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MEAT SLAUGHTERED FOR RELIGIOUS MINORITIES SOLD TO GENERAL PUBLIC

The Government's rejection of its own Farm Animal Welfare Council's recommendation to abolish exemption on religious grounds from humane pre-slaughter stunning of animals has been fiercely criticised. Jews and Muslims insist on religious grounds that animals are slaughtered while fully conscious. But Dr Tony Andrews, senior lecturer in farm animal medicine at the Royal Veterinary College, claims that a large proportion of meat from ritually slaughtered animals is sold to the general public. At least half the beef slaughtered by the Jewish Shechita method is sold to non-Jews, because only the forequarters are accepted as kosher.

Council members of the British Veterinary Association have strongly condemned the Government's refusal to implement the FAWC's proposals. They are adamant that effective pre-slaughter stunning is essential to ensure that animals do not suffer unnecessary pain and distress.

The BVA has also rejected the Government's reasoning on the labelling of such meat, namely that there would be serious difficulties in administration and enforcement.

The Compassion in World Farming organisation has denounced the Government for taking the easy option on the question of ritual slaughter. It describes Agriculture Minister John MacGregor's statement that such killing must be performed humanely as "a contradiction in terms".

Agscene, the Campaign journal, comments: "Not only has the Minister rejected the call for an end to the religious exemptions from humane pre-slaughter stunning . . . but he has also rejected FAWC's recommendation for all meat slaughtered by religious methods to be 'clearly labelled to indicate the method of slaughter'. As the hindquarters are routinely rejected in Jewish slaughter, the meat-

eating public will continue to be dished up such cruelly slaughtered meat, even though they may be totally opposed to such slaughter methods. This decision makes all the flaunting of new food labelling measures look somewhat two-faced".

The CIWF welcomes the Government's promise "to prohibit the religious slaughter of deer because the necessary form of restraint, in particular head restraints, is not considered suitable for them". The welcome is guarded, because the Government's attitude "leaves the way open for some clever designer to come up with a 'suitable' form of restraint in future".

The organisation accuses the Minister of accepting ritual slaughter "as a way to fob off the vehemence of the more orthodox and fundamentalist groups within the Jewish and Muslim communities". He also ignores a national opinion poll taken last summer which showed that 92 per cent of the population opposed ritual slaughter, with only five per cent in favour.

The Vegetarian Society of the UK is also extremely critical over the sale of meat from ritually slaughtered animals without disclosure on methods of killing. The Society points out in a press release: "Ritually-killed animals come from ordinary farms and are transported and marketed through the usual channels; they are therefore cruelly reared and treated, beaten, bruised, mutilated and ailing — many are bloody — before they can be offered up for the ritual cut. Most are not 'physiologically perfect' as Jewish authorities claim for kosher meat, and they do not conform to the stipulations cited from Muslim writ by latter-day interpreters.

"If Jews and Muslims adhered to their teachings,



(continued on back page)

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NEWS

CHURCH DESTABILISATION

Until last month, as far as the general public was concerned, *Crockford's Directory* could have been a handbook for the hardware trade. At £27.50 a copy, and without the benefit of *Spycatcher*-type publicity, it stood little chance of becoming a literary blockbuster. So when a rumpus broke out over the anonymously written Preface, it appeared that we were in for another of those flutters in the Anglican dovecotes that bewilder the religiously indifferent and amuse the ungodly. The death by suicide of Dr Gareth Bennett who, it transpired, had written the Preface, changed all that. Religious farce had become human tragedy.

Dr Bennett, a distinguished church historian and scholar, was deeply perplexed by the state of the Anglican Church. He was not unique in that respect; people always have and always will be worried about institutions that mean much to them. And there is nothing new about churchmen exchanging insults in the guise of genteel courtesies.

It is unlikely that all the factors which made Dr Bennett ignore Christian teaching on the sinfulness of taking one's life will ever be known. He had a wide circle of admirers, but few close friends. They have described him as "a very private person". A bachelor, he was devoted to his mother who died a few years ago.

Whatever Dr Bennett's true intention when he wrote the waspish criticism of the "liberal elitists", led by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Robert Runcie, and the Archbishop of York, Dr John Hapgood, it becomes clearer by the day that his tragic death is being exploited by advocates of what the *Observer* newspaper described as "the new moral certainties of Thatcherism".

Dr Runcie is an obvious target. The Archbishop is no closet Trotskyist, but the Prime Minister has not forgiven his refusal to turn the Falklands memorial service into an orgy of triumphal jingoism. The report, *Faith in the City*, whatever its shortcomings, could not be mistaken for a Conservative election manifesto. So there may be some justification for Dr Bennett's accusation: "The jibe that the Church of England is now the SDP at prayer has enough truth in it to be uncomfortable".

These are indeed uncomfortable times for illiberal elements within the Anglican fold, whether they be the Sir Humphreys of Church House, anti-Romanists in groups like the Church Society, or traditionalists who are implacably opposed to women's ordination. Of course the anti-liberals are baffled and frustrated. Unless they can find a way to get rid of Dr Runcie,

AND NOTES

he could remain in office for another four years. More realistically, they are aiming to prevent Dr Hapgood, a liberal and a scientist, becoming his successor.

A "stop Hapgood" campaign, spearheaded by Conservative MPs and supported by some Government Ministers, was gathering momentum even before the controversial *Crockford's* hit the bishops' doormats and the headlines. This caucus has Mrs Thatcher's sympathetic ear, and she will play an important role in the appointment of Dr Runcie's successor. Another Prime Minister would exercise a degree of caution and balance. But no institution, with the possible exception of the monarchy, is safe from the Iron Lady and her boot boys. They have mounted an onslaught against the BBC, worked assiduously to suppress information unfavourable to the Government, and bullied local authorities into submission. Thatcherite members of the General Synod include John Selwyn Gummer, Government Minister and pop-up theologian; also Peter Bruinvels, poison dwarf of the Christian Right and until last year Conservative MP for Leicester East. No doubt they fondly recall the halcyon days of yore — and not all that yore either — when Lambeth Palace could be likened unto an annexe of Conservative Central Office.

Reaction by the mainly Conservative press to the *Crockford's* Preface cannot but arouse strong suspicion that the perpetrators were motivated by something more fundamental and devious than a lofty desire to keep the Church of England theologically pure. Fleet Street — Wapping hacks and leader writers, not normally noted for their adherence to Anglicanism, became instant defenders of the faith and experts on Church matters. The Archbishops were virtually branded assassins, while the late Dr Bennett was depicted as a victim of liberal witch hunters. If Dr Bennett was hounded to his death, the pack consisted in the main of practitioners of cheque-book journalism and tabloid muck-rakers who were trying to dig up dirt on his private life.

The Archbishops' Commission on Church and State rejected disestablishment in their 1970 report, one reason being that such a move "might suggest that the English people as a whole were going un-Christian". Of course the nation has been going un-Christian, particularly unAnglican, for many decades. Secularists are the traditional opponents of a Church "by law Established"; but the *Crockford's* scandal, with its strong political overtones, will encourage many Anglicans to support the disestablishment cause.

AN ODD GOD

Christian fundamentalists in the last century often suggested that tragedies like the Kings Cross fire were a divine warning to this sinful nation. Sabbath-breaking was particularly provoking to The One Above, punishable by shipwrecks, mining disasters and railway accidents. Thus, after the Clayton Tunnel collapsed on the London to Brighton line (1861), resulting in 23 people being killed and 175 injured, local clergy sent railway companies a pious screed on the wickedness of Sunday travel.

This reaction to a disaster is by no means unknown among Christians today. Many of them regard the recent hurricane that devastated much of southern England as yet another warning from the Almighty. Fr Michael Clifton, a London priest, has expressed his belief, in the Roman Catholic weekly *Universe*, that the hurricane was "a warning from Almighty God . . . aimed at the most affluent, most materialistic, and the most sin and drug-ridden area of the country — that is to say the most Godless". Whether those who live in the stretch of country from Torquay to Tunbridge Wells are deserving of this priestly stricture, let alone godly wrath, is open to debate.

Fr Clifton thinks it is significant that the hurricane occurred "at the time of much opposition being expressed against David Alton's bill to limit abortions". Furthermore, a parallel can be drawn with the thunderbolt that struck York Minster after the Bishop of Durham was consecrated. Nor is that all: the stock market crash was God's way of showing his disapproval of greedy money-grubbers. Vatican Bank directors and the Church Commissioners must be quaking.

