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BHA WARNED OF ATTEMPTS TO TURN THE CLASSROOM CLOCK BACK

John White, secretary of the British Humanist Association Education Committee, has warned the Association of attempts that are being made to turn the clock back in the field of education. Addressing the Association's annual conference in Walsall, West Midlands, last month, he welcomed the changes that have occurred during the last 20 years in the areas of moral education and life stance. But he expressed his fears that the next four years would see these advances eroded.

Reviewing the progress that has been achieved, John White quoted from the Inner London Education Authority's Agreed Syllabuses drawn up in 1968 and in 1985.

The 1968 Syllabus said that four-year-old children should be taught that "though earthly friends may fail, God never does". Teenagers should be shown "the foolishness of not putting first in one's life the God who is the creator and ruler of all".

He contrasted these narrow, indoctrinatory statements with the Secondary Stage Objectives in the 1985 Syllabus. These encourage the students "to explore fundamental questions about human existence and the answers offered by the various traditions, and to consider the implications for the social and ethical concerns of humanity". He reminded the audience that the Syllabus made clear that this exploration should include "the ethical, non-theistic tradition of Humanism".

This open, inclusive approach in this area of school studies, which started in the 1970s in Birmingham, is found in many other modern Syllabuses, including those of Brent, Essex and Manchester. The Hampshire Syllabus, adopted by 16 other LEAs, calls three times in its Aims for "religious and non-religious belief systems to be studied".

This breadth of viewpoint is echoed by the Report on Religious and Moral Education prepared by a

working party of the Religious Education Council of England and Wales. This considered that "all County schools should include religions other than Christianity together with non-theistic moral outlooks". It made clear that in discussing Moral Education it is necessary "to take note of the different principles or origins by which religions and naturalistic philosophies determine what is moral".

The audience were shown some of the teaching material being produced by LEAs to support these new syllabuses, including the attractively-produced, 28-page Teaching Pack on Humanism, comprising six Modules with linked Units of Work, which had recently been published by the ILEA RE Centre.

John White gave a warning that these moves, away from indoctrination and towards openness and tolerance, will be threatened by the Government's intended legislation. He instanced the London Borough of Wandsworth as one of those LEAs which intends to withdraw schools in its area (in this case from the ILEA). He feared that these schools would have a narrow, Christianity-dominated Syllabus imposed on them like the Syllabus in West Sussex which had a similarly Right-wing Conservative Council.

Intended legislation on a national curriculum and on school worship gave indications of the atmosphere in education the Government wished to see. A series of quotations made clear the viewpoint of prominent Conservatives. Mrs Thatcher condemned the guidelines from the Manchester Chief Education Officer about assemblies that would be "celebrations of human values more relevant to the multi-faith make-up of our schools in the 1980s". In the House of Commons she backed the traditional assembly of hymns and prayers, saying it was still the law of the

(continued on back page)

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NEWS

THE SUN OF GOD

The Silly Season usually produces a rich crop of unlikely and almost unbelievable stories in the press. This year's pick of the bunch is a *Sun* editorial entitled "Let us Pray". It is, by *Sun* standards, a long and thoughtful piece, reprinted here in full for the edification of our faithless readers.

"It would be a pity if the plan to scrap compulsory morning worship in our schools goes ahead.

"One of the arguments for it is that, in some schools, most of the pupils are muslim (*sic*).

"But Britain remains a Christian country and morning service is part of our tradition.

"Let's keep it".

In fostering the legend that Britain is a Christian country, *Sun* experts on religious affairs are at odds with church leaders who more realistically refer to "the post-Christian era". Only last month an Anglican bishop lamented in a broadcast that religion in western Europe "is in a state of horrendous decline".

Compulsory attendance at morning service in schools is a tradition that dates from 1944. Voluntary attendance at morning service in church is a more venerable tradition. Both are being abandoned.

There are good social and democratic reasons for the abolition of compulsory worship and religious indoctrination in the classroom. These are increasingly being accepted by teachers and pupils, and consequently the law is being broken in hundreds of schools every day. It is regrettable that school heads are obliged to be seen either as law-breakers by ignoring the religious clauses of the 1944 Act, or as hypocrites by implementing them.

Christian indoctrinators have nothing to fear about the present Government's intentions on school religion. But they may be embarrassed by the knowledge that their fellow-labourers in the Lord's vineyard include the Dirty Digger's disreputable organ.

Fr Bryan Storey, a Roman Catholic priest in Tintagel, Cornwall, has an odd sense of priorities. He has written to the Pope urging him to demand the resignation of Archbishop Thomas Winning of Glasgow. The Archbishop, who is by no means a trendy radical, suggested that free condoms should be distributed among prostitutes to prevent the spread of AIDS. No so, says Fr Storey. "The act of fornication is more serious than the spread of AIDS", he declares.

AND NOTES

SUNDAY BUST-UP

The local council in Liskeard, Cornwall, a hotbed of "morality" campaigners, has taken store owner Mike Robertson to court for breaking the Sunday trading laws. Magistrates listened solemnly while lawyers and a retired gynaecologist debated the burning question whether a lady's bra is an item of clothing or a medical aid.

Dr Keith Read said it was both, and Mr Robertson's lawyers argued that surgical appliances are exempt from the Sunday laws. Dr Read said that a bra was vital for new mothers and women with large breasts found them essential. They were also a protection against something called Jogger's Nipple.

Sabbatarian organisations encourage their supporters to inform against traders who — often inadvertently — infringe the Sunday trading laws. Many local authorities are reluctant to take action. But Liskeard Council has pursued the bra-selling Mr Robertson with a zeal that Lord's Day narks will find "uplifting".

POSTER PROTEST

Samantha Fox's recent arrival in Israel for a concert tour caused consternation among ultra-orthodox elements. They were strangely agitated by the singer-model's revealing attire.

One fan — a woman as it happens — was arrested for displaying a poster of Samantha in the rear window of her house in Tel Aviv. Mrs Vardi Lavi and her husband think that Samantha is a great singer (which is a matter of opinion) and a great looker (which is indisputable). Orthodox zealots gathered outside the Lavis' home to protest against the poster. The police were called, but instead of dispersing the religious mob they arrested Mrs Lavi. She appeared in court charged with violating the "immorality" section of the country's penal code. The case was adjourned.

Mrs Lavi is fighting back. She hopes to get the matter raised in the Knesset, Israel's parliament.

Like our own minority of censorious feminists, Israel's male religious nuts are constantly endeavouring to impose their own dreary standards on all and sundry. Earlier this year, bearded and curly-locked fanatics destroyed dozens of bus shelters in Jerusalem. They were doing battle with advertisers of what the orthodox describe as "improper clothing". The holy war was fomented by rabbis and other leaders of the Mea Sha'arim community. In their

area of the city — which has been described as "a chunk of 19th-century Poland transplanted in the Middle East" — women are not allowed to reveal even a bare arm.

It cost the transport authorities £150,000 to make good the damage caused by the pious vandals.

Small wonder that so many of Israel's dotting admirers living in western countries want no closer contact with the Promised Land than a brief holiday or a glance at the map of the Middle East.

A MAN OF FAITH

Colonel Oliver North, central figure in the Irangate investigation, is a ruthless liar and a dangerous warmonger. He is also a dedicated Christian and, not surprisingly in the land of Pearlygate, a national hero. Thousands of supportive telegrams and messages confirm Republican Senator Paul Trible's comment that North "has won the hearts and minds of the American people". He is being pressed to stand for Congress or even the White House.

Oliver North was born into a devout Roman Catholic family. He was baptised at the St Peter, Prince of Apostles Church, San Antonio, Texas, in 1943. He made his first communion in 1951 and two years later received the sacrament of confirmation. Educated at a Catholic school, he was an altar server for a time.

North later became a worshipper at an Episcopal church where they went in for such nonsense as faith healing and speaking in tongues. He and his wife belonged to a parish group of couples who met in one another's homes for prayer meetings and Bible study.

