. But loyalties remained transient, priorities changing, and there was considerable mobility between movements. In capturing something of the momentum of popular politics, Ken Weller has retrieved a sense of the complexity of the history of the Left.

ANDREW WHITEHEAD

WILD BERRIES, by Yevgeny Yevtushenko. Macmillan, £8.95

While Mark Twain evokes the special flavour of one part of America, Yevtushenko plunges his reader into the particular scents and sounds of the Siberian taiga, a land of forest, rivers and a wilderness peopled by characters who display the toughness, the tenderness, the sensibility, the wit and the tolerance that seems to be brought out in all people, whatever their nationality, who live close to the soil.

Yevtushenko is first and foremost a poet — his feeling for life, his passion for people and nature bursts through the prose and suffuses this garland of stories — a series of incidents, reflections and encounters prompted by the visit of a team of scientists prospecting for tin to a small village in Siberia. The translation admirably sustains the tone and feeling of this evocation and, incidentally, resurrects for English readers a lovely word "roiling", used of water in turbulent motion.

Here is a group of scientists and peasants, men and women, the older of whom have lived through what could have been the end — Hitler's invasion — nervous of what could still happen if war were to

come again, yet talking with an innocence and poetry that, to those brought up on the British press, is both startling and refreshing.

Up to, say, 1940 one might have been able to hear such conversations in southern Ireland, Scotland or Wales. It no longer happens in England because beliefs about justice, truth and "the common decencies" are no longer so securely part of our general assumptions. Why should this be so? A complex of reasons including mass culture, an insecurity about moral values, a self-consciousness about the expression of such beliefs and a quite phenomenal erosion of privacy born out of greed by computer technology.

It takes a real effort to switch off the TV at the end of a programme. Vision is so much more intimately part of perception for mobile beings that the screen affects us more directly and more fully than what we hear or read about, as witness the response to the terrifying pictures of starving and dying people

in Ethiopia. But if we do not switch off when we have no real need to view we become emotionally battered. Sooner or later, like a stone in a polishing drum we will emerge, certainly with the corners rubbed off, but as featureless as the other millions.

But TV is only one among many systems seeking to convince us why we should think and act other than in the interests of ourselves and our friends: schools, churches, political parties, commerce, the press and the Government through its various ministries and agencies.

The children of Mark Twain's stories, like the children of Yevtushenko's taiga, grow to be people with distinct individualities, retaining a freshness of insight and a feeling of harmony with nature. They are the "wild berries". And perhaps Yevtushenko set his stories in remote Siberia because he realised that urbanisation and centralised control, as here in Britain, crowds out spiritual space and freedom.

MICHAEL DUANE

Muslim Schools in England

H. J. BLACKHAM

As a pendant to the letter to the *Guardian* on the claim of Muslims in this country to schools of their own (reprinted in the August *Freethinker*) I should like to offer my conclusion after hearing some of their views and evidence.

A major worry they have expressed is their impression and fear that the country has drifted into indifference to religion, and that this is reflected in schools. For this reason, they are inclined to prefer Church schools in the aided sector, and to choose them where available. However, since agreed RE policy now is to make it an introduction to the understanding of contemporary beliefs and practices, religious and non-religious, their remedy is to insist that it is so in the schools their children attend. Revised Agreed Syllabuses almost unanimously testify that this is the practising policy, despite the 1944 Education Act. The chairman of the Education Committee of one new LEA Syllabus, taken at random, says: "The County School can no longer seek to encourage commitment to a particular faith". A document of the British Council of Churches stated: "Since the LEA can no longer be expected to carry any more responsibility in principle for Christian nurture than for the nurture of Muslims, Jews or Humanists, local churches must accept full responsibility for the Christian nurture of their young". The "no longer" in these statements marks the distance of modern RE from the RI of the Act.

The answer to the argument on grounds of consistency that Christians and Jews do have the opportunity of education in schools subsidised by the State in which they have a major say, should be, as the *Guardian* letter says, the practical one of phasing

out such schools by legislation. Meanwhile, however, in areas where there is a concentration of Muslims, they can press the LEA to make provision for their special religious needs, in terms of diet, dress and prayer. This has been done satisfactorily in some areas. In one exemplary case, Muslims have not asked for their own school because they have come to terms with the LEA, whereas in a neighbouring area where Muslims are less numerous they are agitating for a school of their own.

From a secular and humanist point of view, an Open Society requires universal sharing of public institutions and services, not least education, with toleration of different ways of thinking and of living. I gather that even orthodox Muslims would go along with this, if not threatened with assimilation. They have lines of action to protect their interests short of segregation. They should be encouraged to pool their strength on these fronts. But if they are frustrated by the authorities, they are left with no recourse but to demand what the present law would allow them. Let that be their sanction, not their sacred mission.