Fr Clifton does not explain why, although around twenty erring humans died during the hurricane, the greatest number of fatalities occurred among non-human creatures. Or why, if "only God can make a tree", as the song goes, he perversely destroyed at least fifteen million of them in one night. Most curious of all is the fact that while secular establishments like clubs and public houses got off lightly, hundreds of church properties were destroyed or badly damaged.

Perhaps James Anderton, Chief Constable of Greater Manchester, can be persuaded to raise these questions next time he is having a chat with the Almighty.

Andrea Reynolds, a born-again Christian, rang a Los Angeles religious TV programme to confess that she had stabbed her young son to death. She had also drowned their four pet dogs. The manager of the flats where she lived said that Reynolds was unable to pay her monthly rent. She had given it to a church.

TAKE YOUR PARTNERS

When the waltz was becoming the rage of Europe it was denounced by the clergy as a titillating corrupter of morals, enticing the innocent to perdition. That viewpoint is still being expounded in Scotland by Free Church minister, the Rev Angus Smith, who has been thundering against the demon dance in his church magazine.

A reader had written to say that dancing was a legitimate pleasure for Christians. Not a bit of it, retorted the Rev Angus: "Although the dancers may be apart, it leads to 'touching between the sexes' which constitutes fornication".

He argues that all dancing has some exposure or a measure of sensuality about it. "A waltzing minister can lead to Hell, whatever he preaches".

The Rev Angus poses a profound question: "If Christians or Christian ministers begin cavorting on the dance floor, then where do they draw the line?" Where indeed? One over-enthusiastic cavorter might inadvertently solve one of life's great mysteries: "Does a Scotsman wear anything under his kilt?"

The Free Church minister is known as "the Ferry Reverend" because of a campaign he ran to prevent Sunday ferries from the mainland to the Isle of Skye. He failed on that one, and it is safe to predict that Highlanders will be waltzing and quickstepping long after his joyless creed has gone to the wall.

It is reported that Sir Richard Attenborough has agreed to make three films for Universal during the next five years. The first two will be based on the lives of Thomas Paine and Sir Richard Burton, the explorer.

"MIRACLE" TEARS

American Sean Carlsson has successfully duplicated one of the Catholic Church's favourite conjuring tricks by causing a copy of the Mona Lisa to weep.

This revelation was made by Gay Byrne during his regular morning programme on the Irish Radio. The inventor, Byrne said, claims that the method of getting a painting or statue to weep is so simple that it could have been employed in basilicas and suchlike for centuries.

Carlsson, who uses salt crystals to work the "miracle", has applied for a patent in the USA and intends to market weeping icons as a novelty. No doubt he aims to make as much money out of the deception as the Church has done.

Significantly, the Greek Orthodox Church of St Nicholas in Chicago also owns an icon that "weeps" — but declines to let anyone examine it.

Ultra-orthodox Jews have lost court battle to prevent Jerusalem cinemas opening on the Sabbath.

Irish Campaign to

The Campaign to Separate Church and State, a new organisation set up in the Republic of Ireland, presented a submission to the representative of the United Nations Human Rights Commission, who visited Dublin last month.

The Campaign was set up because its founder members are concerned at the increasing collusion between Government departments, notably Education and Health, and various Church establishments. They are concerned because of the ineffectiveness of successive parliaments and elected politicians in the realm of Church-State relationships. High legal costs make taking remedial action through the courts prohibitive.

In its submission to the UNHRC, the Campaign declares that the extra-parliamentary relationship between the State's Executive and Church interests is partly a residue of colonial rule in Ireland. This is facilitating Church-led social engineering, contrary to the fundamental rights, wishes, social and economic interests of the people. Formally, the churches in Ireland favour the separation of Church and State, but the main areas of contention are in public education and health.

The Campaign points out that most of the Department of Education's policies and regulations have never been debated or approved by Parliament.

"In so much as Ireland does not have a comprehensive Education Act it is virtually unique among developed countries. The abdication of parliamentary control, coupled with official connivance, has created a monopoly of the supply of primary or elementary schooling and a monopoly in the training and supply of primary teachers under the control of Roman Catholic and Church of Ireland bishops".

Only one per cent of primary schools in the Irish Republic are run by State or local authorities. The remainder are essentially denominational, under the patronage of Roman Catholic bishops (3,323), Church of Ireland bishops (202) and other denominations (67). There are only three multid denominational schools in the Republic. But the State provides all salaries and 85 per cent of capital expenditure.

In recent years, educational developments, undertaken without consent or awareness, have seriously infringed Constitutional rights of non-conforming Irish citizens.

The Campaign says the rights infringed include the right of all citizens, not just practising Catholics, to opportunities for employment as teachers in all publicly funded schools. So is the right of children to receive a genuine primary education which is not constrained by the dictats of Church leaders.

"In December 1985, the Minister of Education confirmed that her Department recognised that in schools under Roman Catholic patronage a principal

Break Church's Grip

teacher's personal qualities include 'being exemplary in carrying out religious duties', and in the case of an assistant teacher of being 'a practising Catholic'. This concession was made following private meetings between the Minister's office and the Catholic interests, in spite of Article 44, 2.3 of the Constitution which says: 'The State shall not impose any disabilities or make any discrimination on the ground of religious profession, belief or status'.

"Teachers too have a Constitutional right to freedom of expression. . . Moreover, 'education' which is restricted within a framework defined on religious grounds is no longer education".

In a section of the Submission entitled "Health", it is pointed out that a similar situation prevails in the Republic's hospitals, which are 99 per cent State funded but largely controlled by the Church.

"The personal autonomy of hospital professional staff is constrained by religious criteria, e.g. through what is known as the 'Bishop's Contract'. . . Trainee nurses, although paid out of the Exchequer, are being selected on the basis of religious conformity, to the exclusion of other worthy persons. . .

"A medical ethics code determined by the Catholic hierarchy in most instances binds both nursing and medical staff through their contracts of employment, despite the fact they receive their salaries direct from the Department of Health".

Last year a proposal to set up a central applications bureau for the selection of trainee nurses was successfully obstructed by Roman Catholic and other religious opponents.

"Roman Catholic nursing schools want to select religiously conforming trainees, despite the fact that the State funds both the training and the emoluments of trainee and graduate nurses in voluntary hospitals, which contribute almost nothing from their own resources. Voluntary hospitals under the aegis of Protestant churches operate in a complementary fashion. . .

"Three of the four health schools in the universities use voluntary hospitals under RC control for training purposes. Students attending these schools are taught only one particular code of medical ethics".

The Campaign to Separate Church and State endorses the provisions of Article 44.2.2 of the Irish Constitution which declares that the State shall not endow any religion. The Campaign contends that "religious beliefs are for the individual to decide, otherwise they would not carry the strength of belief but the weakness of coercion".

The CSCA secretary is Dick Spicer, 112 Railto Cottages, South Circular Road, Dublin 8, Republic of Ireland.

OBITUARIES

Mrs E. Clayton

Elinor Clayton, of Cliviger, near Burnley, has died at the age of 92. She was a well known writer whose work was published in newspapers and magazines, including *The Freethinker*. Her interest in the Esperanto movement dated from before the first world war. It was as a student of Esperanto that she met her second husband, Jack Clayton, who died in 1979. He was for many years a prominent speaker for the National Secular Society, particularly in the north of England.

There was a secular committal ceremony when cremation took place at Burnley.

Mr E. Edwards

Eddie Edwards, a former Labour councillor in Lambeth, has died. He was 63.

There was a large gathering of relatives and friends when the secular committal ceremony was held at Woodvale Crematorium, Brighton.

Dr R. Manvell

Roger Manvell, who has died in the United States, was an author, lecturer and broadcaster, and one of Britain's foremost authorities on the cinema. He was a former director of the British Film Academy, and taught film studies at the London Film School. His book, *Film*, published in 1944, enjoyed considerable popularity. He also wrote biographies of several theatrical figures, including Sarah Siddons.

Dr Manvell was an active humanist and an opponent of censorship. He contributed articles to the *Humanist* and *New Humanist*, and was associate editor for twelve years. He was also a director of the Rationalist Press Association from 1965 until his death. His book, *The Trial of Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh*, was published in 1976.

The Earl Russell

John Conrad Russell died suddenly while travelling by train from London to his home in Cornwall. The son of Bertrand and Dora Russell, he was described by a friend as "an eccentric, but a prolific writer and self-motivated publisher". His marriage to Susan Doniphan was dissolved and he is survived by their daughter. He was 66, and shared a house with his mother until her death in 1986.

