

The Freethinker

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IN JUNE the National Secular Society protested to the Vietnam Ambassador in London (a brother of the Vietnamese President, Ngo Dinh Diem) about his government's policy towards the Buddhist majority in his country. Since then, since the first Buddhist monk, Thich Quang Duc, burned himself to death to draw attention to Roman Catholic intolerance, the situation in South Vietnam has seriously worsened. Martial law has been imposed in the capital Saigon, and elections have been postponed. Even Washington and the Vatican are disturbed—disturbed at the effect on their respective "images" in South-East Asia and the world at large. And, while Mr. Henry Cabot Lodge seems hardly

the best choice as new American Ambassador to South Vietnam, he can hardly be worse than his predecessor, Mr. Frederick E. Nolting, who was a firm upholder of the regime. Now the State Department has even threatened (how seriously remains to be seen) to cut American aid if President Diem does not remove his brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu from office.

Nobody doubts that Nhu and his notorious wife are powerful influences behind President Diem. Nhu controls the secret police and advises the President on army promotions and government appointments. On the side, as *Time* put it (August 9th, 1963), he runs the Revolutionary Labour Party, "whose 70,000 members throughout the nation spend most of their time informing the police about their neighbours". Nor can anybody doubt the fervent Roman Catholicism of the Vietnamese ruling family. The President's eldest surviving brother, Ngo Dinh Thuc, is in fact Roman Catholic Archbishop of Hué, though not as highly regarded in Rome as the Archbishop of Saigon who, to his credit, has spoken out against the government. Religion is not, of course, the only cause of strife in South Vietnam, but it is definitely a major factor.

Madame Nhu and the Barbecue
The strikingly beautiful Mme. Nhu, however, is by all accounts the most influential member of an otherwise bachelor family into which she married. She is "probably more feared than any other man or woman" (*Time*). And not only is she a militant Catholic (a convert from Buddhism incidentally) like the President to whom she is First Lady and whom she seems capable of "manoeuvring" at will; she regards the Buddhists as "provocateurs in monks' robes", allies of Communism. She callously compared the suicide of Quang Duc to a barbecue with "imported gasoline". Her brother-in-law Ambassador to Britain was more discreet in his reply to the National Secular Society (dated July 31st), referring to the burning as a "tragic incident . . . the more deplorable because it was an unnecessary and undeserved act . . .". But the Vietnam Embassy naturally put the blame on the Communists: "the result of an emotional disturbance blown up by extremist and communist agitators". The Embassy letter traced the "whole chain of unfortunate events" to the "incident" in Hué last May when,

"During celebrations on Buddha's Day an explosion occurred killing 9 people in the crowd". According to the Embassy:

Post-mortems established their death to be caused by plastic explosive, a notorious weapon of the Communist terrorists in Vietnam (and in use by terrorists everywhere). However, the Buddhist leaders maintain that the responsibility is the Government's.

Time (not a conspicuously Communist apologist) agreed with the Buddhists, viz.:

Three days later, government troops forbade Buddhists to unfurl their flags at a rally celebrating the 2,507th birthday of Gautama Buddha. When the Buddhists protested, the government soldiers stupidly shot down nine demonstrators. That was the beginning of the Buddhist

protests, which in turn provoked more police repression.

Since that appeared on August 9th, *The Observer* has printed an eye-witness account (by a German doctor) confirming the brutality of the government soldiers, and there have been further repressive measures against the Buddhists.

Recent Arrests

Hundreds (some accounts say thousands) of students and youths were arrested in Saigon on Sunday, August 25th, and many are to be drafted into the Army. A British newspaper photographer, Larry Burrows, and two Americans, Milton Orshefsky, a reporter, and Burt Glinn, another photographer, were also arrested, but later released after the photographers had turned over their film under protest.

What the *Guardian* (August 26th) called the "ugliest incident", occurred at the central market in Saigon, where about four hundred students tried to demonstrate for the release of fellow students in the northern city of Hué (where Diem's brother is Archbishop) and for the freeing of Buddhist leaders. "Shots were fired into the air", said the *Guardian*, "as security forces broke up the demonstration", and "according to many people claiming to be eyewitnesses . . . one girl was shot dead and others were wounded".

Martial Law

All school and university buildings in Saigon have been closed, troops and police occupy key points, and the cordon around the Presidential Palace has been increased. And though most of the Buddhist leaders are now in prison, the situation in Hué was still described as "explosive" on August 27th. Mr. Vu Van Mau, who shaved his head and resigned as Foreign Minister in protest against the government's anti-Buddhist actions, has been prevented from leaving on a pilgrimage to India (his car being stopped on the way to the airport) and virtually placed under house arrest. "We consider Communism opposition enough in wartime", Mme. Nhu has said, "but we will have open declared opposition as soon as peacetime follows".

Certainly the endless war against the northern Communists is a factor to be considered, even if it is being fought mainly by the Americans. But perhaps, at long

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Religious Strife in Vietnam

By COLIN McCALL

last, the United States is realising the blunder of bolstering a hated Roman Catholic ruling family as a "bulwark against Communism"; realising that it is, in fact, having the opposite effect. After all, seventy-five per cent of Vietnamese are Buddhists.

From Montreal

By LANJE GARDYEN

A YEAR OR SO AGO there was a strike by four of our schoolteachers, led by a young man named Jules Chatelain, who endorsed the action of his very young pupils when they said that religious images around the classroom were ugly and should be taken down. Take them down he did, which led to officious action, threats, rebellion, support by three other teachers, and a walk-out. A committee was formed to support them, 800 signatures were obtained, and the event was widely publicised.