Colonel North is of course a family man. In an interview with *Life* magazine, Betsy North, the Colonel's wife and mother of his four children, revealed some interesting sidelights on life with the super-patriot. For instance, when Uncle Sam got a bloody nose in Vietnam, Ollie was so affected that he took to running around in his birthday suit waving a gun. Psychiatric treatment allegedly straightened him out.

Mrs North claimed that their religious faith enabled them to face any situation. "We are Christians", she purred, "and if you allow Him to work things through, you put a big weight on His shoulders".

When the Colonel is not away from home arranging funds and arms supplies to American-backed terrorist groups, he and Betsy are active in the local Christian community. Friends are invited to the Norths' residence for weekly Bible readings. And although Mrs North did not actually quote Ollie's favourite passage, it is likely to be found in Paul's letter to the Corinthians: "All things are lawful for me".

A CROSS WE DON'T HAVE TO BEAR

Nowadays officiants at secular funerals encounter little awkwardness or hostility on the part of crematorium administrators. And when the staff of these establishments realise all that is expected of them is to remove the cross in the chapel, they are invariably helpful and co-operative.

But there still are areas where the authorities apparently expect Christians to be privileged even in death. One such is the Hither Green Crematorium in South East London, which serves the borough of Lewisham. The chapel is adorned by a cross of such weight and proportion that the labour of five men is required to remove it. Consequently mourners attending a funeral at Hither Green, whether they be Jew, Muslim or non-believer, find the proceedings dominated by this inappropriate and distasteful object.

This large cross should be replaced by a portable one. Alternatively, it could be concealed by a set of curtains or folding doors during non-Christian ceremonies. Indeed this suggestion was made five years ago when representatives of the National Secular Society, Lewisham Humanist Group and the minister of Catford Unitarian congregation met Council representatives. The response was that these possibilities would be borne in mind next time the chapel was redecorated. But as NSS president, Barbara Smoker, has discovered, not only has nothing been done about it in the intervening years: the situation is now even worse.

Five years ago it cost an extra £25 to have the cross removed before and replaced after a non-Christian service. When Miss Smoker was recently asked to conduct a secular funeral at Hither Green, the next-of-kin particularly wanted the cross removed. Not only were the immediate family atheists, but some of their relatives were practising Jews. In a letter of protest to Lewisham Council she relates what happened.

"The funeral directors accordingly telephoned the crematorium about the removal of the cross — to be told that the funeral would have to be put to the end of the day and that the extra charge for removing the cross was now actually £136. The reason given for this 444 per cent increase was that it included danger money, it being a dangerous job to remove the cross. In that case, surely, its removal should be disallowed altogether, and some means of covering the cross should be substituted, as our deputation had previously suggested".

Several points should be borne in mind concerning this matter. First, it has never been suggested that all religious symbols should be banished from crematorium chapels, only that they should be easily removed or concealed. Certainly they should not be

part of the permanent decor. Secondly, it is extremely unfair that secularists should have to pay for the cost of removing and replacing Christian ornaments in a crematorium chapel, particularly as the crematorium movement was established with secularist support and in the teeth of fierce hostility from most of the Christian churches and denominations. Thirdly, a municipal crematorium chapel does not belong exclusively to Christians, but is provided for use by all citizens. Its upkeep is financed by fees and rates paid by people of all religious faiths, and none.

There is no excuse for the insensitivity of those Crematorium, particularly at a time when public responsible for administering the Hither Green authorities are becoming more responsive to the needs of a pluralist society.

A 69-year-old Greek Orthodox bishop has been arrested by drug squad police in Rome. The holy man had a large quantity of heroin hidden in his vestments. He and eight others are suspected of involvement in a narcotics ring.

IRISH FAMILY WAY

Nearly ten per cent of the Irish Republic's babies in 1986 were born to unmarried mothers. About one-third of the mothers of illegitimate babies were teenagers. Department of Health figures also reveal that 34 girls under the age of 15 gave birth.

The number of marriages recorded during the year was the lowest since 1970, and the birth rate was down to 17.4 per thousand.

Official figures do not give a complete picture of the situation. Abortion is banned in the Republic, but every year over 4,000 Irish women travel to British clinics for the operation. And a long holiday with relatives or friends in Britain is a traditional method of concealing the birth of an illegitimate baby.

Sex education in Ireland is largely left to career celibates like priests and nuns. Birth control is denounced by the Roman Catholic Church, and contraceptives are virtually unobtainable in many areas.

Religion still exercises a profound and poisonous influence on the lives of Irish people, as last year's referendum on divorce made clear. But large numbers of young people are emigrating and thus escaping from the clutches of Holy Mother Church.

Four of the five members of a theatrical company have "made a Christian commitment" after attending a faith healing conference. Steve Starkie, the born-again leading man, now believes that diseases including AIDS "can be washed away by the blood of Christ". His group is aptly named the Hallucinations Theatre Company.

Free Speech After the Election

MARY HAYWARD

There is nothing new about attempts to suppress freedom of speech and publication. The threat is exacerbated by the re-election of a secrecy-obsessed Government and the growing Right-wing authoritarian — Left-wing feminist lobby. The Secretary of the Campaign Against Censorship (writing in a personal capacity) assesses the situation after the General Election.

The General Election result was bad news for those who value honesty. We have the return to power of people who practise secrecy and suppression; division not only between have and have-not but between know and know-not.

The Access to Personal Files Bill managed to scrape into law in a watered-down form just before the election, but a full-scale Freedom of Information Act is most unlikely. Officially secrecy for its own sake or to save those in power nothing worse than embarrassment will continue. Further experimental substitutes for the discredited Section 2 of the Official Secrets Act may be found. The result of this is that the whole concept of secrecy is being devalued. There are things which for the sake of safety or personal privacy should be secret, but this does not include every petty detail of Government housekeeping.

Moreover, the law has proved unenforceable. Peter Wright's book was published in the United States last month and there is nothing the British Government can do about it. On the international scene they have broken a primary political rule: Thou Shalt Not Look Foolish.

All censorship is political. The claim to impose censorship for social or moral reasons is universally made and always false. Information is power, and the withholding of information is a political act whether performed by parents in front of the television or a censor in a government office. The Government intends to alter the law of obscenity not because there is "deep public concern" over the issue — they know as well as we do how "clean-up" campaigns and letters of protest are organised and by whom — but because the Government of a divided country has much to gain by keeping violence off the television screen. Victorian politicians were more open. They freely admitted that they wanted certain writings suppressed because they would give the lower orders ideas. Today's would-be censors carefully avoid saying that an Act prohibiting the showing of "gross violence" or "horrific incidents" does not necessarily refer to horror movies. It could equally well refer to riots or disasters and there is nothing in the law, either existing or proposed, to say that it doesn't.

The safeguards in the Obscene Publications Act (the so-called public good defence) only come into operation at the trial. They can do nothing to prevent publications being seized and prosecutions launched. A book is still of value a year later. A news item is dead. Among the leaders of the new Government are people who have persuaded themselves that the broadcasters are their enemies and that any view of the world other than their own is subversive. Also they see the media — like local government, trade unions and schools — as an alternative power base to their own. A few prosecutions for obscenity would be a useful step in a long-term scheme to break up first the prestige of the BBC and then its structure. It cannot be said too often that the issue is not morality but power.

There are two sectors of opinion that find "horrific incidents" quite acceptable if they are real but become panic-stricken if they are imaginary. These are the people dedicated to the absurd proposition that a person's choice of entertainment determines their character and not the other way round. They are also, *sensu strictu*, sadists, manifesting a persistent tendency to equate sex with violence and violence with sex. On the one (right) hand is the old "moral majority" in its symbiosis with Right-wing politics, each using the other for its own ends. Hence Private Members' Bills on obscenity openly supported by Conservative Government ministers, as ministers and not as individuals. On the other (left) hand we have the people who call themselves feminists, squawking that "porn causes rape", not because they wish to reduce rape but because they wish to suppress porn. The difference is that while the right hand try to return to the past — that cosy Victorian past when poverty, oppression and violence could be ignored by those not personally affected and only the rich could afford porn — the left hand wants a world that never existed.