Grant Nesdale, a New Zealander, has been sentenced to a fine of £300 by a court in Malaysia for "wounding the religious feelings" of a Muslim businessman, Mohamah bin Maswood. Nesdale, who is a Christian missionary, was accused of saying, "Your Islam is not true". Under section 298 of the country's penal code he could have been jailed for a maximum of twelve months. A friend who smiled in agreement when Nesdale committed the "offence" was also fined.

The Evangelical Alliance has taken the unprecedented step of expelling one of its members, the Jesus Fellowship Church (Baptist). The reason for expulsion — failure to practise close fellowship with other evangelicals — is itself controversial. There was no dispute regarding the JFT's doctrine. Apart from its exclusiveness there is little to distinguish it from many other Christian groups — except its success.

Midlands readers will probably have met members of the Jesus Fellowship Church in their shopping centre distributing literature or holding a "Jesus march". The Fellowship now has about seven hundred members, with 450 living in one of its 24 communities (large country houses) or ordinary houses, all of which have been donated or bought with funds provided by the faithful.

It all began back in 1971 when the Rev Noel Stanton led a Charismatic revival among members of Bugsbrooke Baptist Chapel in Northamptonshire. Television producers took an interest when this group opened up a number of houses to convert drug users who now make up a substantial section of the Fellowship.

Within three years the Fellowship had bought New Creation Hall at a cost of £67,000. A central food and clothing store was opened. It is this facet of the Fellowship's work which draws many visitors from across the world. For the JFC life-style is based on Noel Stanton's interpretation of the New Testament Church in Acts, chapter two. Like the theology, it is fundamentalist. All needs are met out of central funds, the pooled resources of the membership. On joining, new converts hand their wages over to a pool and lend money or property to the housing association. After a year they earn the right to sign over the whole of their estate to the Jesus Fellowship Community Trust. These funds are used to acquire businesses and properties and to finance evangelical work.

Members not working or attending school staff one of the Fellowship's enterprises. It owns a farm, the Goodness Food health food chain, a clothing shop, a bakery and a haulage, building, heating and plumbing firm. Members also staff a medical practice and a design consultant company.

Food and clothing supplies come from the community's distribution centre. But you cannot get fashion clothes, make-up or jewellery there. Members do not have any free time to indulge in the frippery of the twentieth century. Women with young children have the traditional role of looking after all the children and doing the cooking and

housework. The men carry out the evangelising duties. No one watches television, listens to the radio or owns a record or cassette player. Evenings are taken up with religious meetings and instruction. Visitors and relatives are welcome on Thursday, the only free night. A vast amount of evangelising work takes place over the weekend. There are street meetings, marches, gospel services and "outreaching" in other towns.

So why should such a dedicated evangelical fellowship fall foul of the Evangelical Alliance?

The answer seems to lie in the structure of the organisation which has brought it notoriety in the Press, fuelled by disaffected former members who were quick to throw charges of "cultism" at the JFC. But what the Fellowship simply does is to practise what the Bible preaches.

In 1976 disciplining bands were set up in the community. These are small, single-sex study groups. Above these are the "shepherding" groups consisting of between 20 and 30 people. Members have to ask their shepherd's advice on everything from relatives' Christmas presents to getting married. At about the same time, Noel Stanton began to enforce strict rules on marriage and sex. Celibacy was regarded as a "higher way". Contraception — not being an invention of God — was forbidden, and married couples had to use single beds. No consumer products, magazines or non-Christian literature were allowed. The JFC began to sound like the more infamous School of Economic Science, particularly when it started setting up businesses. One of these was the New Creation Farm. It did not help when a member was found dead in a field and a local vicar spoke of his fears for other Fellowship members.

The accusations really began to fly when the JFC started to expand its activities to Leicester, Coventry, Birmingham, Milton Keynes and Nottingham, buying up property on the way. They inevitably clashed with other Christian organisations who were in danger of losing members to this more fundamentalist group. The anti-cult organisations Deo Gloria and FAIR expressed concern after hearing from worried parents. The *Oxford Journal* and the *Baptist Times* both slated the Fellowship, and the *News of the World* jumped on the bandwagon calling it a "brainwashing cult".

Despite denials that it wishes to prosletise, the JFC did at one point attempt to establish rival Christian unions in two universities. It certainly took little interest in other evangelical groups and activities.