Mr P. Sowter

Percy Sowter, who had been in poor health for some years, has died at the age of 87. He was a member of the British Humanist Association and the National Secular Society, and a former membership secretary of the Progressive League.

There was no funeral as he had directed that his body be used for medical research.

On the Rocks, or A Refuge

T. F. EVANS

Captain Shotover: The Church is on the rocks, breaking up.

Bernard Shaw, Heartbreak House, 1919.

*They say the C of E's "in schism".
There may be those who much resent
Priest, Liturgy, and Sacrament
Whose worship is what they call "free",
Well, let them be so, but for me
There's refuge in the C of E.*

John Betjeman, Poems in the Porch, 1954.

It is astonishing how, now and again, and unpredictably, items float to the top of a disorderly pile of papers on the desk that prove to connect with each other in a most satisfactory way. Thus, in the last few weeks when our thoughts should have been on other things, we have been driven again and again to consider once more the position and influence of what John Betjeman earlier in the poem from which the above lines are taken, called "our dear old C of E". The matters which needed our attention as the recent hurricane drove across the south of England were the even greater storms that were blowing through the stock markets of the world, and the great clouds of violence that are always looming over us, whether in the Gulf or in the troubled province of Northern Ireland. It is understandable that, at a time of uncertainty and disturbance (has there been any other time in this century?) many minds should seek for some rock of faith or doctrine to which to cling. Those of us who do not believe in belief, and who abhor what we consider to be mere superstition, cannot be surprised at this. Nor, I submit, should we condemn. Whether we like it or not, great numbers of human beings, since the world began, have sought such comfort or consolation, or, to quote Betjeman again, a refuge. We think that they are mistaken, but it is hard to deny that many, not conspicuously less intelligent than ourselves, have found something of value to themselves in the religious life.

Perhaps, therefore, we should try to be just a little more charitable than usual in reflecting on some of the examples of the larger lunacy that now assail us. Thus, we are constantly being drawn away from the wailing of Wall Street on one side of the Atlantic and the word of the Lawson on the other, to consider the problem of the private behaviour of certain individuals. This problem has been raised most strikingly in a document that has been circulated (we do not know how widely) by some clergymen in a small church in the north of England. The document, which comes in two parts, is issued by the Parochial Church Council of St Gilbert's and St Sullivan's in Dunchester-upon-Dribble. Further information may be obtained from three gentlemen, who may be

assumed to be largely responsible for the drafting. Their names are shown as the Rev Fred, Mr Bill and Mr Jack. Readers will be attracted, or the reverse, by the cosy way in which the names show that the authors are ordinary chaps, just as the rest of us are. (The names, by the way, are not exactly as shown; it would be unkind to identify the church or the reverend gentlemen, but the use of invented names does not mean that their views are not to be taken seriously.)

One section of the declaration is entitled "The Unbelief of the Church of England" and the other is "A Call to Anglican Evangelicals". To put it very broadly, the main argument is that the national church "in its official teaching and practice is apostate — it consciously refuses to believe the Bible and knowingly rejects the truth of God". Some very harsh things are said about the way in which the leaders of the Church of England have deliberately turned away from the essential precepts of the Bible and the duties that necessarily flow from them. The firmness of the condemnation of those who have betrayed their calling is only matched by the certainty with which the Parochial Church Council lays down the truth of what Christians should believe and what they ought to do. In a rather striking phrase, we are told that "the Anglican religious supermarket offers a variety of man-made 'gods' to suit all tastes". From the Archbishops down to clergymen and parishioners alike, the Church has failed to grasp facts which are as clear as daylight to the sharp eyes on the banks of the Dribble.

The Bishop of Durham, to nobody's great surprise, is accused of heresy. But the greatest condemnation is reserved for the Bishops' Report, a motion on which was passed by the General Synod in November 1986. The implication seems to be that the heresy of one bishop might not do as much damage as all that, but when it is not condemned by the authority of the entire Church, no one knows what disastrous consequences might follow. The Church, we are told, has rejected the "consistent statements of the New Testament" and accepted in their place "the divergent views of scholars". It never seems to have entered the minds of the Parochial Church Council that many, many people, not only merely the Bishop of Durham, have failed to find the consistency in the Bible that is so clear to those who live in Dunchester-upon-Dribble.

When we turn from the blanket condemnations in which the declaration abounds, and look for specific instances, we do not find anything really sensational. The Church, we learn, "is more interested in the human problems of South Africa and the inner city — right though this concern is — than in the eternal destiny of men and women". It is a relief that

thoughts about South Africa and the misfortunes of hundreds of our fellow-citizens, are "right" but they do not compare in ultimate value with the "spiritual" issues. When, however, we turn from the virgin births, the atonements and the resurrections, in which the Church apparently does not believe, or does not believe firmly enough, we find — again not entirely to our surprise — that the Church has failed to "discipline" homosexual clergy "for their teaching and lifestyle". By unmistakable implication, the authors of the papers are far more concerned with the sins of the flesh, or the particular ones that they are worrying about, than with matters of public policy on which a lead might reasonably be expected from those who speak for a religion that purports to lay down the whole duty of man.

Of course, what may be thought of as a coincidence in our opening remarks, may be nothing of the kind. Those who feel that the somewhat murky waters of the Dribble could be as sparkling as those of the Jordan, probably knew that the question of alleged sexual sin, particularly homosexual sin, on the part of Anglican clergymen, from the lowly almost to the highest, was to be discussed at the November meeting of the General Synod. We have not had the opportunity of reading comments by those two great custodians of public morality, the *Dunchester Diapason* and the *Dribbleside Drumbeat*; but what we know of the rage and fear engendered in the local press of the country by sex, suggests that the correspondence pages especially in those journals must have been very striking. The national press has certainly not been silent. A great mouthpiece of traditional order, which we will not name, has thundered from on high that "biblical principles" are at stake. It is nowhere made clear that sexual sin is ever condemned in the New Testament (we may leave aside the feverish pages of the Old Testament devoted to the code of conduct prescribed for, but not always followed by, a primitive tribe) with anything approaching the firmness directed against the worship of wealth or a lack of charity towards one's fellows. More cautiously, another great voice of the newspaper world has reminded us of such inconvenient texts as that which calls on anyone who is without fault to throw the first stone.

It has all been a fine to-do but it may not add up to much. To return, however, to the two quotations at the head of these remarks — we are forced to reflect once again on the lead that we are given by the national Church that purports to speak for and on behalf of us all, members and believers or not. Can we really take seriously a body that summons up such excitement about matters of personal behaviour and ignores, almost completely, for example, the carnage on the roads, the terrible race problems in South Africa and elsewhere, declining standards in our great cities and, of course, the immense expen-

diture on weapons of war which continues no matter how the international scene may change? It is fair to note that now and again the Church speaks out, as in *Faith in the City* for example. But the reputation inside the Church of those responsible for such a document does not seem to be greatly enhanced. At the same time, a writer in *New Society* (admittedly a theology student) has written that there is a growing interest in spiritual matters which entitles us to think that we are moving out of the secular era of the 'sixties and after into a period of a new religious revival.

Sonia Martin, a 25-year-old St Albans woman, got involved with the Moonies cult when she visited the United States in 1983. She was brainwashed into believing that members of her family were satanic. Moonies travelled on the same plane when the family brought her back to England, and it is believed she thought they were hunting her. Last month police found her body hanging from a signpost in a lane near East Budleigh, Devon.

Counsel of Death

The California Court of Appeal has handed down a ruling that has serious implications for clergymen who set up shop as counsellors. Describing the suicide of 24-year-old Kenneth Nally as "a profound human tragedy", the court upheld the right of his parents to pursue a million-dollar law suit against four pastors whose incompetent counselling they blame for their son's death.

Kenneth Nally shot himself after being counselled for severe emotional problems by the pastors of a fundamentalist church. He was a good student who had just left college and was planning to go to law school. His parents' contention is that the church was negligent in relying on biblical teachings to treat a psychiatric illness. They were not informed of their son's suicidal condition.

The court defined the charge as "negligent failure to prevent suicide and intentional or reckless infliction of emotional injury causing suicide".

The Nallys' lawyer said the significance of the court ruling is that clergymen who act as counsellors "are being held accountable and don't have the blanket immunity which until now had been assumed."