Because of the way they evolved most male human beings are sexually stimulated by the sight of a female human body and that stimulus is pleasurable. If it were not so, none of us would be here. With an increase in far-Left representation in Parliament we may see successors to Clare Short's Page 3 Bill. They will almost certainly fail. The danger from the feminists is not there but in two other places; one, they trivialise the issue — censorship is not really about sex — two, they inhibit the Opposition from resisting censorship legislation by their own brand of emotional blackmail. For this reason the debate must be wrenched away from "sex on television" and expressed in genuine political terms.

"Mirror Mirror on the Wall!"

MICHAEL DUANE

The Doctrine Commission of the Church of England recently published a major report, *We Believe in God*. It follows *Christians Believing (1976)* and *Believing in the Church (1981)*. Michael Duane examines the new Report which sets out to answer the question, "What is it that Christians believe in?" or, "What do I really mean when I say 'God'?"

In setting out to seek for the God who wants us totally — "whole, conscious and unconscious, soul and body" — the Doctrine Commission's Report creates, for this reader at least, a vision of an overwhelming desire to return to the mindless, instinct-dominated state of animality depicted in the Garden of Eden before Adam and Eve ate the apple from the Tree of Knowledge — a parable of evolution if ever there was one — a vision from which Milton recoiled when, despite his role as the source of all evil, Satan emerges from Milton's unconscious as heroic in stature. This desire occurs many times, in statements such as, ". . . to find ourselves 'in Christ' is gradually to break through the limitations of individualism and introspection . . . it calls in question the supposed absoluteness of the self as an individual or self-contained entity . . . to intuit the mysterious interpenetration of individuals one with another. . .".

From the first paragraph of the first chapter the question is made to arise in the mind of the reader, "For whom has this document been written?", and as chapter after chapter makes a particular assertion and then leaves no room for him to dissent, the question forces itself even more insistently on to his attention. For example, the first chapter purports to establish that God exists because "great numbers" of people think so; because we cannot define God without falling into "the error of supposing that I can reduce him to what can be caught in the net of human language" — a statement that, in effect, says, "Reason, logic and historical evidence can not conclusively disprove the existence of God". That comes close to challenging the unbeliever to a duel having first made sure that the opponent cannot find a weapon.

Very well! Let us, for the sake of argument, agree that reason, logic and concrete evidence of any kind cannot disprove the existence of God. Then why, in the remainder of the book, draw on those very methods to seek to prove that God exists. One can respect the purity of the Mystics who revel in God without thinking it necessary to justify their enthusiasm, but can have scant regard for the hotch-potch here served up.

The question recurs, "For whom was it written?". Certainly not for any theologian with a smidgin of training in philosophy — no one with any pretence to intellectual honesty could refer to the intolerances of "Marxist regimes" as if they equated with Dialectical Materialism. Certainly not for any normally well-educated reader for whom the concepts of psychoanalysis and its derivatives have become part of their critical equipment. Freud, who contributed a qualitative leap to our understanding of the causes of crime and neurosis, is not even mentioned in the Index. William James, one of our greatest modern philosophers and author of *The Varieties of Religious Experience* which first appeared as The Gifford Lectures in Edinburgh University in 1901, is simply omitted. Significantly, the subtitle of that book is "A Study in Human Nature". Nor does the Report refer to Edward Sapir's *Language, Culture and Personality*, a seminal work for anthropologists, philosophers and theologians alike. In an article entitled "The Meaning of Religion" (1928), after distinguishing between "a religion" and "religion", Sapir defines the latter as "man's never-ceasing attempt to discover a road to spiritual serenity across the perplexities and dangers of daily life. How this serenity is obtained is a matter of infinitely varied detail. Where the need for such serenity is passionately felt, we have religious yearning; where it is absent religious behaviour is no more than socially sanctioned form or an aesthetic blend of belief and gesture". His final comment in that essay is, "Religion has always been the enemy of self-satisfaction".

Let us pick up the point embedded in the subtitle of William James's book, *A Study in Human Nature*. If, whenever the authors of the Report had used the word "Man" instead of "God" to symbolise everything we aspire to — power, justice, wisdom, love — it would become clear at once that what they are actually talking about is ourselves. Having only human bodies, sense organs and brains we can perceive only physical objects, though we have learned, through language and other symbolic systems, to imagine causes and effects. "This tree" is a linguistic symbol that, spoken to another person without sensory defect and in the presence of the tree, leaves little ambiguity in the mind of the other person since there is no other tree that is an exact copy of this one. His resultant concept of the tree is likely to vary if the store of experience and knowledge of trees is different from mine, especially if any strong emotion is associated for either of us, with another tree of this kind.

Similarly, if a child is brought up with care, love and a rich experience in education in the context of

OBITUARY

Dr Cyril Bibby

Dr Cyril Bibby, the distinguished biologist and educationist, died on 20 June at the age of 73. He was an Honorary Associate of the National Secular Society.

H. J. Blackham writes: I first met Cyril Bibby when he was on the staff of the College of St Mark and St John in Chelsea, a College that is within the University Institute of Education. He was mainly a lecturer in biology there, but was equally interested in education, and was a most stimulating tutor, since he thought his subject should be taught in a way that would make it a form of total education. That was one way in which he was an inbred humanist. He was able to communicate his enthusiasm and broad outlook from the platform, for he was an outstanding and memorable performer.

His model was T. H. Huxley, in whose footsteps, at a distance, he trod. His departure from St Mark and St John's in 1959 to become Principal of Hull College of Education was probably facilitated, if not actually determined, by the publication in that year by Watts of his book, *T. H. Huxley, Scientist, Humanist, and Educator*. Aldous and Julian Huxley contributed Forewords, both evidently grateful and impressed. (Julian's is a detailed summary of the book; Aldous takes off on his own speculative excursus on education.) Bibby was not concerned merely to write a general biography; mainly, he wanted to carry through and offer a thorough examination of Huxley's achievement as an educational statesman, in all its aspects. In giving the book that focus, he brought out the immense public debt to Huxley that had been eclipsed in the public mind by his resounding reputation as Darwin's spokesman, and by his prominence in the controversies of the day. This made the book distinguished and important, and it gained the serious attention it deserved.

Bibby took up the post at Hull with some diffidence: "power corrupts" was in his mind. When there, he certainly exerted his authority, and kept a tight ship. But I believe it was a happy one, and he saw to it that it was properly equipped; and that was in the days before information technology had been added to the abc of educational institutions and programmes. He had good links with the university in the town, and the scope of the job suited him better than a university chair in his science; though I think he was ambivalent about that. He wrote other books, and used his influence on national committees to promote the development of education. He was a vigorous personality, who, more than most, shaped his life the way he wanted it.

As a humanist, Cyril Bibby was always ready to give the movement support or service, unless he had reason to refuse a request on a point of principle.

a Christian family that practises loving generosity to the poor, tolerance to others of different beliefs, modesty in their style of life and joy in their work and play, whereas another child experiences a family that views God as a vengeful and threatening tyrant, emphasises pain and discomfort as the means to salvation, the concepts that those children will develop about the word "God" will be of very different characters.

The God of the poor, within the same overall culture, will have little in common with the God of the theologians whose personal circumstances allow them to spend years refining concepts relating to their God — omniscience, ubiquity, immutability, aseity, immateriality. As James writes: "Pray, what specific act can I perform in order to adapt myself the better to God's simplicity?"