Following a year-long mission, the Jesus Fellowship Church opened a house in Nottingham. Former members responded with Prayerforce Fellowship which published an anti-JFC leaflet. The *Star* news-

paper repeated accusations of Moonie-style brainwashing and the Evangelical Alliance was forced to take action. The only truth behind these accusations appears to be the dictatorial method of Stanton's leadership in the past. His total control weakens as the Fellowship expands. It is also true that a hundred members have left since 1979. But few have regrets and many pay their community group frequent visits. So cultism is not the answer either. Many groups like to think that they have the only way to Christ.

The real answer lies in the Fellowship's refusal to play the current evangelical game of mobilising in national politics, remaining aloof from more worldly Christians and showing the unacceptable face of evangelism. Foreign-based cults being exposed in the newspapers is one thing; typical British evangelism is another. To defend the Jesus Fellowship Church, the Evangelical Alliance would have to admit that it is not that different from its other affiliated groups.

LETTERS

THE CONFESSIONS OF A WHITE MALE SEXIST AND RACIST

Your critical report of the so-dubbed "Alternative Moral Majority" (October) seems to me totally unwarranted and is a conspicuous example of the sexist and racist attitudes (usually more implicit) often found in The Freethinker.

I believe that anyone who attempts to challenge the sexism and racism which infect our society is doing a very worthwhile job. With typical journalistic skill, your report rips the examples quoted from their context; for example, whether saying, "Hello darling" is an act of sexual harassment surely depends on why and how, from whom and to whom it is said.

In any case, an instance of this nature is only the tip of the iceberg — but it may be all that white men in the workplace will admit to. I have worked in a local authority establishment. Every day I heard people from ethnic minorities being referred to (behind their backs) as "wogs", "niggers", "sambos", etc. Similarly, almost any woman was called "it" and spoken of in the most crudely demeaning language as an object of heterosexual desire or repugnance. Male bosses asserted their power over female employees by displaying posters and calendars of naked women in their offices.

As for job advertisements to which "Women and ethnic minorities are invited to apply", it is only right that, when so many employers discriminate against these groups of people, every effort should be made to encourage applications from them. Even so, discrimination may continue in practice; I happen to know that, for my job, all applications from women were immediately discarded — due to the misogyny of the Section Head. This is the case despite the Council's "equal opportunity" employment policy.

No doubt The Freethinker, with its relentless concern for "freedom", feels that Left-wing activism in these areas poses a threat to the liberty of white males. But, if so, I would like to ask how desirable is a freedom that maintains the right to oppress others (and, in a

less obvious way, also injures the oppressors, rendering them unfit for most human relationships)?

I am a white male and, as such, am aware of the sexism and racism within myself, just as, being a gay man, I know that all straight people are — to varying degrees — heterosexist. It is only by being aware of these prejudices that we can try to overcome them. When I see The Freethinker making its readers (many of whom, I fear, are white liberal academics living in ivory towers) more aware of sexism and racism in Britain, I shall take its criticism of the methods of others more seriously. If, however, these issues are outside the magazine's scope, I suggest it stops attacking those who are concerned about them. Some of us really do have more serious things to worry about than what journalists Simple and Junor write about us.

JONATHAN SANDERS

CORRECTING THE CORRECTIONS

A couple of errors crept into my letter correcting a couple of misquotations (August).

The French writer defended by Voltaire was not "Helvéticus" but Helvétius.

The last line of the Swinburne stanza should read: "Even love, the beloved Republic, that feeds upon freedom and lives".

NICOLAS WALTER

BURIAL PLACE

As Stuart Campbell states (October), Charles Guignebert argues that it is "more likely" that after the crucifixion the body of Jesus was thrown into a common pit rather than having been placed in a new tomb. However, he certainly does not rule out the latter possibility, and I can see no reason at all why the corpse should not have been buried in the tomb mentioned by the Gospels, and have simply remained there.

JOHN L. BROOM

A CRITIC ACCUSED

I am quite surprised that you allowed Nicolas Walter to review my *Encyclopedia of Unbelief* (August) considering how our past differences in *The Freethinker* have made him anything but objective. The review itself reveals Walter's longstanding inability to allow the editor of a work to pick the contents, and not him. Who is he to say that political views, such as anarchism, socialism, etc. belong in the book? In my opinion, and as stated on pages XV-XVI the book confines itself to religious unbelief. If Walter wants to do an encyclopedia which has different parameters, let him do so, but please do not criticize me for choosing otherwise.