Kazem Akrami, the Iranian Education Minister, has announced that there were 150,000 schoolboys fighting in the Gulf war last year. Declaring that children were among the country's best front-line troops, he said in a Tehran Radio broadcast: "The reason is clear; if a pupil understands spiritual matters well, he will depend only on God. He will not depend on anything in this world".

Was Chairman Mao a Gay Freethinker?

BARRY DUKE

Amidst the growing clamour among the New Right in Britain for increased control over film, television and print, Barry Duke poses this intriguing question in a timely bid to demonstrate what happens when censorious busybodies gain positions of unchallengeable power.

Whenever I see the hoary old bumper sticker proclaiming "When God made men drivers she was only joking", I am tempted to ram the vehicle bearing the silly slogan hard up the rear. But no such provocation would occur in South Africa, for there, only two years ago, the censors outlawed the sticker — not because it was so obviously sexist, but because it was deemed to be blasphemous.

Lots of things in that Christ-crazed country are considered blasphemous — also indecent, politically undesirable, decadent and corrupting. It's all there for you to see in an essentially depressing, but nonetheless amusing tome called *Jacobsen's Index to Objectionable Literature*.

I first came upon *Jacobsen's* when, in Johannesburg in the early 70s, I was commissioned to write a monthly anti-censorship column for a satirical magazine called *TimeOut* (no connection with the London publication of the same name). During the magazine's short but spirited lifetime (the censors eventually forced its closure) the *Index*, together with weekly proclamations from the censors themselves, and censorship certificates relating to films (which were not meant for the public gaze but were leaked to me by someone not entirely unconnected with the film industry) yielded more than I could possibly use for each column.

But more than that, they provided a remarkable and often horrifying picture of the collective mentality of what was then called the Publications and Entertainments Control Board headed by one J. J. Kruger, an elderly and profoundly deaf Afrikaner fundamentalist with weak eyesight and matching intellect. Shortly before his long overdue retirement, Kruger, a sworn enemy of communism, socialism, liberalism, homosexuality, freethought, pop music, battery-powered willies and anyone with a black skin, was rewarded with an honorary Doctorate of Literature by a leading Afrikaans University.

Although no reason was given for the award, the assumption was made that it was for the sterling work he and his board had done in keeping the country free of tens of thousands of "objectionable" books, pamphlets, T-shirts, key-rings, dildoes and other paraphernalia. (If one were to apply the same university's judging criteria to, say, Adolf Hitler, a case could surely be made for posthumously award-

ing him the Nobel Peace prize.) Apart from demonstrating a strong and entirely predictable antipathy towards the things that most upset (and constantly obsess) the puritanical — namely, anything to do with the unclothed human form, sex in all its rich variety, and religious mick-taking — the censors displayed a breath-taking (even by South African standards) degree of racism. This was most apparent in the certificates they issued in respect of films submitted to them for approval.

Here are just three examples of cuts they ordered:

"Eliminate all shots where negroes are much in evidence, ie negress on bench with white man, black couple in background, and shot of a black girl on bed in flat".

"Excise shot where negro captain (Jim Brown) refuses to shake hands with white lieutenant".

"Eliminate scene where kaffir with gun is pierced by a spear".

I examined certificates relating to 45 films. Of the total of 236 cuts ordered, 51 concerned the "offensive" intermingling of blacks and whites. The rest were mainly to do with scenes or dialogue with sexual overtones.

The censors killed *TimeOut*, but failed to halt the torrent of ridicule they suffered as a result of similar columns and regular news items which had now begun appearing in mainstream publications. Not a week went by without news of some new lunacy perpetrated by J. J. Kruger, Doctor of Literature, and his pack of professional prudes. One week it was the banning of a T-shirt bearing the slogan "Black is Beautiful". Another saw them ordering the complete removal of singer Janis Joplin from a pop festival documentary (they objected to what they described as her "screeching!") This served as proof of something I'd long suspected: that in addition to weeding out material they saw as potentially harmful, the censors were attempting to impose their own judgement of art, music and film on the country as a whole. Given that most of the material they were examining emanated from an English-speaking world which was, at the time, joyously throwing off the vast vestiges of a Victorian hangover, while their idea of culture was a rugby match followed by endless choruses of dreary Boer War songs around a campfire, some conflict was bound to arise.

Then came the film *MASH*, renamed *HASH* by everyone who saw it after the censors had ordered something like fifty different cuts. Unfortunately, whoever was responsible for carrying out the butchery before the film went on circuit only partially deleted one "objectionable" scene. Someone

with very sharp eyes spotted the oversight in a cinema — and before they knew it, the distribution company found itself before a magistrate on a charge of contravening the censorship laws. The case was hilarious, bordering on the sort of farce only Tom Sharpe could conceive.

At one point a senior vice squad officer testified that — despite the fact that it only lasted a fraction of a second — he had clearly seen the offending scene in which a couple “made love on a snooker table”.

Counsel for the defence: “This scene was barely a flash on the screen. How did you know that they were making love on a snooker table?”

Detective, drawing himself up to his full height, and displaying considerable confidence in his powers of observation: “Because, your honour, I saw the balls!”

Entire courtroom collapses with laughter. Magistrate tries unsuccessfully to conceal his mirth behind a glass of water. Vice squad detective shrinks in the witness stands and turns puce.

For all that, and a great deal more amusing testimony, the company was convicted. But, in reality, it was the censors who were brought to trial, and their stupidity exposed. In most civilised countries, an official body so publicly embarrassed would be abolished or at the very least reformed. The South African authorities, whose insensitivity is surpassed only by their arrogance, naturally did no such thing. Instead, they immediately made it an offence for any publication to comment upon or ridicule any decisions of the censors, thus once again allowing this absurd bunch of hypocrites, misfits and goons to carry out in secret the task of blinkering an entire country.

Jacobsen's Index leaves no doubt as to how far the censors have gone in their bid to starve South Africans — now paying in blood the price of officially-cultivated ignorance — of any material they think might upset the status quo. Thus most things with “Africa”, and everything with “gay” in the title are banned. No South African is allowed to read Mandela's *The Struggle is my Life*. If they were, they might be far less susceptible to the anti-ANC hogwash slopped out with unrelenting monotony by Botha and his cronies. *The Thoughts of Chairman Mao* (in English as well as French) is banned. *The Bible Handbook*, to my mind the most potent weapon in existence against doorstep evangelists, is banned. An issue of *The Freethinker* was banned; £10 bets this article, on the strength of its deliberately provocative title alone, would be banned, should the censors ever get sight of it.

Jacobsen's details not only books, but a host of other items in its Miscellaneous, or “Multitude of Sins”, section. From this we learn that in 1977 a replica of the famous classical statue, “The

Wrestlers”, was banned. The index refers to it as “two wrestlers in obscene embrace”. In 1985 they banned wrapping paper “displaying naked man with pink heart cushion”, and “a rubber penis-shaped vibrator”. (One can be forgiven for concluding from this that all of South Africa's problems derive from aggravated penis envy embedded deep in the Afrikaner psyche).

In 1986, a bumper sticker which stated: “Save gas, fart in a jar” was blown out the country, and this year a copy of the London magazine-cum-entertainment guide, *City Limits*, fell foul of the censors. No reason was given for the ban, so I called *City Limits* to find out what they had done to anger the regime. “We just ran a special supplement on South Africa. It was not particularly adulatory”, was their answer.

It can be argued — indeed it often is — that society can do without tasteless items like T-shirts bearing four-letter words, and statuettes of men with outsize organs. But can society comfortably live under a political system which seeks to “protect” its citizens from all the influences a powerful and faceless group of mind-benders, accountable to no-one, judge undesirable?

The mounting pressures in Britain by an increasingly vociferous religious Right for more and more social control has resulted in the severe erosion of hard-won reforms in the past eight years. Because these pressures show no signs of letting up — indeed, they are being increased daily by reactionary groups who scent victory in their bid to curtail individual freedoms — I believe that this question is as pertinent to the UK today as it ever has been in South Africa.

Segregation in Schools

A Harris poll carried out in London and the Home Counties for London Weekend Television has revealed that a large number of parents will take advantage of the Government's new scheme to increase parental choice in school selection, mainly on racial grounds. Classroom segregation was supported by 52 per cent of interviewees.

But the survey undermined a claim frequently made by religious leaders that parents from ethnic minorities want their own schools. In fact only twenty per cent of Hindu, seventeen per cent of Sikh and fifteen per cent of Muslim parents favoured segregation of their children.