The relationship between Man and his God has been sharply drawn into focus for us by a speech on 16 February of this year when Mikhail Gorbachev addressed a Forum of scientists, artists, clergymen and politicians. "For centuries we have been seeking after immortality. It is difficult to accept that every one of us is mortal, but to tolerate the doom of all humanity, of human reason, is just impossible".

Gorbachev's point is relevant to the discussion of God because the concept of immortality — one of the attributes of God — is an abstraction that relates to Man rather than to individual men and women. Just as immortality cannot be a characteristic of any individual, so infinite goodness, justice, wisdom and love cannot be other than abstractions, imagined projections of individual acts of goodness, justice, wisdom and love. In all these discourses replace the word God by the word Man and everything falls into place. We are talking about ourselves and imagining what it would be like to be a "super" human.

To pursue Mikhail Gorbachev's line of thought a little further. What happens to God when a power-mad lunatic, a fanatical terrorist or a simple malfunction blows us all into oblivion? Where is God then? Like all Man's other creations God, too, would have been blown away. A modern Milton could write a new *Paradise Lost* as his imagination depicted an even more horrendous Hell than that into which the Fallen Angels were cast, but once the button had been pressed where would be the God to inspire, and the poet to write, a new *Paradise Regained*?

At one point in the Report an author writes that "the bow in the sky . . . is the sign that Yahweh will never again destroy mankind". Perhaps this faith makes clear why so many otherwise intelligent Christians have accepted nuclear weapons with equanimity as necessary to deter the Russians and a guarantee against nuclear devastation. I, for one, would not bet on it.

Freethought in Fiction (2)

ANDREW WHITEHEAD

Stephen Remarkx

In the second of his series of articles, Andrew Whitehead examines how one East End clergyman sought to honour Christ and damn disbelief through the popular novel.

"The most popular parish magazines", the socialist cleric, James Adderley, once commented, "are those which contain a serial story about an insipid young chorister who gets into bad company with some atheist lecturers but is rescued by the Vicar's wife, who finds him a nice little wife in the grocer's shop. His father-in-law dies leaving him a hundred pounds, and the last act ends with a christening and tea at the Vicarage".

The sneering tone is unwarranted, for Adderley's most celebrated literary work is no more elevated of plot. *Stephen Remarkx: the Story of a Venture in Ethics* appeared in 1893 when Adderley was in his early thirties, and just a few years after his conversion to socialism during the 1889 Dock Strike. "I wrote the book in a few hours during a holiday", Adderley recalled. And, yes, it does show. There was difficulty finding a publisher, but when it did appear the petite volume was a surprisingly strong seller, going through many printings.

Stephen Remarkx is a reflection, a little belated, of the clerical discovery of London's East End. The settlement movement, which first found expression in the establishment of Toynbee Hall in 1884, was the result of a populist turn among Oxbridge ordinands. Adderley, who was High Church, worked first with Oxford House in Bethnal Green and then with the Christ Church Oxford Mission in Poplar. The novel appeared, Adderley wrote, "just when slumming was the fashion among religious people of the upper classes, and Socialism of a very mild type was beginning to be indulged in even by duchesses".

The eponymous hero of the tract is the orphaned second son of Lord Remarkx. Educated at Eton and Oxford (the Hon and Rev James Adderley was himself a product of Eton and Christ Church), Stephen is ordained and takes the curacy in the much neglected parish of St Titus, Hoxton. Stephen finds the area to be:

a hotbed of militant Secularism. While the Vicar was droning away in a black gown on the "Wonders of Creation" to a congregation of twenty on a Sunday morning, Mark Smasham was addressing a crowd of four hundred men in the high road, fifty yards from the Church, on the "Contradictions of Genesis or the Muddles of Moses".

Hoxton, of course, was Charles Bradlaugh's birth-

place, and but a short distance from the Hall of Science on Old Street.

Stephen, who advocates a socially-concerned clergy, "knew from personal experience that such a parish as St Titus was an exception to the general rule. He knew that in other parts of East London the work of social reformation was being led by faithful Church people. He was a personal friend of the workers at the different University Settlements and College Missions". So Stephen sets out to brighten up the local ministry, preaching in the streets and on club platforms, winning a new audience for the Church.

The plot then takes a rather unusual turn. Stephen becomes, through the patronage of his uncle, the rector of St Mark's, Chelsea. There he makes a name for himself as a radical preacher. All this is too much for his uncle who asks Stephen to resign the benefice. But by this time Stephen has already elaborated his idea of a Christian community, whose members would devote their wealth and intellect to Christ.

Among those flocking around our hero is a docker, John Oxenham, who perseveres in his new faith in spite of the scepticism of his colleagues and the mockery of a secularist lecturer, by name Joe Binks. Oxenham declares in his own defence:

"While Joe Binks has been puzzling his head over Cain's wife and Balaam's ass, I have been trying to find out what the Bible has to say on social questions, and do you know there's a lot more about socialism in the Bible than any of you fellows think. And it's because my parson up West knows something about these things, and a good lot more than our friend Joe here, that I intend going every Sunday to hear him, until further notice".

John Oxenham becomes one of the founders of the Christian community. And of course (an echo, perhaps, of the parish magazine), that rogue secularist Joe Binks becomes a supporter of the project when his wife's life is saved by a society doctor who has forsaken his lucrative practice and joined the community.

The final pages betray an even more remarkable twist to the story. On Christmas night, Stephen befriends an old tramp. A knight of the realm leaving a ball spies the two of them and, in resentment of the democratic tone of Stephen's preaching, lobs a snowball at them. This causes Stephen to fall under the wheels of a cart and, amid much wailing, he dies.

As a work of literature, *Stephen Remarkx* has next to no virtue. Its popularity, one imagines, came from potential donors to the settlements and missions

rather than East Enders themselves. The novel does, however, reveal the acute class sensitivity of those wealthy young men who came to work among the poor, and exposes too their ignorance of working class life, for the novel has nothing to say about the struggle for existence in the poorer parts of London. Yet there is no doubt that the energy and sincerity of the clerical colonisers helped to give Anglicanism a cutting edge which allowed it a wider relevance. One might reflect that Toynbee Hall still flourishes, now adapted to serve particularly the needs of the Bengali community in Spitalfields, while the Hall of

Science long ago shut up shop.

One of the recurring themes of James Adderley's autobiography was the struggle against organised secularism in working-class London. He recalled how the Oxford House papers, pamphlets issued "as a very mild artillery wherewith to storm the secularist trenches", were excellent reading for clergy and ordinands but "quite inadequate to meet the *National Reformer* and the *Freethinker*". He is sufficiently modest to recognise that it was not the Church, but socialism, which eventually superseded militant atheism as a popular movement.

Cults: Guidelines for Gurus

DAVID TRIBE

During 1963-71, while David Tribe was President of the National Secular Society, some humanists were anticipating a massive influx into the free-thought movement of apostates from "orthodox" Christian sects. He warned then, however, there was every indication that these drifters were being caught on the rebound by a number of new cults. In this and a following article he now takes an ironic look at the operation of these cults and compares them with their older rivals.

ism; while Marxist historians have praised every madcap "communist" sect of sixteenth-century Germany or seventeenth-century England as a harbinger of the Revolution. In short, far from going out of their way to abuse or ridicule religious minorities, freethinkers have been prone to welcome their defiance of religious establishments and social conventions.

Only when these minorities have become sufficiently large, or vocal, or nasty to be noteworthy has *The Freethinker* taken much notice of them. Thus Spiritualists gained increasingly adverse publicity in its pages when "sensitives" forsook private seances for public platforms and "spirits" turned from reminding the Widow Twankey of her cat's need of milk to warning the world of the evils of atheism. An exception to this is the odd suburban Messiah, with no following outside his own family, who has committed some secular crime. Then it may be useful to remind the godly, who justify religion from its supposed association with morality, that there are "religious maniacs" but not "atheistic maniacs". To avoid further correspondence let me hasten to add that I am aware atheists can be criminal or insane, but atheism is not part of their psychopathology.