The same young Chatelain (23 years old now) got his degree, teaches in a private and (religiously) neutral school, and works for a TV station. Recently he got the OK from the station to put on three weekly telecasts concerning neutral state schools. There was to be at first (on August 2nd) four fathers—one Roman Catholic, one Protestant, one Jew, and one Secularist. He succeeded in getting his four parents, Joseph La Rivière (a member of the National Secular Society and of French Freethinking organisations) being the secular one. Well, it turned out that all were in favour of neutral schools! For different reasons, perhaps, but in agreement with the idea.

The Station then tried to get some Roman Catholic fathers (parents, that is) who would come and speak against neutral schools the following week. They could get none, and put on a football game. Then they wrote to *Action Catholique* and got the promise that the General Secretary himself would come. They asked Mr. La Rivière to come also, and he accepted. That was for August 16th. On August 15th the Station got a notice that the General Secretary couldn't come because his father or uncle had died out of town somewhere. They tried to get someone else. So did Mr. La Rivière, phoning people he knew were against undenominational schools, but none was willing to go on TV and discuss the subject publicly.

So Joseph La Rivière went on alone with the public as the opponent. All and sundry were invited to call the Station and put their questions right there and then. Everything went fine. In half-an-hour Mr. La Rivière answered nine questions and phone calls were still being received two hours later, and the public reaction was very favourable to both telecasts.

The strange part of this is that, with 85 per cent of the population being Roman Catholic, French-speaking Canadians who are officially Catholic must represent 60 per cent. Yet, despite the combined efforts of the Station and Mr. La Rivière no *père de famille* could be found who was willing to speak on TV for religious schools. Several offered to ask their priest to come, but that was the wrong type of father. It was a father of children going to school who was wanted.

What is the Catholic Province of Quebec coming to?

THE "CATHOLIC HERALD", BBC AND VIETNAM

BBC *Panorama's* recent feature on the South Vietnam situation came in for special attack in the *Catholic Herald* (30/8/63). "The BBC programme," the *Herald* said, "in effect, flatly diagnoses it as a deliberate attempt by the Catholic Church to smash the Buddhists as such".

Church asks Secular Society for Rate

"UNDER THE Church of England Assembly (Powers) Act 1919 and the Measures passed thereunder, the Parochial Church Council has 'power to make, levy and collect a voluntary Church Rate for any purpose connected with affairs of the Parish'." So runs the opening sentence (italics and all) of an application on behalf of the Parish Church of St. George the Martyr, Leicester, addressed to—of all people—Leicester Secular Society, 75 Humberstone Gate.

The rate, assessed at fourpence in the £ and "now payable" amounted to £12 15s. 8d., and was accompanied by an explanatory letter from the Vicar and two Churchwardens. "The system," they said, "has the advantage of leaving parishioners in no uncertainty about what they may be expected to give to their Parish Church . . . Its successful operation will obviate the need for periodical appeals for voluntary contributions and it is probably a fairer method of raising the finances required . . . As we do not propose to send out a 'final payment' notice we should appreciate an early payment of this voluntary rate".

C. H. Hammersley, Secretary of the Leicester Secular Society, commented as follows in letters to the *Leicester Mercury*, *Leicester Mail* and *Leicester Chronicle*:

It must of course be a practical joke on the part of the Church Council of St. George's, Leicester, who have presented me with a voluntary rate demand in respect of the Secular Hall (which does happen to be in their parish).

Our Committee was vastly amused that a church in this city should be prepared to accept money (£12 15s. 8d.) from the Leicester Secular Society, which denies the validity of the Christian religion, the existence of the Christian God, or the usefulness of the Christian Church.

We are quite sure that on second thoughts St. George's would not wish to accept our rates and so we shall not embarrass them. We do of course pay a large sum of money every year in City rates and recommend the Biblical axiom—'to St. George's (and all other churches), "Go therefore and do thou likewise"'.
West

PROFESSOR LEVY'S PROPOSAL FOR AN INTERNATIONAL BODY OF FREETHOUGHT SCIENTISTS

IN OUR REPORT of the International Congress of the World Union of Freethinkers which was held in Duisburg, West Germany, from July 26th to July 29th, we referred (THE FREETHINKER, 16/8/63) to a resolution moved by Professor H. Levy (London), seconded by Professor W. Hollitscher (Vienna) and carried unanimously. Professor Levy's resolution (the text of which was not to hand at the time) read:

To consolidate into a single international body, those scientific men and women who accept a freethought outlook on matters religious.

1. To study scientific methodology in order to determine what criteria, if any, could be used to decide the truth or falsehood of matters of religious dogma.

2. To set out many permanent or temporary limitations to scientific method in search for truth that might be involved in the criteria used.

3. To act as a watchdog to ensure that theory and experiment, thought and action, are not confused or blurred by the misuse of the language in which scientific activity is being visualised and described at any moment.

4. To make public pronouncements on such matters when the social and scientific situation demands.

From Plato to Mao Tse-tung

By F. A. RIDLEY

A NEW VOLUME of the veteran American sociologist, Max Nomad, published by the University of Michigan, is of great interest to radicals of every shade of opinion or denomination; in particular to Freethinkers, I would imagine, on account of the highly individual, not to say, iconoclastic views expounded by him. America is nowadays regarded, perhaps justifiably, as the land *par excellence* of social and political conformity: in which respect in particular, Mr. Nomad is a sort of breakaway. I have been an admirer of his books since the '30s, in fact I had the honour of reviewing the English edition of his earlier book, *Apostles of Revolution* back in the now so incredibly remote pre-war era.