Lady Hooper, Under Secretary of State at the Department of Education and Science, acknowledged that racially segregated schools may be the price to be paid for Government policy on giving parents more say in the running of schools. She said in a BBC television programme: “If it ends up with a segregated system, then so be it”.

BOOKS

THEOLOGIAN UNDER HITLER, by Robert P. Ericksen.
Yale University Press, £6.95

Why should "three well-meaning, intelligent and reputable Protestant theologians — Gerhard Kittel, Paul Althaus and Emmanuel Hirsch" choose a political stance that, while it did not bring them directly to kill or gas Jews, nevertheless led them to support Adolf Hitler and National Socialism long after the true nature of that regime had been exposed? Kittel, with his extensive knowledge of Judaism and the Talmud, won himself a leading place in the world of Nazi scholarship on the question of the Jews and erected a theological basis for their oppression while professing Christian and academic values. Althaus, a leading Lutheran scholar, occupied the middle ground in seeking to act as mediator between the Nazis and their victims, but welcomed and supported Hitler until shortly before the war. Hirsch made the unity of the German Volk a central preoccupation, was an active apologist for Nazism and colluded with Nazi officials in their harassment of more liberal colleagues. "These men were by no means uncommon or isolated. Their assumptions, their concerns and their conclusions represent a position that must have been common to many professors, theologians and pastors in Germany. *They were not extremists*" (my italics, M.D.).

In trying to find clues to the reasons for their betrayal of Christian and academic values, Ericksen first surveys Germany during the period from Bismarck to the Second World War. Bismarck's high-pressured unification and industrialisation of what had for centuries been separate and autonomous states maintaining a feudal structure brought disintegrating shifts in the social, political, economic and cultural patterns that had been deeply rooted in tradition.

The central fact of large-scale industrialisation brought masses of workers together in large towns and cities; created a new proletariat with powerful demands for political representation; brought about a geographical mobility hitherto unknown in Germany; disrupted, through changed patterns of income and mobility, the well-established structures of life in the country and in the old towns; and by changing patterns of expenditure and consumption, broke down old concepts of taste not only in dress, furniture and decoration, but in reading and the arts.

At the same time important changes were occurring in intellectual and scientific assumptions. These changes came from the failure of eighteenth-century rationalism to solve the major social problems of war, disease and revolution. Within sixty years from the middle of the nineteenth century Darwin, Freud and Einstein had dealt devastating

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blows to long-held scientific and theological beliefs. In Germany these reinforced the social and political turmoil of the period and added to the anxieties of theologians in particular where modern studies using more scientific methods and forms of criticism had cast doubt on what hitherto had been taken as "gospel truth." With the emergence of a new philosophical materialism rooted in science, history and sociology, the theologians were really alarmed. Trained to respect "authority" and having seen the authority of the state routed in war and made publicly to acknowledge responsibility for the war, they felt that they were being swept away, so that when Hitler appeared they were ready to grasp at him as a bulwark against a flood of disintegration.

Ericksen systematically shows the development of each man's thought through their writings and sermons and in the context of the main lines of theological debate at the time. Given their background and their assumptions he presents an arguable case for each man up to the point when none of them could have avoided facing the crisis between the Nazi doctrine they so wholeheartedly espoused and their Christian profession. Beyond that point their defence falls.

Ericksen also points the finger at Christianity: "The role of Christianity is also called into question by this study. These three theologians saw themselves and were seen by others as genuine Christians acting upon genuine Christian impulses. Even in retrospect a Christian basis for each of their individual positions can be discerned; Christianity has strains which are both anti-Jewish and anti-modern. In light of the German experience, a Christianity which stresses these strains, in which, for example, the love of Christ cannot be readily perceived, should arouse our suspicion."

Ericksen does not attempt to examine factors in the childhood of the three men that could have led to their submitting so abjectly to an illegal and criminal power. He makes no mention, for example, of Wilhelm Reich's study *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, which draws very heavily on the German experience; of Erich Fromm's *The Fear of Freedom*, an analysis of what occurs to create the fascist character-structure, necessary to both any dictator and to the willing millions who sustain him in power; or of the various studies of character by Freud himself. Perhaps he felt that such material, however relevant, might be beyond his competence or interest. What Ericksen does say on the very last page is in the nature of a warning directed at America, though it applies with equal force here in Britain and in Europe: "The scenario to fear, then, is one in which

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REVIEWS

a combination of crises makes life difficult; a lost war, economic collapse, shortage of oil, shortage of food. If this is coupled with a meaningful attempt to follow democratic principles, to allow true freedom and give a true political voice to plural groups within society, beware. Then we will hear calls for toughness, for law and order, for national unity. . . Will we avoid being the Kittel, Althaus or Hirsch of that time? Will we avoid using our intellect to rationalise a position that protects our comfort and our best interests, closing our eyes to the pain created for the different or less fortunate among us? Until we have pondered these questions we will do well not to condemn Kittel, Althaus and Hirsch too loudly."

MICHAEL DUANE

A HUNDRED YEARS OF CHAMBER MUSIC, by Frank V. Hawkins. South Place Ethical Society, £5

The single most valuable contribution that the organised humanist movement has brought to London's cultural life is probably the chamber concert given every Sunday evening during the six winter months at Conway Hall. These concert series started in 1887 and, to celebrate their centenary, SPES has published a short illustrated book to celebrate and record this long and distinguished history.

The concerts were first given at the South Place Institute in Finsbury, moving to Conway Hall in 1929, not long after the celebration of their 1,000th concert. Admission was free until 1939, and this doubtless helped the concerts acquire their reputation for introducing to a larger public the riches of the serious smaller scale music repertoire, especially in the 19th century when staple concert programmes were of a generally more popular nature. In the earlier years, small orchestras were often featured, but, since the 1940s, the concerts have become exclusively of chamber music, especially of string quartets for which the Conway Hall acoustic is ideal.

The book starts with a short account of the founding of the concerts; indeed, being only one page, it is really too short. I should have liked to know more about the connection between the SPES and the People's Concert Society which apparently initiated the idea. Also, to what extent was the Institute trying to create a secular alternative to Church Evensong? How much opposition was there from the Sabbatarian lobby to Sunday concerts if, as is stated, these were the first to be given in that era? This section could

well have been expanded for the more general reader.

The book continues with a running account, given in sections of roughly a decade each, describing the notable performers in each period and the more unusual or innovative works performed, with descriptions of particular events like the four-hour Jubilee Concert in 1937. There are certainly many famous names in these pages and some very enterprising concerts, like in 1949 when the challenging six quartets of Bartok were given for the first time in London in a single series.

The following section, about a quarter of the book, comprises short individual accounts, with photographs, of twenty of the most noted and regular ensembles that have appeared since the second world war. Most of these are string quartets, and they include some of the most celebrated of an older generation, such as the Amadeus, as well as outstanding contemporary younger groups like the Chilingirian or Lindsay Quartets.

The book concludes with a group of historical lists; the first is of all the works ever performed (and Dvorak's Piano Quintet in A emerges as the firm favourite, at 63 appearances). Then all the performers are listed, all the past Committee members, and all the winners of the composition prizes given since 1939 in honour of Alfred Clements, who organised the concerts from their inception right up to 1938 and was obviously the chief mover and inspirer of their success.

The book has been edited and mainly written by Frank Hawkins, assistant secretary to the Concert Committee. His parents had also been closely involved in the concerts earlier in the century.

Much of the book will be mainly of interest to aficionados of the concerts or of London's musical life through the 20th century; however, the concerts have shown a remarkable longevity and maintained consistent high standards. Also, it is still probably true today that no other venue can offer such excellent value for money, combined with perfect acoustics, a friendly informal atmosphere and a thoroughly imaginative choice of works traditional and modern. A tribute is therefore very much in order, and this book provides a comprehensive record of the achievements of the last hundred years. I hope that both this review, and the book itself, may encourage lovers of music to discover and frequent some of these concerts in the future.

CHRISTOPHER FINDLAY

Newspaper reports are always required by The Freethinker. The source and date should be clearly marked and the clippings sent without delay to The Editor, The Freethinker, 14 Coundon Road, Coventry, West Midlands, CV1 4AW.

LETTERS

SYSTEMS OF BELIEF

I had not intended to comment publicly on "Why I Am Not A Humanist" (November 1987) by Nigel Sinnott, who was kind enough to send me a copy before publication (but after submitting it), until Harry Stopes-Roe's comments appeared (December).