These reflections have been inspired by a recent flood of media comment on certain sects, not in the impious pages of this journal but in the pious pages of the popular press. The first shock to the faithful was Pearlygate. In some particulars it was *déjà vu*. Have we not for decades heard or witnessed the weekly (or more frequent) nuptials of God and Mammon, celebrated by Billy Graham, Herbert W. or Garner Ted Armstrong, on the box? And who is unaware of schisms, lavish living, heart-rending cash-flow problems, and allegations of financial and sexual irregularities within the Armstrongs' World-wide Church of God? But Pearlygate reached new levels of shock-horror.

One of America's leading religious spectaculars, within the orbit of the Assemblies of God, is PTL, variously described as standing for People That Love

Referring to religious manifestations of the "alternative society" (*The Freethinker*, January), Vera Lustig observed that "many of these sects are probably harmless, benign even". The following month E. Chambers took the Editor to task: "You devote article after article to humorous onslaughts on the lunatic fringe of religion. . . . Attacking these tiny minorities strikes me as being irrelevant and futile". In May Phillip Adams spoke indulgently of "curry-scented beliefs like the Hare Krishna, which gets kids out of yuppie costumes into socks, thongs, saffron robes and Kojak haircuts". This echoed the Editor's own reference, on an earlier occasion (May 1974), to "dottily innocent Hare Krishna followers" who "enliven the scene and relieve the tension caused by the rush and bustle of city life". Until a few years ago, when they made an unusual takeover bid for a listed Australian company, I had had similarly sentimental feelings about the Orange People (Rajneeshi) and their apparently idyllic, if parasitic, lives of simple sexuality.

In the nineteenth century Spiritualists were quite prominent in some freethought organisations, particularly in Australia. A few prominent English Theosophists were also for a time active within or beside the National Secular Society on a number of social and libertarian issues. Liberal freethinking historians have tended to be sympathetic to Protestantism in general because of its role in breaking the power of Catholicism and the Feudal System and ushering in the epoch of the individual conscience and capital-

or Praise The Lord — and by the ungodly as Pass The Loot. This \$129 million-a-year corporation was run by the Rev Jim and Tammy Bakker. Its message was as intellectually substantial as Tammy's pencilled eyebrows and as authentic as her plastic eyelashes, but was to be judged on its warnings against the Whore of Babylon and other spiritual perils. In March this year everything came apart. A former church secretary, now living in West Babylon, New York, alleged that in 1980 she had been plied with drink and drugs by the Rev Jim and taken advantage of by him and some favoured associates. Her shame had been assuaged by the promise of \$265,000, but not all of this had been paid. Worse was to come. Not only intercourse but oral sex was named. The Rev Jim was accused of dressing up in blond wigs to pick up prostitutes while returning from church conventions; of cavorting naked with three men in a steam room; and of propositioning a male vice-president of the church. Now, freethinkers really do not care if Jim Bakker goes to bed with a woman, a man or a transsexual hippopotamus. The point of this saga is that the really "detestable and abominable vice" is not buggery but humbuggery.

Once Pearlygate was opened, there was a stampepe of saints coming and going. The lovely Tammy was found to be addicted to "therapeutic" drugs. It was alleged that Jim had been unable to live on his modest stipend of \$1.6 million a year, and that \$92 million of PTL funds had gone missing. The Bakkers were cast into outer darkness, to vent their wailing and gnashing of teeth in a \$3 million Palm Springs mansion; and the outfit was put into the receivership of the Rev Jerry Falwell, magnate of the Moral Majority, of which the Bakkers had latterly been so glittering and marketable a commodity. Meanwhile, investor confidence was low in other enterprises of televangelism. The Rev Dr Oral Roberts (so called, it should be said, because of his eloquence), boss of a \$150 million-a-year empire, retired to a prayer tower in Faith, Oklahoma, with the awful warning that God would "call him home" unless \$8 million were donated by 31 March. The Devil was so active that as the fateful day approached there was a shortfall of \$1.3 million and car-bumper stickers appeared with the slogan "LORD" — "Let Oral Roberts Die". But God had more than enough hot-gospellers caterwauling on his right hand, and a greyhound racetrack owner was moved to cough up the deficiency at the last moment. Next in the limelight was the Rev Jimmy Swaggart, first accused by Bakker of trying to take over his corporation and then served with a \$90 million writ by the Rev Marvin Gorman alleging misconduct. All this at a time when the mogul of the Christian Broadcasting Network, the Rev Pat Robertson, was planning to run for President as a Republican.

This real-life *Dallas* was in many ways reminiscent

of the kingdom of Father Divine (alias George Baker, The Messenger and Major Devine), Mother Divine, Faithful Mary and assorted angels, who flourished some decades ago. Father had merely taken the logical step of deciding that the ever-vocal mouthpiece of an ever-silent God might as well assume the divine style and title himself; and his subjects concurred. In the interim much nastier religious rackets emerged, to be faithfully recorded by the current Editor and his predecessors. The most notorious of these were frankly psychotic: the "Family" of Charles Manson, which graduated from hero-worship to ritual murder in the wealthy wasteland of California, and the "People's Temple" of the Rev Jim Jones, which graduated from faith-healing to ritual suicide in the steamy jungle of Guyana. Within the other sects deaths are mostly unrecorded, but shattered lives emerge with sickening regularity round the world.

Chief of these in terms of members, money and influence is the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity (Unification Church or Moonies), founded by the South Korean Rev Sun Myung Moon and most conspicuously political (Right-wing, of course) of them all. Readers will also be familiar with the Children of God, inspired by the American guru, Moses David (David Berg); the Divine Light Mission, illuminated by the Indian Guru Maharaj Ji and his Holy Mother; and the cults that mix bogus science with superstition. Most successful of these is the Church of Scientology, created by an American science-fiction writer, L. Ron Hubbard. Most bizarre is the Aetherius Society, founded by a sometime London cabbie. He began life as plain George King but is now addressed as His Serene Highness the Rev Prince George King de Santorini, DD. Most popular among the glitterati is the World Government of the Age of Enlightenment, established by the Indian Maharishi Mahesh Yogi of the Flower Power era, which has graduated from Transcendental Meditation (TM) to levitation and rainmaking. On any scale of social disruption and personal misery, the last two sects appear to sit demurely at the bottom.

But what of the "innocent" and "idyllic" Hare Krishna and Rajneeshi? No sooner had Pearlygate opened to reveal conflict in paradise than reports suggested that some adepts of Krishna Consciousness were doing more than chanting and trying to flog unreadable "giveaway" pamphlets. In the words of one paper (*Sydney Sunday Telegraph*, 29 March 1987): "There are accusations that it has become a haven for drug-traffickers, wife-beaters, child-molesters and murderers". The centre of these activities is said to be a lavish Palace of Gold in the hills of West Virginia; but sect hitmen are as peripatetic as its chanters, and buggery seems to mix freely with humbuggery in other communes of this

international society. Greater worldwide publicity has overtaken the Orange Movement, founded by the Indian Bhagwan Shree (Mohan Chandra) Rajneesh. Attention was first drawn to its Oregon headquarters by its fleet of 93 Rolls Royces. Then the number two, American Ma Anand Sheela, defected to Germany with, alleged the Bhagwan, much of the loot. Subsequent investigations revealed a bunker beneath the commune, where Ma carried out electronic surveillance on members and visitors and mixed poison for those she didn't like. Meanwhile, the Bhagwan was caught trying to leave America with the rest of the loot. Alas, religious persecution is alive and well there, and many "holy innocents" of both sects have already been tried, convicted and sentenced.

Different as they are in history and story, these podgy sects and podgy Christs have many features in common. For the guidance of anyone proposing to set up in the cult business, I offer the following Ten Commandments. Like keeping the Sabbath holy in another set of commandments, not all of these are *de rigueur*. A lot depends on circumstances and serendipity. If these rules are observed faithfully, it should not be necessary to pass from manipulation, tax avoidance and excommunication to overt fraud, tax evasion, murder and other indictable offences.