The full title of his recent *magnum opus* is, *Political Heretics—from Plato to Mao Tse-tung*, but the subtitle appears to be more relevant to the author's subject-matter than the actual title. For Nomad casts his net widely: many of his political heretics are, in fact, ideologists, dreamers, social reformers and prophets, whose connection with politics properly so-called, is often of the most tenuous nature. In substance, this book may be described as such it is distinguished by that encyclopedic erudition and caustic wit that characterised its author's earlier productions. For even now I can well remember the sharp impact first made upon me by his earliest book, *Rebels and Renegades*, which I stumbled upon by chance in the Library of the British Museum thirty years ago in the course of a busman's holiday of desultory reading.

In his latest volume Nomad covers a still wider field, one that in fact literally (as his sub-title indicates), stretches from Plato to Mao Tse-tung, and as the publisher's blurb remarks accurately: "Max Nomad explores the concept of social revolution whether it is envisaged by a cloistered monk, a political philosopher or an Anarchist fire-brand. If there is a meeting ground for such diverse characters as Spartacus, Sir Thomas More and Nechayer [a Russian 19th century terrorist—F.A.R.], it is to be found in their unquenchable desire for sweeping social change. From the Greece envisioned by Plato to the new world of China engineered by Mao Tse-tung an amazing gallery of dreamers, rebels and revolutionaries parade through more than two thousand years of history".

As most schoolboys have learned at some time or another from their enforced perusal of Julius Caesar's *Commentaries*, "all Gaul is divided into three parts". Similarly, social evolution as envisaged by Max Nomad can conveniently be described as tripartite. For there was, first of all, the long era of pre-industrial civilisation founded upon the universal prevalence of a scarcity economy, an enormous epoch that stretched from the dawn of human civilisation right up to the 18th century Industrial Revolution. The Industrial Revolution (c.1700-1800) introduced the second phase of what is usually denominated "Utopian Socialism" and the kindred radical philosophies with which our author's narrative deals, whereas from 1917 when the Russian Revolution installed a socialistic system over what has now become two-fifths of the planet a third phase of culture has appeared, as yet unfinished. Nomad deals successively with these three sequential phases of social evolution, phases that when collectively considered make up the twenty-three stormy centuries that separate Plato from Mao Tse-tung.

In his opening section, Nomad deals with the movements of social protest that kept on recurring from the

age of the ancient Greeks to the early modern era of the Reformation. Two outstanding ideological works, both still world famous, characterised respectively, the beginning and the end of this long historical era: Plato's book on the State, inadequately translated as *The Republic*, and Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516). As is by now generally realised, Plato was the arch-reactionary of classical antiquity, the prototype of the ancient and modern totalitarian States; a kind of *City of God* and *Mein Kampf* rolled into one. To be sure Nietzsche very aptly described Plato as "a Christian before Christ", and one could now relevantly add, "a Nazi before Hitler".

Plato's famous book which incidentally includes advance sketches of both the Inquisition and the Gestapo, has probably proved to be the most influential, as well as the most brilliant handbook of counter-revolution that has ever been written. As Nomad shows, its originality has perhaps been exaggerated, since Plato based his ideal state very closely on the then Greek militarist state of Sparta, which already boasted a most efficient "Gestapo", the Krypteia, a kind of combination of secret police and an embryo inquisition for suppressing dangerous thoughts. Contrarily, More's original *Utopia* was actually a highly radical work which not only gave its name to a whole school of Utopian literature, but itself contained some of the most un-Utopian realistic social criticism that is to be found anywhere in radical literature. The ironies of history are truly colossal, for More, the arch-Utopian Communist, is now a Catholic saint and martyr and was for long the favourite author of the Jesuits, those ecclesiastical prototypes of modern Fascism.

Between Plato and More, and indeed right up to the Industrial Revolution, many Utopian theorists appeared, several of them besides More of English nationality (e.g. the "Digger" Gerrard Winstanley). There were also numerous armed risings of the oppressed classes, mostly influenced in varying degrees by Utopian social theories, from Spartacus (73-71 BC) via Wat Tyler (1381) to the Anabaptists of Munster (1534-5), contemporary with More. All such movements had a backward looking character and harked back to some legendary Golden Age in the remote past; some Garden of Eden. As the medieval Lollards phrased it, "When Adam delved and Eve span, where was then your gentleman?" (i.e. In the beginning, where were class distinctions?) Most of these Utopian movements were inspired by religious heresies. As Nomad remarked in one of his earlier books, their victory would have led to some form of religious dictatorship.

With the Industrial Revolution and its political corollary, the French Revolution, a new era began of virtually uninterrupted social protest. The greater part of *Political Heretics* is necessarily devoted to this relatively brief era of virtually non-stop political activity. In a brief review such as is this, all that one can adequately do is to indicate that the radicalism of the modern industrial era has been secular in inspiration and forward-looking in its essential character. However much the various radical philosophies, Marxism, Syndicalism, Anarchism, etc., may differ, they all seek both their own future and their ideal society here, in this terrestrial world below. As far as our author is concerned, his own point of view appears to lean to a form of democratic socialism, and he is critical, perhaps excessively so—since after all most present-day demo-

(Concluded on next page)

This Believing World

The Archbishop of Canterbury must be so delighted at the success of missionaries in converting the "heathen" to Christianity, that he now wants the converts to come to England and "convert the heathenism in our country". We hope they come in droves, and begin trying to convert the heathens who call themselves Humanists, Rationalists, Agnostics, Secularists, and Atheists. So far, Dr. Ramsey and his pious colleagues have completely failed.