For Nicolas Walter to complain about the coverage of the Rationalist Press Association is hypocrisy, as he accepted the authorship of the article on the RPA and then never delivered his article. As a result, another author had to expand his coverage of "Unbelief in the United Kingdom" to cover the RPA and more modern times. This brings up the major point which Walter seems to be overlooking: This book is the work of over a hundred different people, each supposedly an expert in his or her own area. The subject is too large for anyone (including Walter) to know well, so the editor has to pick his authors well and trust their expertise. I did give them guidelines, and I did ask for additional information if some subject of importance was omitted by them, but it is the individual experts who decided on the coverage of their subjects. Thus, Nicolas Walter, if he has a place to lay the blame, must place it upon

EVENTS

all of the individual experts who don't seem to have had his book in mind when they wrote their articles.

There are some areas where there indeed have been weaknesses. The lack of an article on "Unbelief in Italy" is an example. After three different authors (one after another) accepted the assignment to write that article, and all failed to deliver their articles, I simply ran out of experts. This, however, is not to admit that Walter's comments about individual authors not being covered in individual articles about unbelief in literature, has any merit. Obviously, not all authors could be covered, and the choice was up to the experts on the individual literatures. The lack of biographies on such people as Buckle, Bury and Draper was my decision, but it was made on sound grounds. The book is not designed to be a copy of McCabe's work *A Rationalist Encyclopaedia*. There was no attempt to be exhaustive. Only the really outspoken freethinkers (not, for example, Darwin, although he is covered in the article on Evolution) were to be included. Again, if Walter wants to write a different book, let him do so.

Every review journal of reference books has praised the *Encyclopedia* highly. If Nicolas Walter thinks it's "unreliable", perhaps that is because it is not the book he would have written. In that case, he is perfectly free not to use it.

GORDON STEIN

PROGRESS IN BRENT

Some months ago the National Secular Society castigated the Brent Borough Council for recommending to the Ministry of Education that a Muslim primary school in its area be given public funding through voluntary-aided status, since this would encourage the proliferation of schools that segregate children according to their religious background.

So we are glad now to be able to applaud the proposal by that Council to broaden RE in their county schools by removing the undue emphasis on Christianity and including not only a range of other religions but also the alternative to all religions: non-belief. To those who oppose this progressive move, we would point out that non-belief is a far older tradition than any extant religion, and in this country is numerically superior to any one religion, with the sole exception of C of E (nominal).

Rather than have RE on the timetable at all, the National Secular Society would prefer a change in the law to allow facts about religion to find their natural place in such lessons as history and sociology; for surely the proper time for religious instruction is outside school hours, and the proper place for it is the home — augmented, if required, by church, chapel, synagogue or mosque. But as long as religious myths and doctrines are taught in our schools, then, in the name of the principle of education itself, they should certainly cover a range of both religious and non-religious views. Presenting children with contentious beliefs as though these had the same sort of consensus as mathematics or geography is hypocritical, dishonest and anti-educational.

BARBARA SMOKER
President,
National Secular Society

Newspaper reports are always required by "The Freethinker". The source and date should be clearly marked and the clippings sent to the Editor at 14 Coundon Road, Coventry, West Midlands CV1 4AW

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group. New Venture Club, Bedford Place (off Western Road), Brighton. Sunday, 7 December, 5.30 pm for 6 pm. John Marriott: Prisons — a Governor's Perspective.

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. Friday, 12 December, 8 pm. A Christmas Antidote (Winter Solstice Party with food, wine and entertainment). Admission £3.

Glasgow Humanist Society. Information regarding meetings and other activities is obtainable from Norman Macdonald, 15 Queen Square, Glasgow G41 2BG, telephone 041-424 0545.

Harrow Humanist Society. Programme of meetings obtainable from Rosemary Bennett, telephone 01-863 2977.

Lewisham Humanist Group. Unitarian Meeting House, 41 Bromley Road, London SE6. Thursday, 27 November, 7.45 pm. Norman Bacrac: How Scientific is "Scientific Creationism"?

Humanist Holidays. Christmas at Bournemouth. Information obtainable from Gillian Bailey, 18 Priors Road, Cheltenham, GL52 5AA, telephone 0242 39175.

Leeds and District Humanist Group. Swartmore Centre, Woodhouse Square, Leeds. Monday, 8 December, 7.30 pm. Discussion: Personal and Business Morality.

Norwich Humanist Group. Programme of meetings obtainable from Philip Howell, 41 Spixworth Road, Old Catton, Norwich, NR6 7NE, telephone Norwich 47843.