1 Be imaginative and flexible with names — your own and that of your sect. It's a good thing to have two or more names: one sacred, one secular, and perhaps one popular. This also serves to confuse creditors, tax inspectors and other enemies. The East (so long as they don't have to live in it) is very popular with your prospective dupes, so you might consider an Indian name as your sacred one; with, of course, a "guru", "swami", "yogi" or somesuch tacked on. Alternatively, you might adopt something patriarchal from the Old Testament. Your secular name can be your real one (unless you have to establish a new identity in a hurry); but don't hesitate to lay claim to academic distinctions, ecclesiastical or aristocratic titles. These things do not need to be invented — which would detract from your credibility if discovered — but can actually be bought through private colleges or conferred by people of rank down on their luck, quite legally. Your cult's secular name should sound ultraspectable, and probably scientific.

2 Before you start recruiting, read up about psychology. Begin with something motivational — it will do you good too — like Norman Vincent Peale's *The Power of Positive Thinking*, Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People* and *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living*, and Napoleon Hill's *Think and Grow Rich*. Don't worry if you find your own message totally incredible. The important thing is that your disciples believe it, though it's easier to sell something

you believe in yourself. Make sure (a) they believe in nothing else; (b) they believe in you. To get them in the right frame of mind, some application of physiology is desirable. This is a complex theme, but central to the success of your operation. The following tips are indicative only. Segregate your dupes from their families, friends and other contacts, and make them emotionally dependent on you and your group. Don't *criticise* their former beliefs, just *drain* them physically and mentally and make them suggestible to your ideas through sleep deprivation, avitaminosis (a monotonous, and cheap, "macrobiotic" diet helps), prolonged chanting (which produces low blood oxygen, high carbon dioxide, acidosis and disorientation) and, if necessary, psychedelic drugs.

3 Whatever your personal beliefs and the crux of your message, don't forget that your cult should have all the trappings of a religion. There are many reasons for this. Firstly, it will appeal to most candidates for admission, who are likely to be pious "seekers after truth". Secondly, it adds a certain respectability and tends to hoodwink police, judges, politicians and charity commissioners. Thirdly and most importantly — for you're in the business to make a profit — it gives you a splendid legal and fiscal status in terms of running schools, gaining taxation and rating exemptions, and other secular advantages. The precise nature of your religion is up to you, but remember two points. Eastern mysticism and mumbo-jumbo are very popular; but, as your dupes are likely to come from Christian backgrounds and your headquarters be sited in a Christian country, nod in the direction of Christianity. Borrow a few slogans from the Old or New Testament and, if you are in communication with a number of Cosmic Masters, see that one of them is Jesus.

4 Independently of your cult's actual tenets, let it offer vague "spiritual" benefits: things like intellectual certainty, psychic power, harmony with the universe, renunciation of "materialistic values". Your dupes are more likely to be emotionally than financially deprived. Make them feel good by giving away their money — to you. If they're too young to have assets of their own, try to bring their parents into the sect or, failing that, milk them. This commandment applies chiefly to commune-based cults.

5 If your operation is secular and city-based, peppered with yuppies and salted with tycoons, be sure to stress the material benefits conferred by your faith. These people are too shrewd to give you everything, but will keep you in the style to which you've grown accustomed if you advertise that your brand of spiritual enlightenment will help them to pass their examinations, get a better job, make a good match or clinch more business

deals.

- 6 As we live in a scientific or pseudoscientific age, sprinkle your writings with scientific or pseudoscientific terms: words from space programmes, quantum physics, psychoanalysis, faith-healing — it doesn't matter what. Don't worry if you don't understand what these words mean. The chances are your followers won't either. Further, if you can find a way to introduce gadgetry into your liturgy, so much the better.
 - 7 Don't forget the importance of sex in charisma and sexual practice — or substitutes — in communes. Unfortunately, the issue abounds in problems. Group sex can get out of hand; celibacy is hard to enforce; conjugal bliss can offer too much competition. Perhaps you should allow marriage but choose the partners yourself. Above all, don't have a setup which spoils your own fun.
 - 8 If you're not a good manager, hire a few enforcers who are. But keep an eye on them; they may get uppity. If you run a "commune", make sure the title deeds are in your name — your real name. Don't let your dupes get too obsessed with contemplating their navels or seeking mystical experience. Someone's got to do the work and bring in money. Punctuate their devotions with housework, craftwork for sale, begging and proselytising expeditions and other useful activities. Just cut down on their sleep.
 - 9 Don't forget public relations. Cultivate the media, but don't let them drop in on your commune unexpectedly or wander around unchaperoned. Heavens knows what they might see. Wherever you meet them, wine and dine them well (especially the former). Cultivate an "image" of being picturesque, caring and Right-wing. Make it clear that your commune is anti-Communist. Also cultivate "big names", invite them to visit you and look after them well. Pop stars and film stars are good for starters. Later you'll need more substantial people like impartial bishops, academics and politicians.
 - 10 If things should go wrong and you get a bad press, don't panic. Sit tight; build up paranoia and a persecution complex among the faithful; quote Revelations and threaten potential defectors with excommunication and smearing. In a few weeks or months the hue-and-cry will die down. The media will find a new sensation, and politicians and charity commissioners have short memories.
- Oh, and there's an Eleventh Commandment: Don't get found out.

It is reported that superstar Michael Jackson has left the Jehovah's Witnesses. A spokesman for the sect said that Jackson had "disassociated" himself. He is now likely to be shunned by Witnesses, including his mother who is a devout member.

A Pagan Poet

T. F. EVANS

Rupert Brooke was born on 3 August 1887, and since 1915, the year he died, his poems, particularly "The Soldier", have been read at innumerable remembrance day services and recruiting rallies. His short life is widely regarded as the epitome of conservatism and conformity. In fact the soldier-poet, as he became known, was a Fabian Socialist who satirised Christianity in his work.

The poet W. B. Yeats once remarked: "He was the handsomest man in England and he wears the most beautiful shirts". He was speaking of another poet, not to become as famous as himself but to have a special, if strange place, in English poetry and even in English life. The "handsomest man", called by another contemporary "an unbelievably beautiful young man", was Rupert Brooke. Even to readers who are familiar with Brooke's work, and those, the great majority today, to whom the Great War of 1914 to 1918 is something about which they have heard from other people, it comes as a shock to realise that it is now a hundred years since Rupert Brooke was born. The occasion of the centenary affords an opportunity to think again about a young poet and his reputation, a reputation founded on other things besides his poetry.

Rupert Brooke was born at Rugby, in Warwickshire, where his father was a master at the famous public school. His mother was a woman of strong character who is reported to have been disappointed that, as she had one son already, the child was not a girl. His education was on the conventional middle-class lines. After a preparatory school, he went on to Rugby where he showed not only academic ability, with already a special interest in literature, especially poetry, but also a great aptitude at games. He played in the rugby fifteen and in the cricket eleven, and is mentioned in *Wisden's Cricket Almanack*. He won a classical scholarship to Cambridge and entered King's College in the autumn of 1906. At the university he threw himself with great vigour and enthusiasm into a wide variety of activities, including amateur acting and, at the same time, was able to win academic prizes. He declared to a friend that "there are only three things in the world; one is to read poetry, another is to write poetry, and the best of all is to live poetry".

At the end of his studies he took a second class degree, and his failure to obtain a first seems to have worried other people more than it did himself. He announced his intention to live "a Life Dedicated to Art", and while the phrase was a quotation and used with a touch of self-mockery, there was some truth

in it. He later became a Fellow of King's. During the years between his university studies and the outbreak of war in 1914, he published one book of verse and spent much time travelling in Europe and in the South Seas and in the United States. He had a serious breakdown in health and difficult relationships with women friends, in none of which does he appear to have found true satisfaction, although his letters show what deep distress he caused and was caused.