If there is anything "rather odd" about the Sinnott perspective, it is not its historical analysis or broad definition of terms. The Stopes-Roe refutation, on the other hand, is totally unhistorical, and its definitions unrecognisable outside Prince of Wales Terrace. In *Nucleoethics* I showed in detail how all the brands of irreligion, including atheism, began as "positive" moral affirmations or, if you like, "stances for living". But as negative feedback is at the core of the learning process (and other computer operations), they defined themselves in terms of what they rejected. This was also the case of emergent religions and systems of politics: Christianity and Islam being Judaic heresies and "Ideological Marxism" anti-capitalism. Sinnott could well claim that in retrospect their "negative" aspects appear more valuable than their "positive". Capital-H Humanism is not unique as an alternative to religion or as a repository of "characteristic beliefs". Religionists can and do lay claim to the title, meaning that they are led to theism by studying the human condition rather than dogmatic theology.

I also agree with Sinnott that some modern "Humanists" have developed such a "horror of anything they perceived as 'negative'" that their utterances have degenerated to "rhetoric" or mere gush, but with disturbing implications. "Man in the saddle directing the course of evolution" is not just "mind-blowing" in the cant 'sixties sense but mind-boggling. But Sinnott should not blame Protagoras for these excesses, for his "man is the measure of all things" — where the key word is "measure" — is epistemological.

Though lacking Sinnott's moral credentials as a vegan vegetarian, I can claim to be an environmental boffin and support his strictures in this area. Stopes-Roe has a point however (though not in his "frankly dishonest" expression) in saying that humanism is not necessarily anticonservationist any more than rationalism is necessarily "arid". And I doubt if the term humanism is "now more of a liability than an asset".

DAVID TRIBE

FACTS OF HISTORY

Harry Stopes-Roe (December 1987) says I am condescending and grudging about the religious wing of the freethought movement. What is so patronising about "groups of agnostics, some of whom regard themselves as religious?" He also takes me to task for not mentioning the ethical movement by name. I did not do so because the ethical societies and churches straddle the borderline between religious and non-religious freethought/humanism and because "ethical" has never been used in a broad sense to describe the whole freethought movement.

I am well aware of the contribution of the Ethical Union in establishing humanism in Britain. Had there been space I could also have discussed unitarianism as humanism in Victoria (Australia) was launched jointly by rationalists and unitarians.

It is a great pity that my good friend Victor Myhill is no longer around to read Dr Stopes-Roe's article. He was a staunch advocate of the religious end of the movement and founded a brief-lived Humanist Fellowship of Australia. But before his premature death in

1985 he admitted to me that he — who was at the opposite end of the spectrum from me — did not like the term humanism and lamented the fact that it had tended to supplant the word ethical. Victor Myhill's spiritual home might have been the Ethical Church in Bayswater, but he was born in the wrong country and at the wrong time.

I might not agree with religious freethinkers, but I respect them and have learned from them. From Peter Cadogan, in England, I acquired the valuable concept of the "gift economy", but I cannot go into that now.

Harry Stopes-Roe claims my arguments are "vitiated" because I think humanism is a new name for the freethought movement. It is a fact of history that in the 1960s and '70s humanist societies and groups arose in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa either by renaming or supplanting rationalist organisations, or else were founded as an alternative by disaffected rationalists. Rationalism — particularly in the broadest sense — had by the 1930s become a near-synonym of freethought.

More recently, the November 1987 issue of the British Humanist Association's journal, *Humanist News*, in describing the foundation of the BHA in 1963, states: "The Humanist movement had tried to come together in one body throughout the 1950s. . . Throughout this period, the word 'humanism' (the capital 'H' has been adopted since by the BHA) was generally being used to describe the freethought movement".

Dr Stopes-Roe is entitled to claim that I have presented "a travesty of Humanism" even if, in his words, "I cannot now go into details". I may be guilty of using colourful language in my November article, but at least I did not descend to calling anyone "frankly dishonest" — as Dr Stopes-Roe does me — without the courtesy of laying detailed evidence on the line.

NIGEL SINNOTT

SHORTCOMINGS IN HUMANISM

Thank you for printing the article, "Why I am Not a Humanist", on Humanism by Nigel Sinnott. A breath of fresh air. May I add a couple of points?

The first is my suggestion that one of the roots of modern Humanism is Hegelianism, with all its attendant dangers. One can argue until the cows come home about precisely what it was that Hegel meant by Geist; but for those followers of Hegel who reject God (a contradiction in my view), and even for some who do not, Geist seems to betoken some sort of common human consciousness, or conscience, or consensus on which the process of history operates. The trouble with secular Hegelianists of course is that each one thinks that he has a personal understanding of the collective Geist, with the implication that anyone who understands differently is a danger to society, and should be treated accordingly. One can sometimes detect this sort of view pervading much humanist thinking.

My other point concerns human nature. The genetic mutation that produced modern man has been followed by some 45,000 years of natural selection, with the result that we are left today with the same mental programming that enabled small family or tribal groups to survive in the late pleistocene. Despite a tendency towards compassion (where on earth did that come from?) this programming gives the self, and members of the immediate group, precedence over other contenders for the same resources. It is a programme that still has survival value, even if only in a restricted sphere; and it undoubtedly manifests itself more strongly in those who make the decisions than in those who merely follow. On the other hand it may be a

disastrous programme in the context of modern technological civilisation. I suppose what I am saying is the secular equivalent to the doctrine of original sin, which of all arguments against Humanist is the strongest.

GLYN EMERY

A WEAK MIXTURE

Nigel Sinnott's article, "Why I am Not a Humanist", should have been entitled "My Criticism of the Term 'Humanist' ". The argument is about labels. In an age when image is promoted at the expense of reality, some test is required to ascertain whether a word corresponds to anything in objective existence. Suppose that one is asked to label the contents of a bottle. It can be labelled according to an objective test, be it oil, wine or vinegar. But suppose that the test is in reverse, and one is asked to fit the contents to the label. No problem about oil, wine or vinegar, unless cheating; but suppose that the label reads "Elixir of Life" or "Miracle Cure for Baldness"? Humanism is a very big word, embracing all aspects of human existence. One might with humility urge some hesitation before self-labelling with such grandiloquence.

If the contents of the "Humanism" bottle are euthanasia, abortion and funerals, flavoured with a tincture of "life stance", the mixture will be so thin as to merit prosecution under the Trades Description Act.

Corliss Lamont made a brave attempt in his *Philosophy of Humanism*. More humanists should read it. They might also consider my article, "The Golden Age (The Freethinker, September 1987), which claims that something went wrong in human history, a challenge which humanists, so far, have not faced.

Sinnott was right to criticise "Man is the measure of all things". If humanists had done their homework they would have found that Protagoras was not commenting on man, still less exalting man. His emphasis was on "things", disclaiming the possibility of objective truth in favour of the kind of empty pragmatism one would expect from a Sophist. One has only to ask the question: "Does matter precede consciousness?", or "Was there a lifeless pre-Cambrian earth unobserved by human beings?" The subjectivism of Protagoras leads straight back to religion.

KARL HEATH

TIME TO CHANGE?

I was delighted to read Nigel Sinnott's article (November) in which he points out the contradiction between the word "humanism" and an ecological world-view.

May I now put in a plea for the subtitle on the masthead of *The Freethinker* to be changed from "secular humanist monthly" to "the secularist monthly"?

STEPHEN D. MORGAN

MORALITY WITHOUT RELIGION

Barbara Smoker's further elaboration of the National Secular Society's stance on human rights (Letters, December) is both astounding and alarming. A newborn baby possessing all the faculties and functions to develop into a mature human being is not to be accorded "full status and rights". The disturbing conclusion that there are categories of people who do not have full human rights will worry many people, including humanists.

It is undoubtedly clear that using consciousness as the criterion when assessing the value of human life opens the door not only to abortion but also to infanticide and involuntary euthanasia. It also erodes the

notion, held intuitively by many people, that all human beings are special creatures and worthy of special care, whether they live in Hampstead or Harlow, are conscious or unconscious.

It is very sad to see the consequences of a system of moral values which begins with man and ends with man. The attempt to remove from our thinking belief in the infinite personal God who really is there, leads to empty moral values and a frightening view of future society.