★

The snag is, however, that converts from other lands may never have heard of unbelievers, and may think all white people are Christians, having been told so by missionaries. They may even be surprised that unbelievers are not in the least afraid of frizzling for ever in Hell, and wouldn't go to Heaven at any price (they would be bored to death!). However, we still hope the converts will come and, as a start, they may even convert the Bishop of Woolwich to believing again that God is really "up there" sitting on a cloud.

★

In the meantime, we have a Christian bishop, Dr. Oduola, who is the Bishop of Ibadan, Nigeria, objecting to Christian missionaries attacking polygamy. After all, polygamy is not attacked in the Old Testament. And he accused Westerners of indulging in "progressive polygamy", that is, "remarrying after divorce". In the face of this, why do Christian missionaries object to "natives" in other lands having a number of wives? Why indeed? Dr. Oduola should come to England where he might now find plenty of people agreeing with him.

★

The Anglican Congress in Toronto has been trying to settle the difficult problem of what to do in the future. There are about 18 Anglican Churches in the world and, roughly, there were about 1,000 delegates taking part in the proceedings. We note that Canon C. B. Mortlock, writing in the *Daily Telegraph* (August 13th) admitted that "it is difficult to say in positive terms what is meant by Anglicanism" though "it is an essential characteristic of every Church in the Anglican Communion" to be with the See of Canterbury. But here again there is the tiny snag that few people know where the See of Canterbury now stands. If the Congress can positively tell us, and all the speakers and delegates fully agree, we shall have at last a Christian miracle.

★

In any case, one Bishop—the Rt. Rev. Glyn Simon, the Bishop of Llandaff—thinks that "the Church is facing a break-up", and its "schisms" may prove that "the Anglican Communion has done its work". This must give the Church of Rome a great deal of amusement, for no Catholic priest would think of saying that his Church has done its work. Altogether, the outlook for Anglicanism seems pretty dismal.

★

The late Lord Nuffield was perhaps the greatest philanthropist we have ever had—to donate £40,000,000 to great causes is a wonderful achievement. Yet in the obituary notices we read, there was no word about his religion. We wonder why? No doubt he was a believer, but it would have been interesting at least to know what he believed, if indeed he believed anything!

★

"There is a principle." High-sounding words that are often followed by foolish action, in the case of King's Lynn (Norfolk) Town Council a ban on hiring corporation football pitches on a Sunday. "While nobody wanted to

stop people playing football", said Mr. Douglas Black, chairman of the physical recreation committee, "it was felt we should not encourage Sunday morning football by renting our pitches" (*Evening Standard*, August 22nd). So if the ban stays, the footballers will have to make do without goalnets or corner flags.

FROM PLATO TO MAO TSE-TUNG

(Concluded from page 283)

cracies originally started as dictatorships—of the present Communist totalitarian regimes. An original feature of sociological approach both here and in his earlier books, is represented by the important role that he ascribes in the evolution of revolution to the activities of educated *déclassé* unemployed (and perhaps unemployable) scions of the old ruling classes who from Marx to Mao have usually furnished the theorists and leaders of successive subversive movements.

Whatever their personal views, most radicals and, we imagine, most Humanists, will concur with Max Nomad's balanced conclusion: "The thinking man of today has been placed before a cruel choice; either the preservation of the *status quo* guaranteeing a certain amount of personal and cultural freedom at the exorbitant price of insecurity and unemployment, or a plunge into the dark ages of a 'security' which has once and for all substituted unquestioning obedience and martial law for the right of criticism and civilised democratic procedure".

"To find a way out of this double impasse, to combine the advantages of a planned economy with the blessings of liberty, will be a challenge to the best minds and a task which will require the collective effort of all those who are not willing to accept either of these alternatives".

A notable conclusion to a notable book.

THEATRE

Schweyk at the Mermaid

Brecht's *Schweyk in the Second World War* derives from Hasek's famous first world war novel, *The Good Soldier Schweyk*, which the German playwright greatly admired. The main character has changed—in Brecht's words—from "a cunning saboteur" to "simply an opportunist", but he lands himself in no less awkward scrapes, which he usually talks himself out of preposterously. "I don't know why I listen to you", says the SS officer. "I must be hypnotised by you". And we share his bewilderment, with the great advantage of being able to laugh at it.

Laugh we certainly do, for Bernard Miles seems outrageously right for the title rôle in the London première at the Mermaid Theatre. "I feel pleasantly at home in the part", Mr. Miles tells us in a programme note. And he reminds us that London might well have been the venue of the play instead of Prague.

And behind the fun—behind Schweyk's side-splitting efforts to lure a Pomeranian into a Gent's, and his friend Baloun's efforts to satisfy an enormous appetite (to the extent of praying to the Virgin that his stomach might shrivel)—is the fear: the fear expressed in the soldier's wife's ballad sung by Joan Heal: "The butcher calls. The silly sheep adore him. With banners raised, they march in ordered ranks". Hanns Eisler's varied music exactly fits Brecht's words.

"Everybody cheered when the Führer gave the order. 'Go and capture Danzig, it's just across the border'". There was less we cheer about later, and we have had our dark times since. Perhaps at long last, though, "The darkness is lifting. The night has twelve hours. But then comes the day".

Like Brecht, we hope so. Meanwhile his plays help us a little more clearly to see our hopes, fears and follies. C.M.C.