South Place Ethical Society. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Sunday 16 November, 11 am. Peter Heales: Art and the Logic of Experience. Sunday, 23 November, 11 am. Ronald Mason: Keats and Poetry. 3 pm, Sam Beer: Geoffrey Chaucer. Sunday, 23 November, 11 am. James Hemming: Perspective on Reality. Sunday, 7 December, 11 am. T. F. Evans: The Abdication. Sunday, 14 December, 11 am. Stephen Coleman: Is Marxism Obsolete? 3 pm. Rita Udall: Positive Use of Inferiority Feelings — an Alderian View. Sunday, 21 December, 11 am. Barbara Smoker: Christmas.

Sutton Humanist Group. Friends House, Cedar Road, Sutton, Wednesday, 10 December, 7.30 pm for 8 pm. Richard Allen: Quakers and the "New Age" Trend.

Warwickshire Humanist Group. Friends Meeting House, Hill Street (off Corporation Street), Coventry. Monday, 15 December, 7.45 pm for 8 pm. Public meeting.

West Glamorgan Humanist Group. Information regarding meetings and other activities is obtainable from Georgina Coupland, 117 Pennard Drive, Southgate, telephone 044 128 3631.

Worthing Humanist Group. Trades Club, 15 Broadwater Road, Worthing. Sunday, 30 November, 5.30 pm. Jim Herrick: International Humanism.

School Religion the Most Boring and Least Useful Subject

A religious education inspector told a conference of teachers in London last month that religious leaders and religiously committed parents do not accept multi-faith education. Mr Ralph Gower, an inspector for the Inner London Education Authority, said: "Where religion is involved, then claims to absolute truth are involved. And these allow no room for any other truth".

The Christian claim that Jesus was "the way, the truth and the life" and the Muslim belief that Muhammad was the final revelation of God excluded alternative truths, he said.

He estimated that forty per cent of religious education teachers in the ILEA area are not committed to any faith. But they are among the best teachers.

David Hargreaves, chief inspector for ILEA, says research indicates that London pupils regard religious education as the least useful and most boring subject. Dr Hargreaves, who makes this claim in an essay in *Faith for the Future*, describes RE teachers as conservative and afraid of change. Church schools have a poor record in showing how imaginative religious education can help to create a coherent curriculum.

Faith for the Future has been published to mark the 175th anniversary of the National Society. It was founded in 1811 with the aim of "promoting the

Abolish Oaths, says Dean

The Very Rev Kenneth Jennings, Dean of Gloucester, has suggested that oath-taking in court should be abolished. Preaching at a service in Gloucester Cathedral at the start of the Michaelmas Law Term, he told the congregation, which included three robed judges, that the manner of taking the oath was most important. "But so is the integrity of the person before the court", he declared.

"We behave as if belief in God, a sense of awe for the Bible, and a feeling of revulsion at speaking any untruth after such preliminaries, were all still part of the standard equipment of every citizen".

The Dean said that a person may be induced to tell the truth under cross-examination. "Whether the oaths taken do anything to help is constantly under question", he added.

While affirmation could eventually become as routine as oath-taking now is, "it does leave the onus where it actually belongs, on the person's own character and integrity".

education of the poor in the principles of the established church throughout England and Wales". Four years previously, Samuel Whitbread's Education Bill which proposed setting up rate-aided schools for poor children was defeated in the House of Lords. Hostile opposition to the proposal came from the Bench of Bishops who feared that an educational system not under Church control "would enable people to read vicious books and publications against Christianity".

Sunday Pubs for NI

The Government has announced that public houses in Northern Ireland will be allowed to open on Sundays. The new ruling comes into effect next year. It is seven years since an official commission recommended that the ban on Sunday opening should be lifted.

The Federation of the Licensed Trade mounted an effective campaign for reform of the licensing laws. A highlight of the campaign was the well-publicised act of civil disobedience on Sunday, 11 May, when fourteen Dungannon publicans defied the law and opened their premises. Members of the Rev Ian Paisley's Free Presbyterian Church picketed the public houses which were packed with customers exercising a right enjoyed elsewhere in the British Isles.

Oliver Kearney, general secretary of the Federation, said at the time that he hoped the Dungannon Sunday opening would result in action by the Government. Publicans in several other towns offered their services for more illegal Sunday openings should this be necessary.

The Federation's case rested largely on the unfairness of the licensing laws which allowed over six hundred drinking clubs to operate on Sundays but compelled publicans to keep their doors closed. A representative of the Federation declared: "The Government must realise that our patience is exhausted. We will not be denied a fair deal for much longer".

A former nun has won a nationwide Housewife of the Year award in the Republic of Ireland. Mrs Mary Holleran, a mother of seven, was awarded the first prize of £800. The competition attracted over a thousand entries.