S. J. NICHOLLS

Barbara Smoker replies: To regard the potentialities of a newborn baby as actuality is mere superstition. Would Mr Nicholls hold the baby responsible for its actions as though it were already mature?

The belief that someone in an irreversible coma has full human rights is also superstition. It led to the Catholic American girl, Karen Quinlan, being kept "alive" for ten years after her brain had shrunk to the size of a golf-ball. Millions of dollars were spent in nursing this living corpse — pumping in food, pumping out excrement, massaging the wasted limbs, and perpetually turning the curled-up body. To my mind it was a shocking waste of resources and, in fact, obscene — but Mr Nicholls would presumably demand it.

As for his phrase "a system of moral values which begins and ends with man", this seems to describe his own position, not mine. In my view, human beings are not "special creatures . . . whether . . . conscious or unconscious", but we are members of the animal kingdom; and a human being in an irreversible coma has far less moral significance than a sentient rat.

* * *

The following resolution was passed unanimously at the recent annual general meeting of the National Secular Society: "This AGM calls for the legalisation of human embryo research up to the five-week stage — i.e. prior to the development of a functional central nervous system — but for the restriction thereafter to the benefit of the particular foetus and its mother". — Editor.

National Secular Society ANNUAL DINNER

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Hardbacks

The Bible Handbook, G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball, £5 (35p); Did Jesus Exist?, G. A. Wells, £5.80 (85p); The Historical Evidence for Jesus, G. A. Wells, £8 (£1.05); Honest to Man, Margaret Knight, £6 (50p); Humanism, H. J. Blackham, £5.95 (70p); Religion in a Modern Society, H. J. Blackham, £2.50 (60p); Materialism Restated, Chapman Cohen, 50p (45p); President Charles Bradlaugh, D. Tribe, £4 (£1.50); 100 Years of Freethought, D. Tribe, £2 (£1.05); The Trial of Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh, Roger Manvell, £5.95 (65p); The Freethinker, 1978, 1981, 1982 and 1983, £7.50 each (90p); The Freethinker, 1984, 1985, £7.95 (90p); Against the Faith: Some Deists, Sceptics and Atheists, J. Herrick, £12.50 (70p). Also in paperback, see below.

Paperbacks

Atheism: the Case Against God, G. H. Smith, £6.50 (£1.10); The Philosophy of Humanism, Corliss Lamont, £6.50 (75p); Varieties of Religious Experience, William James, £3.50 (65p); The Humanist Revolution, Hector Hawton, 95p (45p); Humanist Anthology, Margaret Knight (Editor), £2 (40p); The Humanist Outlook, A. J. Ayer (Editor), 95p (65p); Humanism and Moral Theory, R. Osborn, £2 (40p); Common Sense, T. Paine, £1.50 (25p); Rights of Man, T. Paine, £2.25 (35p); Pioneers of Social Change, R. Pike £2 (40p); Radical Politics 1790-1900: Religion and Unbelief, Edward Royle, £1.85 (35p); Britain's Unknown Genius: The Life and Work of J. M. Robertson, M. Page, £2.25 (35p); The Portable Voltaire, B. R. Redman (Editor), £2.50 (55p); The Dead Sea Scrolls, J. Allegro, £2.25 (30p); The Gods and Myths of Northern Europe, H. R. Ellis Davidson, £1.75 (35p); Origin of Species, C. Darwin, £2.25 (45p); On the Nature of the Universe, Lucretius, £1.75 (35p); Middle East Mythology, S. H. Hooke, £2.25 (35p); Mohammed, M. Rodinson, £2.95 (45p); Sociology of Religion, R. Robertson (Editor), £2.95 (45p); Controversy, Hector Hawton, £2 (45p); Causing Death and Saving Lives, J. Glover, £2.50 (35p); Pope John 23rd and the Cold War, F. A. Ridley, 50p (25p); Rome or Reason?, R. G. Ingersoll, 25p (20p); The Secret History of the Jesuits, E. Paris, £3 (50p); The Vatican versus Mankind, A. Pigott, 60p (35p); Lift up Your Heads, W. Kent (Editor), 60p (35p); The Dark Side of the Moonies, Erica Heftmann, £2.50 (35p); Boys and Sex, W. B. Pomeroy, £1.50 (25p); Girls and Sex, W. B. Pomeroy, £1.50 (25p); The Worm in the Bud: the World of Victorian Sexuality, R. Pearsall, £3.50 (65p); A Message From the Falklands, D. Tinker, £1.95 (30p); Vision and Realism: a Hundred Years of The Freethinker, J. Herrick, £2 (40p); In God's Name, D. Yallop, £2.95 (50p); Against the Faith, Some Deists, Sceptics and Atheists, J. Herrick, £5.95 (60p); J. M. Robertson (1856-1933), Liberal, Rationalist and Scholar, G. A. Wells (Editor), £6 (£1).

Bertrand Russell

A Free Man's Worship; Bertrand Russell's Best; £1.95 each (35p each); Unpopular Essays; The Conquest of Happiness; The Impact of Science on Society; The ABC of Relativity; On Education; £2.50 each (35p each); Political Ideals; Education and the Social Order; Principles of Social Reconstruction; £1.75 each (35p each); In Praise of Idleness; Why I am Not a Christian and other Essays; £2.95 each (35p each); Autobiography, £4.50 (70p).

Pamphlets

The Case Against Church Schools, P. Knight, 30p (13p); The Cost of Church Schools, D. Tribe, 25p (13p); Religion and Ethics in Schools, D. Tribe, 25p (13p); Objective, Fair and Balanced, BHA, 50p (25p); What About Gods?, C. Brockman, £2.50 (25p); A Definition of Humanism, R. Fletcher, 25p (13p); An Introduction to Secular Humanism, K. Mouat, 60p (13p); Humanism, Barbara Smoker, £1.50 (25p); A Chronology of British Secularism, G. H. Taylor, 20p (13p); An End to Belief? (the 1984 Voltaire Memorial Lecture), L. Kennedy, 50p (13p); Marriage: Sacerdotal or Secular?, G. C. L. Du Cann, 20p (13p); Birth Control, various writers, 15p (13p); The Rights of Old People, various writers, 12p (13p); The Right to Die, C. Wilshaw, 50p (13p); Thomas Paine, C. Cohen, 25p (13p); The Devil's Chaplain, H. Cutner, 25p (13p); William Morris and Hyde Park, L. S. Jones, 30p (13p); The People's Uprising, L. S. Jones, 75p (13p); The Nun Who Lived Again, Phyllis Graham, 10p (13p); The Mask of Anarchy, P. B. Shelley, 90p (18p); Life, Death and Immortality, P. B. Shelley, 20p (13p); The Necessity of Atheism, P. B. Shelley, 10p (13p); An Appeal to the Young, P. Kropotkin, 15p (13p); Our Pagan Christmas, R. J. Condon, 75p (13p); What is the Sabbath Day?, H. Cutner, 15p (13p); The Longford Threat to Freedom, Brigid Brophy, 15p (13p); Buddhism and Blasphemy, Sangharakashita, 60p (13p); The Open Society and Its Friends, D. Tribe, 15p (13p); The Future of the British Monarchy, F. A. Ridley, 40p (13p); Good God (verses), Barbara Smoker, 95p (25p); From Jewish Messianism to the Christian Church, P. Alfaric, 20p (13p); The Rise of the Papacy and Crimes of the Popes, G. W. Foote and J. M. Wheeler, 25p (13p); Frauds, Forgeries and Relics, G. W. Foote and J. M. Wheeler, 25p (13p); Our Celestial Visitor, F. A. Ridley, 30p (13p); Three Lunar Voyages, F. A. Ridley, 50p (13p); The Unpleasant Personality of Jesus Christ, C. Maine, 25p (13p); Why I am Not a Christian and Faith of a Rationalist, B. Russell, 60p (13p); Blackham's Best, Barbara Smoker (Editor), £1.50 (20p); Ingersoll's Oration on Thomas Paine, 50p (20p).

Pamphlets for the People

Morality Without God; Christianity and Slavery; Christianity and Ethics; Deity and Design; The Devil; Agnosticism; Did Jesus Christ Exist?; Giving 'em Hell; Freethought and the Child; Gods and Their Makers; Must We Have a Religion; Thou Shalt Not Suffer a Witch to Live; What is Freethought? Chapman Cohen's series of pamphlets, 15p each (13p up to 3 pamphlets).