It has been suggested that nobody can be called truly mature who does not take some interest in politics or religion, the two chief means by which humanity has been deceived and led astray through the ages. On the one hand, is the problem of organisation and government in society; on the other is the question of the meaning and purpose of life. Rupert Brooke, with his overwhelming interest in poetry, which subsumed all other concerns, could not perhaps have been expected to take the greatest interest in either of these two subjects. Yet it sometimes comes as a surprise to learn to what extent he did take an interest, in politics at least. Thus, he had declared himself a Socialist while still at Rugby and, when he went to Cambridge, joined the Fabian Society. This was at the time of the Edwardian twilight that preceded the fall of night in 1914, and perhaps it was not altogether surprising that a young man of generous and artistic instincts should have been drawn to a political creed that appeared to offer something superior to the staleness of the Tory-Liberal governing machines.

Brooke was vigorously political for a time. Hugh Dalton said that, at first, he called himself a "William Morris sort of Socialist", but later moved towards a more orthodox Fabian position. One of the more substantial pieces of evidence in relation to this stage in his development is a paper which he delivered to the Cambridge Fabians, apparently in 1910. The subject was "Democracy and the Arts", and it is by no means out of date in 1987.

There does not seem to have been a very strong religious strain in Brooke's early life. Of course, Rugby had its orthodox religious observances. These included obligatory chapel attendance for about ten minutes at seven o'clock each morning. There is no sign that this had any positive effect on Brooke and it may have influenced him in the opposite direction. In a letter to a friend in 1910, he made some attempt to set down what religious views, if any, he had. He could not say what it was that gave him any sense of purpose, but he tried to define it:

The remedy is Mysticism, or Life, I'm not sure which. Do not leap or turn pale at the word Mysticism. I do not mean any religious thing, or any form of belief. I still burn and torture Christians daily. It is merely the *feeling* — or a kindred one — which underlay the mysticism of the wicked mystics, only I refuse to be cheated by the *feeling* into any kind of *belief*.

In an attempt to sum up Brooke some time after his death, Virginia Woolf said that he was "consciously and definitely pagan". What firm evidence there is supports this view. Thus Brooke was incensed at the Christian burial that was given to the poet Swinburne. He wrote to Dalton:

Did you see that, against his desire, the bloody parson mouthed Anglicanisms of blasphemous and untrue meaning and filthy sentimentality over him?

It could be that the clearest expression of Brooke's religious, or non-religious feelings is to be found in a comparatively light-hearted poem called "Heaven", a reworking of an earlier poem called "The Fish". It is light in touch but sharp, if not quite deadly, in its satire. Fish, in their pond, think about an after-life and persuade themselves, because they have faith, that the future is "not Wholly Dry", and that:

somewhere, beyond Space and Time,
Is wetter water, slimier slime!
And there (they trust) there swimmeth One
Who swam ere rivers were begun,
Immense, of fishy form and mind,
Squamous, omnipotent, and kind;
And under that Almighty Fin,
The littlest fish may enter in.

The poem ends with the expression of a fervent hope that the future shall be truly paradisaical:

— And in that Heaven of all their wish,
There shall be no more land, say fish.

If Brooke had died in 1913 or early 1914, he would be remembered as an exceptionally agreeable young man, mentioned in the memoirs of his many friends, who wrote very pleasant light verse, usually on the theme of unrequited love, which he generally treated with a rueful irony rather than any really deep feeling, let alone passion. As it is, he did not die until 1915 when, after service in the Royal Naval Division at Antwerp, he contracted blood poisoning and died in the Mediterranean when he was originally bound for the Dardanelles campaign. He was unsettled and disturbed in his life generally, but especially, as has been noted, in his emotional life, and the war gave him a sense of purpose. Winston Churchill offered him a commission, and he wrote, soon after enlisting:

The central purpose of my life, the aim and the end of it now, the thing God wants of me, is to get good at beating Germans. That's sure. But that isn't what it was. What it was, I never knew; and God knows I never found out.

Brooke had liked the Germans when he lived among them, but his sincerity in expressing his devotion to the cause of defeating them cannot be doubted. Yet it is hard to read some of his best known works at the present day without misgivings. Shortly before he died, he wrote a short series of

sonnets which appeared in book form in the volume "1914 and Other Poems", a few months after his death. One sonnet included a line about entering into the war "as swimmers into cleanness leaping"; the cleanness is contrasted with other men's "dirty songs and dreary", and the poem then refers to "all the little emptiness of love". There is a better known passage in another sonnet, "The Soldier":

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England.

In the atmosphere of wartime, it was inevitable, if deeply regrettable, that Brooke's life, and especially his death, should be seized upon and used for purposes that distressed his friends and would almost certainly have appalled him. Winston Churchill, understandably, wrote that:

The poet-soldier told with all the simple force of genius the sorrow of youth about to die, and the sure triumphant consolations of a sincere and valiant spirit.

The poet Harold Munro took great offence at Brooke's being "advertised" as the soldier-poet, and the *New Statesman* wrote: "A myth has been created but it has grown round an imaginary figure very different from the real man!" In addition it was sad but true that Brooke's vision of cleanness into which the young men threw themselves in 1914 would shortly be swept away by other, greater poets such as Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen, whose own experiences drove them to write of the slaughter on the Western Front; not of "cleanness", but of men "in foul dug-outs, gnawed by rats" or sent to "die as cattle". Neither Churchill's "sure triumphant consolations" nor the visions of the fishy heaven could have prevailed against this awful reality.

LETTERS

THE NUMBERS GAME

Tim Lenton's letter on evolution (July) demonstrates how a little knowledge can be dangerous, and I would advise him to check his statistics theory. By inserting "each" in the sentence, "At each time and place, the odds are still 1,000 billion to one against", he has stated the truth, yet either missed the point or was deliberately trying to deceive the reader. The point is that if you have 1,000 billion places for events of 1,000 billion to 1 against to occur, the probability that an event will occur at least once somewhere is over 60 per cent. And if you allow 5,000 billion places, at least one event is over 99 per cent certain to occur! Of courses, the chances of Tim Lenton standing at the right place to observe a favourable event are still 1,000 billion to 1 against but that's tough on Tim Lenton.

If he cares to get his calculator out, he will find that this is true of much more modest numbers too, so he should try not to be so emotionally affected by large numbers in future.

I strongly recommend William Poundstone's book, *The Recursive Universe* (Oxford University Press), which deals with the problem of cosmic complexity quite brilliantly and was nominated for the 1985 Pulitzer.

P. L. LANCASTER

MOONSHINE

Your irrational and emotive comments on the Unification Church fall into the category of "knee-jerk reaction to cultism" which was well criticised by James Hemming in *The Freethinker*, December 1985. The "brainwashing" stereotype and other myths you repeat have been debunked by objective academics and government studies. Articles like yours serve only to engender prejudice and misunderstanding.

Rev Moon is a great humanitarian with a vision of a unified peaceful world. To this end he has founded several organisations such as the International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences to provide a forum for academics to dialogue and consider the role of values in science. This highly acclaimed conference is now in its 15th year. Others include the Professors' World Peace Academy and International Relief and Friendship Foundation. People of any faith or none take part in these projects which exist for their own sake and not as fronts or to curry favour. Most of these projects are funded by businesses established by Rev Moon or other Church members for this purpose.

In conclusion, I would have expected *The Freethinker* to behave rationally and not like a fanatical fundamentalist sect, unless of course secular humanism too is a religion as it is often alleged to be in the United States.

WILLIAM HAINES

Press Officer, The Unification Church, London

GETTING IT RIGHT

M. O'Brien (Letters, July) quotes the Bishop of Durham as having said that the Resurrection was "a conjuring trick with bones". What he actually said was that it was "more than a conjuring trick with bones". This doesn't make the Resurrection any more credible to me, and I write only to stress the importance of accurate quotation at all times.