WITHOUT COMMENT

"The BBC belongs to the nation, not to itself, and Christians are entitled to hit back after the long weeks, months and years of insults and sniping and smearing they have had to endure from Broadcasting House. This is plainly a matter for Parliament." *Catholic Herald* (30/8/63).

THE FREETHINKER

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mound).—Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN, McRAE and MURRAY.
London Branches—Kingston, Marble Arch, North London: (Marble Arch), Sundays, from 4 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER, C. E. WOOD, D. H. TRIBE, J. A. MILLAR.
(Lower Hill). Every Thursday, 12—2 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER and L. EBURY.
Manchester Branch NSS (Platt Fields), Sunday afternoon (Car Park, Victoria Street), Sunday evenings.
Merseyside Branch NSS (Pierhead).—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.: Sundays, 7.30 p.m.
North London Branch NSS (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY.
Nottingham Branch NSS (Old Market Square), every Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch NSS (Midland Institute, Paradise Street), Sunday, September 8th, 6.45 p.m.: M. BOWEN, "The Future of British Trade Unions".
Glasgow Secular Society (Central Halls, 25 Bath Street), Sunday, September 8th, 3 p.m.: COLIN MCCALL, "The Bishop of Woolwich: God, Here, There or Nowhere?"

Notes and News

REPORTS OF Buddhist monks and nuns drenching themselves in petrol and then setting themselves on fire suggest a futile fanaticism. Anyway, don't they believe in reincarnation? But there is much more behind the terrible suicides in South Vietnam. In Views and Opinions this week, Colin McCall gives some of the facts behind the "Religious Strife in Vietnam".

★
MONSIGNOR Loris Capovilla, private secretary to Pope John XXIII has described the meeting between the late Pope and Mr. Khrushchev's daughter and son-in-law, which took place at the Vatican last spring. There was no mystery or backstage drama to the audience, said the Monsignor, and indeed, judging by the excerpts given in the *Guardian* (28/8/63), the conversation was far from stimulating. The Pope gave Mrs. Adzhubei a rosary and asked her to say the names of her children (which he already knew) "because when a mother says her children's names they sound particularly sweet". Mr. Adzhubei said apparently raise the question of a meeting (presumably between his father-in-law and the Holy Father) but Pope John didn't want to rush things. The Lord took six days to create the world, he said, "not days as we know them, but great epochs". And now "we are in the first day of 'Let there be light'." "The light is in my eyes and in yours", he went on, and "The Lord, if He wants, can make us see the road to follow. But we need time. Now we can only hope and pray". Amen.

★
A LEADING Australian Methodist minister, the Rev. Alan Walker, has been refused permission to use a building in Capetown because "he said he had 'no respect' for the

Dutch Reformed Church" (*The Guardian*, 27/8/63). We should have hoped that the ban was justified (what decent person has any respect for the Dutch Reformed Church?) but Mr. Walker said in Sydney that he was sure the decision had been taken "on an inadequate understanding of my mind towards the Church".

★

WE ARE not sure where Alasdair MacIntyre, Fellow of University College, Oxford, stands today. When he lectured at Manchester University a decade ago he was, we think, a Christian Marxist. He is considerably less of a Christian now, though he still appears from time to time as a theological critic in *The Guardian*. And "God and the Theologians" is the title of his essay in the latest (September) *Encounter*, dealing with *Honesty to God* (and, of course, Dr. Robinson's mentors, Bonhoeffer, Bultmann and Tillich) and *Objections to Christian Belief*. It is highly important, Mr. MacIntyre says, "that the theologians should not be left alone with their discussions, to carry them on as they please . . . the danger is that God will once more be treated as an in-group totem". Once there were "organised secularist groups (the Rationalist Press Association, the Ethical Union, and the like) which could have assisted in ensuring that the discussion continued in the public forum". But, Mr. MacIntyre alleges, "all these groups essentially became nonconformist churches and share in the general decline of nonconformity".

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IN FACT, the organised secularist groups have done all that they can to further public discussion of *Honesty to God* and *Objections to Religious Belief*. A number of critical articles have appeared in *The Humanist* and THE FREETHINKER and one from the latter has been reprinted and circulated as a leaflet. But copies sent to Dr. Robinson brought no response. We know we speak for the Rationalist Press Association and the Ethical Union, as well as the National Secular Society ("the like"), when we say that any public discussion would be welcomed. If Mr. MacIntyre has any influence with the BBC or ITV—and, of course, the clergy—he may be sure there will be no shortage of Freethinkers able and prepared to enter the "public forum" and discuss what he describes as "the combination of atheism in the practice of the life of the vast majority, with the profession of either superstition or theism by that same majority". To argue whether the "creed of the English" is, "that there is no God and that it is wise to pray to him from time to time".

★

PERHAPS "South Bank" religion is no accident, said the *South London Press* (20/8/63). "South London was famous for its old-time religion when the great Spurgeon drew all London to his Tabernacle at the 'Elephant' and preachers like the Rev. Bernard Small filled smaller churches". It was "always unconventional religion", the paper went on, and after considering some modern unconventional Anglicans (Dr. Robinson, Canon Rhymes, Canon Pearce-Higgins) it declared "this new reformation" to be "healthy", because "it may induce people to study Christianity for themselves".

★

DR. W. E. B. DU BOIS, the Negro scholar whose book, *An ABC of Colour* was reviewed last week by Margaret McLroy, has died in Ghana aged 95. Dr. Du Bois was born in Massachusetts and took a doctorate in philosophy at Harvard. He was a founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People and in 1919 he organised the first Pan-African Congress in Paris. Late in life he joined the Communist Party and moved to Ghana.