Please make cheques, etc, payable to G. W. Foote & Company Ltd, 702 Holloway Road, London N19, telephone 01- 272 1266.

THE FREETHINKER

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Freethinker Fund

Since its inception in 1881, *The Freethinker* has been closely associated with the National Secular Society. One of the accusations frequently directed at the NSS is that rather than being "positive", it concentrates on religious privilege and denouncing harmful social policies promoted by the churches and their front organisations. Barbara Smoker sent that argument into outer space in her presidential address to the recent NSS annual general meeting; it may be added that one positive achievement of organised secularism is the unbroken publication of *The Freethinker* for nearly 107 years.

Readers' loyalty and generosity is again evident in their response to appeals for financial backing. Every month a list of contributions to the Fund is published, and it is with deep gratitude we announce that during 1987 donations amounted to £3,402.75 and \$21. Such generous support, together with the goodwill of our unpaid writers, ensures the paper's financial security.

For its part, *The Freethinker* will continue to campaign against religious intolerance, creeping censorship and "Victorian values". The final list of contributors for 1987 is given below.

N. Ferguson, C. R. Glaser, R. Hopkins and D. Pickett, £1 each; G. W. Coupland, P. Danning, G. Grieg, D. T. Harris, N. Levenson, N. Rigby, G. Swan and J. Thompson, £1.40 each; H. Fearn and T. J. Peters, £1.50 each; J. G. Gerrard, £1.75; A. C. F. Chambre, A. Dawn and G. Jamieson, £2 each; R. H. Barr, G. McGhee and W. G. Stirling, £2.40 each; A. A. H. Douglas, £2.50; F. G. Evans, C. Jones, E. A. Napper and C. Taylor, £3 each; R. T. Savage, £4.40; J. Galliano and P. Stiehl, £4.60 each; Anonymous, J. Barr, J. Holland, W. Johnson, A. T. Lambert, A. Oldham, C. J. Simmons, S. Smith, L. H. White, A. Whitehead, P. K. Willmott and C. Wilshaw, £5 each; N. L. Childs and T. Green, £6.40 each; E. Haslam, £7; J. Glionna, £7.25; D. A. Rickards and J. Watson, £10 each; A. E. Woodford, £14; R. J. Condon, £30; D. C. and F. Campbell, £101; W. J. Gallo, \$5; A. Villarreal, \$1.

Total for November and December 1987: £313.30 and \$6.

Grand total for 1987: £3,402.75 and \$21.

It has been discovered that for four months witnesses in a British court have not been taking the oath on the Bible. A copy of the St John's Ambulance manual was mistakenly used when they were sworn. The name of the court has not been revealed. A similar mishap occurred in the late 1940s when what was thought to be a Bible in protective plain paper wrapper turned out to be a barrister's copy of *Ruff's Guide to the Turf!*

EVENTS

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group. New Venture Theatre Club, Bedford Place (off Western Road), Brighton. Sunday, 2 February, 5.30 for 6 pm. Julian Barker: Natural Medicine.

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. Meetings on the second Friday of the month at 7.30 pm.

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

Glasgow Humanist Society. The Unitarian Centre, 72 Berkeley Street (near Mitchell Library), Glasgow. Tuesday, 26 February, 7.30 pm. Deprogramming of Cult Victims. Sunday, 14 February, 2.30 pm. Steuart Campbell: Jesus, Fact and Fiction. Tuesday, 23 February, 7.30 pm. Archie Carswell: Anarchism.

Havering and District Humanist Society. Harold Wood Social Centre, Gubbins Lane and Squirrels Heath Road, Romford. Tuesday, 2 February, 8 pm. Kathleen Frith and Eugena Levine: Lessons From Cleveland — Problems of Investigating Sexual Abuse of Children.

Leeds and District Humanist Group. Swarthmore Institute, Woodhouse Square, Leeds. Monday, 8 February, 7.30 pm. Alastair Laurence: The Green Movement.

Lewisham Humanist Group. Unitarian Meeting House, 41 Bromley Road, London SE6. Thursday, 28 January, 7.45 pm. Barbara Smoker: Do Human Embryos Have Human Rights?

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

South Placo Ethical Society. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Current Controversies in Evolution, a series of ten lectures by Mike Howgate, Thursday, 7 pm - 9 pm. Fee: £1 per lecture (including refreshments). Details obtainable from SPES.

Sutton Humanist Group. Friends House, Cedar Road, Sutton. Wednesday, 10 February, 7.30 pm for 8 pm. Annual General Meeting followed by discussion.

Warwickshire Humanist Group. Friends Meeting House, Hill Street (off Corporation Street), Coventry. Monday, 15 February, 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. Programme of meetings obtainable from Bob Thorpe, 19 Shirley Drive, Worthing, telephone 62846.

War Glorified for "the Greatness of Islam"

Life is particularly difficult for writers and artists living under religious tyranny in Iran. The magazine, *Iran Today*, issued in London by the Committee for the Defence of the Iranian People's Rights, has published an account of how Ayatollah Khomeini and the mullahs are conducting a crusade to Islamicise every aspect of life in Iran by exercising unbridled censorship of books, plays, films, art and music.

All books must be vetted by the Ministry of Islamic Guidance before publication. A large number have been withdrawn from libraries and destroyed.

Artists are forbidden to paint women's faces and hair, let alone their nude bodies. Portraits of Khomeini and other religious leaders are allowed, but war scenes in which young men have been killed for "the greatness of Islam" are most favoured by the regime.

On coming to power, the clergy banned musical programmes for radio and television. Women singers were dismissed and recordings of their voices destroyed. Male singers managed to work for a time,

singing "revolutionary" songs. Now there is only a small number of singers whose work consists mainly of chanting mournful tunes in praise of war and the joy of dying for the Islamic faith.

The clergy would like to ban women from the stage and screen. Actresses must appear in full Islamic dress, however inappropriate to the scene being played. Attempts are being made to introduce a form of apartheid in the auditorium, with women separated from men in the audience.

The Khomeini regime has put the theatre and cinema, like all other art forms, at the service of war.

Religious School Criticised

A private school for Muslim girls has been strongly criticised by HM Inspectorate. The school was opened by the Muslim Association in Bradford two years ago for girls between the ages of eleven and sixteen. It is housed in a former chapel which was more recently used as a DHSS office.

One of the school's principles is "to produce women who have faith and who are imbued with Islamic learning and character". At the time of inspection there were 65 pupils on the roll.

HM Inspectors reported that although the proprietors had purchased basic text books to support most subjects of the school curriculum, the choice was restricted. There were no plays or poetry anthologies. The school library consists of about two hundred books, with a strong emphasis on religion and home economy.

"Reading and access to books is very restricted", the Inspectors declare. "Most pupils do not have occasion to visit public libraries. The custom of the community which discourages girls from being seen in public makes them dependent for reading matter on what they can acquire at home or on what the school can provide".

The school has difficulty in retaining suitable staff. The majority of staff members have no recognised qualification for the subjects they teach. There is no one qualified by training or experience to teach English, English as a second language, humanities or physical education.

Teachers at the school have low expectations of their pupils, and this is reflected in the standard of the pupils' work. Few of them, if any, can be said to be performing to the extent of their abilities.

The Women for Faith and Family organisation has presented a petition against the ordination of women. The 40,000 signatories, all women, include Mother Teresa.

Meat Sold to General Public

they would themselves bring ritual slaughter to a halt and set a fine example for reduction and reform in methods employed in Britain".

The National Secular Society's Council of Management passed a resolution at its December meeting deploring the Government's decision not to implement the FAWC's recommendations on pre-slaughter stunning.

It declared: "The Government's decision contrasts oddly with that made some years ago in respect of Sikhs wearing crash-helmets on motor-cycles, when relaxation of the general law was disallowed, despite the fact that the aim of that law was the protection of the motor-cyclist himself, who is able to make his own safety decisions, whereas the aim of the animal slaughter laws is the protection of defenceless animals. Such laws should not be waived for the sake of particular religious groups. At the very least, in the name of freedom of conscience, it should be made compulsory for any such meat offered for sale to the general public (as the rejected portions routinely are) to be clearly labelled as having been killed without pre-slaughter stunning, so that those who feel strongly about cruelty to animals can avoid it. Also, the present practice of deliberately serving such meat in many State schools should be discontinued, and, instead, there should always be at least one vegetarian dish on the menu for children whose religion prohibits their eating ordinary meat".

A copy of the resolution has been sent to the Agriculture Minister.