

FREE THINKER

Registered at the
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FOUNDED 1881 by G. W. FOOTE

Friday,
April 29, 1966

RELIGION IN SCHOOLS

The vexed question of religion in schools is no longer an egghead talking point. It is news. Even the contributors to the Catholic press often question the wisdom of segregated church schools. If parents are generally complacent, school children are increasingly vocal in condemnation of compulsory worship and RI in county schools. The campaign of the National Secular Society has moved into a new phase and if it has not yet won any victories it has mobilised the forces of reform.

Over Easter some 100 copies of *Religion and Ethics in School* were sold to teachers at the Annual Conference of the NUT; so that, although the agenda motion on this subject (related to *Religious and Moral Education*) was not reached, the issue was a *sub rosa* talking point. The following Wednesday a big public meeting was held with special reference to proposed increased grants to church schools (*report below*). Last week a deputation consisting of Miss Brigid Brophy, Mrs Kit Mouat and Messrs Don Baker, William McIlroy, F. H. Amphlett Micklewright and David Tribe waited on Mr Edward Redhead, Minister of State for Education, at the Department of Education and Science. Immediately afterwards Miss Brophy was interviewed for **The World at One** (BBC Home). This was followed by a press conference and reports that evening (April 18) and next morning in most of the national press.

Deputation

In a fifty-minute Ministry interview all points relevant to the church schools controversy and the related field of county school religion were succinctly presented. The Minister, who with his assistants received the deputation with every courtesy and friendliness, thanked it for the manner and comprehensiveness of its presentation. He welcomed the recognition that it was an inherited problem, agreed that school-leavers were dissatisfied with the statutory provisions—which were not fulfilling their objective—and that public attitudes were changing. He promised to report back to the Secretary of State the contention that, if this is so, it is better to do nothing now

to strengthen the *status quo* as agreement may be reached in a few years to have a truly national integrated, comprehensive system.

Particularly cogent points made by Miss Brophy in her broadcast were:

- (1) the purpose of schools is to teach facts and judgement, not beliefs
- (2) if teachers are always to some degree biased—which they shouldn't be—it is important to have as wide a range of bias as possible
- (3) tolerance is not to be confused with the subsidisation of intolerance.

Another broadcast of interest took place on Scottish ITV. An RC priest expressed himself perfectly happy with segregated church schools, but his attitude was criticised by the Rev Dr Whitley of St Giles Cathedral, Edinburgh, a school teacher and a Church of Scotland journalist. Unfortunately only the *Helensburgh and Gareloch Times* reported the occasion.

The following report is by Kit Mouat:

The public meeting at the Alliance Hall on April 13 was splendidly attended by an interested and lively audience. Mr David Tribe, President of the NSS, took the chair and summarised the problems to be dealt with.

Mrs Margaret Knight spoke first, presenting with admirable clarity facts about the different sorts of "voluntary" church schools:

- (i) *aided*—for which the church has some financial responsibility, appointing two-thirds of the governing body (which usually appoints teachers). Such schools provide denominational religious instruction, and
- (ii) *controlled*—which are financed entirely by the State and in which only one-third of the governing body is appointed by the church with two-thirds by the local education authority. These schools have what is called "undenominational" RI based on an agreed syllabus, but denominational RI can be given for not more than 2 periods a week for those children whose parents desire it.

One child in five, Mrs Knight pointed out, spends part of its life in a church school. Until 1902 such schools were self-supporting, but in that year the State took over the running costs, which included the teachers' salaries. The 1944 Education Act gave a 50 per cent "maintenance grant" towards the cost of improving and renovating their buildings and 100 per cent if the schools accepted "controlled" status. Nothing was provided for new schools. In 1959 the maintenance grant was raised to 75 per cent and extended to cover the building of entirely new schools if it could be shown that these were needed to absorb leavers from existing church primary schools. Now, in 1966, the Government proposes to raise the grant from

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75 per cent to 80 per cent and make all new schools eligible if they go comprehensive.