The Fifth Freedom: Freedom From Superstition

By FRANCES MILLS

ONLY PEOPLE who have been brought up from childhood in a home where Fundamentalism is the rockbed of life have the full experience of the freedom that Atheism can bring. When I became an Atheist I was conscious for the first time that I was a whole person, in command of my own life and fate and not just a toy cast about by the whim of a capricious god.

This sense of wholeness and freedom has necessarily brought a certain loneliness, because instead of conforming to a pattern of life and behaviour I am now conscious that I am "different". There is no longer any sense of belonging to my family and this can produce sometimes a yearning for the ease of a Christian belief and the comfort of being wrapped in the cotton wool of 2,000 years.

There are usually two sides to any way of life and this is especially so of Christianity. In using this word I am not using it in the wide sense of religion but in the far narrower sense of the really fundamental Christianity as purveyed by Billy Graham and pursued by the Plymouth Brethren, amongst other sects. Theirs is a Christianity that demands a complete belief in the Bible as the Word of God and in its truth in every particular from the creation of Adam and Eve right through to the final judgment; a creed in which one has to be "saved" and having been "saved" must "live in Christ" in every detail, even to getting His choice of a marriage partner.

To Fundamentalists, only those who are saved are Christians. Everyone else, no matter how ethically good, is damned and will inevitably go to hell. Roman Catholicism is the Scarlet Woman of Babylon of Revelation and the South Bank Religionists are disciples of the Devil. Only the faithful will "inherit eternal life" and will be eligible for the untold joys of Heaven. To be "saved" is to place your life in God's hands, thus freeing you from every sense of questioning, of responsibility and of suffering. It is indeed the "easy way out", perhaps the greatest form of escapism the world has ever known.

Earthquakes kill hundreds of people and render thousands homeless—it is God's Will. Aeroplanes crash, burning alive the crew and passengers—God is speaking to mankind and through this "lesson" many will be "saved". Children in the underdeveloped countries die of starvation and disease—it is part of God's plan. Countries go to war—this was foretold in the Gospels by Christ and we need not trouble ourselves, for did He not say "And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be". The widows, the fatherless children, the thousands of crippled and maimed human beings? God will look after them, even though the governments will not. A man loses his job, falls ill, his wife or child dies but "all things work together for good to them that love the Lord".

Surely their acceptance of the story of the massacre of the Canaanites sums up the whole Fundamentalist attitude. The command of God to the Children of Israel to exterminate the Canaanites (amongst others) when they entered the Promised Land is considered not only just, but expedient. They argue that the Canaanites were morally corrupt as well as being riddled with venereal disease so that their extermination was the only way to protect the Israelites from moral and bodily danger as well as being a just judgment of God on these people for their sins.

If such barbarism can be condoned there is almost nothing that can happen that cannot be accepted. This

cosy belief in a God who not only allows but encourages the wholesale slaughter of a people and who deliberately causes earthquakes and famine, fire and flood surely robs a person of one of the greatest of human emotions—compassion, a compassion that drives one to a consciousness of the responsibility all human beings ought to bear for each other.

On the other side of the coin is the intense guilt feeling that is produced by such Fundamentalism. The feeling that all your life you are being spied on and even your thoughts are being read by God. For Fundamentalists know that their every deed and thought is written down and when that Book is opened on Judgment Day every smallest thing will be read out.

Every time you step from the "strait and narrow way that leadeth unto life" (and for Fundamentalists this path is extremely narrow), you must apologise hurriedly (repent is the word used) or stand the chance of being "smitten". SIN, in capital letters, is branded on your heart and the Devil lies in person waiting to trap you—and no doubt rubs his hands in glee when he catches sight of you sitting, quaking inwardly, in a cinema.

The teenager in a Fundamentalist household stands very little chance of growing into a normal person for all the normal pursuits of teenagers are deadly sins. Dancing is perhaps the height of iniquity, because, as one "Brother" explained gravely to me when I was 19, it leads straight to having a baby out of wedlock. Going to the theatre or cinema or reading novels run dancing a close second. Only suitable TV programmes are allowed (and precious few are suitable). To use make-up brings you on a par with Jezebel and brief garments are a way to hell and damnation. Even when safely married and in bed one is conscious of being "pure" only if one does not enjoy it and does it only to have children. Not even Heaven will help you if you happen to be unmarried and in bed.

This guilt feeling can very effectively destroy any remnants of humanity that might survive after being "saved". It can produce a wholly warped attitude towards human relationships giving rise to untold misery in the family.

Becoming an Atheist was for me a slow process because most of my teaching and conditioning since childhood had to be shed. I do not know whether the steps I followed are the usual ones, partly scientific, partly intellectual and partly humanitarian. But I do know that the whole picture gradually came apart, cracking and dispersing like a reflection in a stream.

Ironically I found that becoming an Atheist was very much akin to being "saved". Fundamentalists speak of the "burden of guilt rolling away" and this was exactly the feeling I experienced when I was at last able to say "I do not believe in God" without expecting a thunder-bolt to strike me.

For the first time I was able to live in my own right as a human being and to enjoy the wonderful sense of freedom from superstition and at last to begin to be aware of suffering humanity.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH NSS DINNER

Market Hotel, Station Street
(opposite New Street Station)

Saturday, September 28th. Reception, 6.30 p.m.

Chairman: W. MILLER

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Points from a New Book

By OSWELL BLAKESTON

BRYHER'S HISTORICAL NOVELS have been widely acclaimed, for to her to write of events is to become part of them, "to see before the beginning and after the end;" and now she has written an autobiography, *The Heart To Artemis* (Collins, 28s.) to show how external events and unconscious drives help or hinder development.