R. McDOWELL

RESPONSE

In response to the unfriendly editorial comment on my last letter (June), I should point out that I have indeed attended annual general meetings of the National Secular Society, though I stopped doing so because of the political and personal feuds there.

In response to Andrew Whitehead's friendly review of the first issue of *The Raven* (June), I should point out a couple of errors I have noticed in my article on Guy Aldred — the *New Freewoman* was published in 1913 (not 1912), and *Rex v Aldred* was published in 1948 (not 1949).

NICOLAS WALTER

Christian Family magazine has called on its readers to switch off their television sets for a week. The purpose of operation, from Sunday 6 September, is to "strengthen family ties".

Freethinker Fund

It is difficult resisting the temptation to indulge in a quiet gloat as the "born-again" Jesusites in the United States put the knife and the boot into each other. But whilst enjoying the public spectacle, with the Bakkers, Swaggarts and Falwells of God's own country squabbling over multi-million Christian business empires, spare a thought for their gullible superstition-ridden dupes.

Here in Britain it is easy to shake our heads in disbelief at the power and influence of America's televangelists. But it would be extremely unwise to ignore our own network of religious pressure groups. They are well-funded, and increasingly Westminster-based. Spurious concern for "the family" camouflages the real aim of this malevolent minority that aspires to become a "moral" majority.

It is vital that strong support is given to publications and organisations doing battle with reactionary elements in society. *The Freethinker* has played its particular role since 1881. Financial backing and an increased circulation are needed to ensure that it will be carrying the fight into the 21st century.

Throughout the year readers send donations to bridge the gap between income and expenditure. Their generosity is much appreciated, and the latest list of contributors is given below.

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Total for June: £193.05.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY ANNUAL OUTING

(to Lewes, including Firlle Hall)

Sunday, 13 September

Details from NSS,

702 Holloway Road, London N19 3NL

Telephone: 01-272 1266

EVENTS

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group. Summer programme obtainable from Joan Wimble, honorary secretary, Flat 5, 67 St Aubyns, Hove, BN3 2TL, telephone Brighton 733215.

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group. New Venture Theatre Club, Bedford Place (off Western Road), Brighton. Sunday, 6 September, 5.30 pm for 6 pm. Public meeting.

British Humanist Association. Autumn School at High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire, 26 to 29 October. Theme: Religion, Humanism and Morality. Speakers: Jim Herrick, Martin Horwood, Don Liversedge, Dymphna Porter, Harry Stopes-Roe, Nicolas Walter and John White. Details obtainable from the BHA, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London, W8 5PG, telephone 01-938 4791.

Edinburgh Humanist Group. Programme for 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, 11 September, 7.30 pm. Annual General Meeting followed by social.

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

Humanist Holidays. Christmas at a central Brighton hotel. Information obtainable from Gillian Bailey, 18 Priors Road, Cheltenham, GL25 5AA, telephone 0242-39175.

International Humanist and Ethical Union. International Conference at the State University of New York, Buffalo, USA and the Sheraton-Brock Hotel, Niagara Falls, Canada, 2-6 August 1988. Information obtainable from Free Inquiry magazine, PO Box 5, Buffalo, New York 14215, USA.

Lewisham Humanist Group. Unitarian Meeting House, 41 Bromley Road, London SE6. Thursday, 24 September, 7.45 pm. Symposium: Why I am a Freethinker.

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

Sutton Humanist Group. Friends House, Cedars Road, Sutton. Wednesday, 9 September, 7.30 pm for 8 pm. Public meeting.

Thomas Paine. 250th Anniversary Exhibition at the Ancient House Museum, Thetford, Norfolk.

Symposium on Evolutionary Studies. A centenary celebration of the life of Julian Huxley will be held at the Meeting Rooms of the Zoological Society, Regent's Park, London, on Thursday and Friday, 17 and 18 September. Admission to the Symposium is free but by ticket obtainable from the Eugenics Society, 69 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1PJ, telephone 01-834 2091.

Supreme Court Rejects Creation "Science"

Christian fundamentalists in the United States, still in disarray over the Pearlygate scandal, have suffered a further blow. The Supreme Court has overthrown a Louisiana State law which compelled teachers to give equal time to creation "science" when teaching the theory of evolution. The law, which was passed six years ago, has been declared unconstitutional.

Justice William Brennan, who wrote the majority report, said the purpose of the Louisiana law "was clearly to advance the religious viewpoint that a supernatural being created mankind. . . It seeks to employ the symbolic and financial support of the

Government to achieve a religious purpose".

Rejecting a claim that the Louisiana law was aimed at preserving academic freedom, Justice Brennan declared: "The goal of providing a more comprehensive science curriculum is not furthered either by outlawing the teaching of evolution or by requiring the teaching of creation science.

"The Louisiana law does not serve to protect academic freedom, but has the distinctly different purpose of discrediting evolution by requiring it to be countered at every turn by the teaching of creation science. The goal of basic fairness is hardly furthered by the act's discriminatory preference for the teaching of creation science against the teaching of evolution".

Only two of the nine justices disagreed with the majority ruling. Both are ultra-conservative appointees of the Reagan administration.

This Supreme Court ruling is bad news for the Christian Right in at least a dozen other states where they have been campaigning for creation "science" in the classroom. In Alabama they succeeded in getting 44 textbooks banned on the ground that they taught "secular humanism". This case will reach the Supreme Court next year.

Liberal educationists and textbook publishers are delighted by the Supreme Court decision. Gwen Gregory, counsel for the National Schools Board Association, said that if the Supreme Court had not ruled against the fundamentalists, "it would have made it very difficult to keep other religious groups from trying to instil religion in the classroom".

Attempts to Turn the Clock Back

land that there should be an act of worship and that "we should not deprive the children of the pleasure of singing hymns".

John White recalled that Norman St John-Stevas, a former Education Minister, told a conference of teachers: "Because church-going has declined, the school should give pupils this valuable experience. The hymns that are sung should be traditional hymns. It should be a Christian act of worship and include the Lord's Prayer. What makes it valuable is to pray together".

The *Sunday Telegraph* recently reported: "The Government is launching a new offensive against the thousands of schools which fail to hold daily religious assemblies. The promised crackdown reflects growing concern that the legal requirement is being widely flouted. . .

"Ministers are determined to ensure that religious education teaching has a high profile in the Government's planned national curriculum".

Referring to the Secretary of State for Education's plans to amend the law on acts of worship, John White quoted a *Daily Mail* report: "He wants opinions on whether different sections of a school should be permitted to worship separately. This could lead to schools with large immigrant intakes having separate collective worship for non-Christian pupils".

Today referred to "the pressure from Muslims and other groups who want the right to hold separate school services".

John White ended his address with some words from James Hemming's BHA booklet, *The Humanist Approach to Moral Education*, written in 1967: "But it should not be overlooked that society itself is an obstacle to moral maturity in so far as it extols commercial values overmuch, is often impersonal and authoritarian, and is still organised largely on the basis of intense competitiveness".

John White concluded: "If that was true in 1967, how much more true it is in 1987".

Australia's Faith Healer

A report in the *Adelaide News* states that the Sahaja Yoga sect is growing faster in Australia than anywhere else in the world. The claim is based on a statement by the outfit's public relations officer and should therefore be treated with some scepticism. Nevertheless it is true that a lady named Mataji, who is regarded by the faithful as a goddess, drew large crowds to meetings in Sydney and Melbourne.

Mataji teaches that diseases, including AIDS, are all in the mind. Anorexia, angina and epilepsy are caused by dwelling too much on the past. Cancer of the blood, kidney troubles and diabetes "are all caused by too much mental activities".

It would be nearer the mark to say that gullibility and a readiness to swallow any tall tale told by a religious charlatan is caused by too little mental activity.

Reviews and several letters have been held over due to pressure on space.