She was born in 1894 of well-to-do parents, and although many might say that such a background was fortunate she had to fight against the oppressive conventions and education of the period. Her story, in fact, is a courageous document of "freethinking", for she never sold out to comfort and conformity. Once her nurse, meaning to be kind, handed her some cloth saying, "Take this and pretend you are Red Riding Hood". The child promptly flung the stuff to the ground, stamped on it and kicked her nurse. "I want to be myself", she screamed. It was not egotistical temper, "it was simply that I felt perhaps more than most the wonder of the world and dreaded having it taken from me".

Had, she wondered, adventure died just before she was born? Anyway she knew she had to go on fighting in order not to become just another of the thousands of "mass-produced little Victorias and Alberts already sitting on our memorials". Had she been born a little later, there were so many things she might have done—become an archaeologist, a pilot, a psychoanalyst—but she could not have won greater battles through period etiquette to her own free-thinking which laughed at "the Victorians who outwardly gave up sex and received an Empire in exchange".

She responded in every nerve of an artist's clear impressions to the travels on which her parents embarked; and later she rebelled against her school as "a long surrender of the mind", although she was balanced enough to see that it was the age and not the teachers who were to blame for narrowmindedness. She became, among so many other things, a pioneer of educational reform, introducing the idea of teaching children spelling by letting them use typewriters to see words clearly, insinuating business correspondence into the curriculum, proposing lessons by experts mechanically recorded by film and tape so that children would not be inhibited by ungifted teachers.

She loved her parents, but she knew that the greatest gift parents can give children is experience; and because her parents were of their time, they felt it a duty to protect her from "life". However, nothing could kill her spirit—positive rules of "correct behaviour for a young lady" or possessive love; and as soon as she was able to escape on her own she became the friend of creative writers such as Norman Douglas and Gertrude Stein, and such iconoclastic thinkers as Freud. "To seek happiness", she writes, "is the bravest of philosophies" and at the same time she never lost her sense of obligation to the unfortunate. In the thirties, she undertook dangerous missions to help refugees from Hitler's Germany, and she has worked ceaselessly to encourage the neglected artist and all who understand the adventure of "risk capital" in the spirit.

Bryher writes her novels as a poet for whom the greatest glory, for whom the workings of the human mind are the real sacred mystery, for whom and truth are all important. When, as a child, she saw the conscripts in France she immediately demanded what was the use of putting Liberté on in-

scriptions if it meant nothing and men were forced to be soldiers? Then, throughout her life she has wondered how mature people could have "colour prejudice". "Supposing," she writes, "that a creature arrived from another planet with a green hide and pink spots, are we to refuse his offer of friendship because his appearance differs from our own?"

Bryher is definitely an author who should feature on the free-thinker's roll of honour.

CORRESPONDENCE

The Editor welcomes letters from readers, but asks that they be kept as brief and pertinent as possible.

RELUCTANT PEERS

Surely being barred from the House of Commons hardly justifies Mr. Benn being mentioned in THE FREETHINKER. I thought the comparison between him and Charles Bradlaugh, odious. Benn's fight was simply to remove an obstacle to his personal career. I also question the wisdom from the freethought point of view, of your support of the agitation to enable reluctant peers to become eligible for Parliament. As a class I should say they were more hidebound in matters of religion than those on the various parties' short lists of names for potential MPs.

R. C. BOSSOMAIER.

JUSTIN AND PAPIAS

In reply to my assertion that the four Gospels were unknown by name before 180 AD, Dr. Schonfield declared that Justin and Papias both mention the Gospels. He has now admitted that he was wrong and that Justin does *not* mention them. As for Papias, it is true that he mentions Matthew and Mark, but the description he gives of what they wrote clearly shows that these were *not* our Gospels. Dr. S. Davidson, Canon Sanday, and others admit that Papias did *not* have our Gospels. In any case, the surprising fact about both Justin and Papias is that neither mentions the Epistles of Paul though these had been in existence for nearly a hundred years!

Dr. Schonfield says "the historicity of Jesus was never questioned by second century Jewish authorities". We are given no names, no authorities. On the other hand, according to that Christian authority Justin, Trypho roundly told him that "you, having accepted a groundless report, invent a Christ for yourself . . .".

My advice to Dr. Schonfield is—never call an opponent ignorant, because he may be right.

H. CUTNER.

ROMAN CATHOLIC MARTYRS

I was interested in Mr. Adrian Pigott's letter about Cardinal Mindszenty in your issue of the 16th August, and perhaps I may be allowed to offer some comments on his statement that "Romanists are expert in representing their guilty clergy as martyrs".

It is not, however, only the clergy, but the Roman Catholic laity which Mr. Pigott might have included in his remarks. The papal Bull, *Regnans in Excelsis* launched against Elizabeth by Pope Pius V in 1570 contained (*inter alia*) these words, "We declare Elizabeth a heretic . . . to be deprived of her pretended title to the said kingdom, and the people of the said kingdom absolved from their oaths of allegiance".

Here was an incitement to rebellion, and encouraged plots against the Queen of England. Any conspirators who were caught were executed for treason, and it is quite ridiculous to affirm (as the papists do) that they were martyrs. Any repressive measures taken by the State against Roman Catholics as a result of this Bull were on political, rather than religious, grounds.

(REV.) B. C. STONE.

WHAT IS GOD?

Mr. Peter P. Crommelin obviously misses the point of my article, "What is God?"

He says it is foolish to pretend that the word "God" has no meaning, and that logical problems cannot be solved merely by condemning the word as a "meaningless symbol". Mr. Crommelin really should re-read my article more carefully. The relevant passage reads as follows:—" . . . if 'God' is to have meaning it must be capable of an empirical definition, in which case it falls within the province of science. If it is not so capable it is a meaningless symbol, used according to rules

of usage which govern its manipulation, but which afford it no literal significance".

Hence I never said that "God" could not have meaning; indeed it does for many people, and in many different ways. I merely suggest that when it does have meaning it must be explicable in empirical language. When an explanation requires such words as "absolute", "transcendental", "spiritual", etc., I suggest it is meaningless and contributes nothing.

Mr. Crommelin blithely talks of "an Absolute and Eternal Being". If this interesting phrase is not capable of an empirical definition it is meaningless. To substitute one symbol ("God") with another symbol ("Absolute and Eternal Being") is no help unless the second in some sense elucidates the first, which here it does not since the two symbols are equally obscure.

Our logical concept of beings is derived from the world we know. We can manipulate qualities we perceive to produce imaginary, fictional beings, e.g., a blue man, a poetic horse. These entities are in an important sense empirical. They have no qualities which we cannot empirically perceive in the everyday world. But how do we perceive "Absoluteness" or "Transcendentalness"? If we are to assign such qualities to an imaginary being we must somehow perceive them before they can be assigned. I suggest that we never perceive them and cannot arrive at them from other empirical premises. This being so, their use, with the connotation that the theologian requires, is illegitimate—where they occur they are meaningless bits of jargon.

Hence to have meaning, "God" must be defined empirically. Otherwise it has no literal significance.

G. L. SIMONS.

SECULAR EDUCATION

My three youngest children attend the local primary school. Like all the local state schools it is a church school. As it is also a very small school it would cause an immense amount of dislocation if I attempted to contract the children out of assembly or religious instruction. So in this instance I have done nothing, secure in the knowledge that a rationalist home background will keep the children safe as little sceptics. My eldest daughter, however, goes to a comprehensive school which has five classes for each age group. So she is enabled to miss morning assembly and, instead of RE, to have extra classes in French and Geography. I think more parents should seize this opportunity to opt out and let their children employ their time usefully in the gathering of factual information not fables. In fact I made this suggestion at a recent parents and staff meeting, but the headmistress didn't take very kindly to it, being, as she pointed out, required by law to provide all this religion every week. If everyone contracted out the time tables would be in a mess. Here I don't think individual pressure groups can do much; it's a question of getting the law changed.

BARBARA BOWEN.

OBITUARY

With the death of Annie Vallance of Glasgow at the age of 78, the National Secular Society has lost a loyal member and this paper a valued reader. Mercifully, Mrs. Vallance's illness was brief, for she was too active and hard-working a person to bear being an invalid.

We are gratified, too, that her daughter, Mrs. J. Grubiak, follows in her mother's—and her father's—freethinking footsteps. Mrs. Grubiak tells us how Mr. and Mrs. Vallance used to read THE FREETHINKER and discuss it together until Mr. Vallance's death 16 years ago.

We send our deepest sympathy to Mrs. Grubiak in her sad loss.

NEW PENGUINS AND PELICANS

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- The Science of Animal Behaviour, by P. L. Broadhurst, 3s. 6d.
- Karl Marx: Selected Writings in Sociology and Social History, Edited by T. B. Bottomore and Maximilien Rubel, 4s.
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Plus postage from THE FREETHINKER Bookshop

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 21ST, 1963. Present: Mr. D. H. Tribe (President) in the Chair, Mrs. Collins, Mrs. McIlroy, Barker, Ebury, Hornbrook, Leslie, McConalogue, Millar, Shannon, the Treasurer (Mr. Griffiths) and the Secretary. Apologies were received from Mrs. Venton and Mr. Timmins. The Chairman extended a welcome to Mrs. Collins, who was attending her first meeting as representative for the South-West area. Election of North-East area representatives was deferred. New members were admitted to Birmingham and Parent Branches. The President would propose the motion on Euthanasia at Queen's University, Belfast on October 15th and would probably appear on TV at the same time. Mr. Millar reported a good response to the F. A. Ridley testimonial. The Secretary reported on the World Union of Freethinkers Congress in Duisburg, and interest was shown in the suggestion by Professor H. Levy that freethinking scientists should co-operate. The suggested reorganisation of the World Union (a Bureau of 5 meeting at least once a year, an International Council with a representative from each country meeting at least once every two years, and an International Congress once every four years) was approved. But it was agreed to invite the World Union to a special congress in London in 1966 to mark the centenary of the NSS. An illustration of Sir Charles Wheeler's model of the Thomas Paine statue to be erected at Thetford met with general approval. Dr. Donald Soper had agreed to allow a Secularist to speak at Kingsway Hall, London, after his Sunday evening service. Mr. Tribe was appointed and September 22nd was suggested. Birmingham, Glasgow and North London Branch matters were dealt with and correspondence on Divorce Law Reform and Abortion Law Reform reported. The next meeting was fixed for Wednesday, September 18th, 1963.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY

Owing to the impending retirement of its Secretary, Mr. J. Hutton Hynd, South Place Ethical Society has a vacancy for a part-time Secretary. The main duties involve the organising of lectures, discussions and other activities. Prompt applications are desired, stating age and details of experience. Write for further information to the—

Executive Secretary,

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1

- FREEDOM'S FOE: THE VATICAN. By Adrian Pigott. Illustrated. Price 3/-; postage 6d.
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