Catholic Action

About half the Anglican schools had gone "controlled". Only two Roman Catholic schools risked losing their sectarian grip, but there had been a heavy RC building programme. Soon there would be more children in RC than in Anglican schools and, of course, the RCs were determined not only to keep their independence but also to make the Government (ie the British people) pay for it. In 1957 their Action Committee began a vigorous campaign. Surveys were carried out "to test the strength of non-conformist opposition" and Anglicans were moved to comment that they wished "events were moving more slowly"!

Mrs Knight drew attention to the economic waste and ineffectiveness of two parallel educational systems, and insisted (as did other speakers and members of the audience many times) that if the Churches want yet more segregated schools *they should pay for them themselves out of their considerable funds*. The Government yielding to RC pressure groups and lobbying has, she said, surprised even the RCs. But there were not only financial reasons for the Secular Humanist opposition. Primarily Roman Catholic schools are for indoctrination with "give us a child for its first 7 years . . ." as their slogan. The whole educational syllabus sets out to confirm RC dogmas and this can only result in education itself becoming a mockery. The RCs argue that because they pay rates and taxes they have a right to their own schools, but this argument must apply equally to Jews, Muslims or any other minority group, religious, political or neither.

William Hamling, Labour MP for West Woolwich, spoke next. Brought up in Liverpool with all its religious conflicts and educated in a church school, Mr Hamling claimed his present secularism and religious tolerance to be a natural outcome. His personal reaction to "lobbying" was, he stressed, obstinacy and to take the opposite point of view. Everyone, I think, must have agreed with him that any form of blackmail lobbying is to be deplored. We were reminded that whereas the Labour Party used to be secularist it is no longer so. Mr Hamling stressed Clause 76 of the 1944 Act by which "the wishes of parents" must be considered, and he seemed at this stage of the meeting to believe that the Government should be so tolerant as to give financial support even to Fascist, Exclusive Brethern or Jehovah Witness parents presumably with the right to instill anti-semitism, organised prudery, hatred and ostracism and the denial of blood transfusion. But Mr Hamling made it quite clear also that he supported comprehensive education and is against segregation.

A free vote demanded

He reminded us that the 1929 Education Bill with its free vote foundered on religious clauses, but he insisted that MPs must on this issue be allowed to vote according to conscience and not as the Whips demand. He advised secularists to lobby (presumably those people who do not react in the opposite direction!), and then went on to mention the insanitary and generally undesirable condition of many church schools. The Government proposal was to try and improve conditions. Many members of the audience must have been wondering how we shall ever get net State schools if the Government puts our money into resurrecting old church school buildings. But Mr Ham-

ling did not enlarge on this. He was, perhaps, more anxious to encourage tolerance than to take our tolerance for granted and share our most serious concern for education as a whole and for the rights of children as well as of their parents. This point was made later by the Chairman. Nor was Mr Hamling's suggestion that clerical headmasters turn out atheists of much comfort to those of us who believe that atheism should be a positive conviction and not a mere "reaction against". However, he raised our hopes once again when he stressed the need for State schools in all areas and argued that agreed syllabuses in State schools should cease.

Hector Hawton spoke last, emphasizing his own conversion to Roman Catholicism and his school-boy hopes of being a magician-Father of the Church until sex reared its ugly (or did he say "lovely"?) head! He had not been impressed by the Roman New Look. Vatican II's liberalism is relative only, and, by rationalist standards, not liberal at all but strongly fundamentalist. He remarked that whereas the mass of British Catholics may be shedding their beliefs, in Malta priests have been suspended for voting Labour, and an English woman has had her "pills" confiscated by customs and been threatened with a severe penalty. "What is the Secretariat for Non-Believers?" asked Mr Hawton. What is it out to gain? This is the question we have to ask. The Communists are having dialogues with the RCs although there is little joy in Poland about it. Isn't it all part of the Vatican psychological warfare? A soft sell? A means of "drawing the teeth" so that they can "divided and rule" while those who have taken tea with priests dare not, at some later date, be really tough with them?

Too much compromise

What we need is total secular education in State schools. So long as some Protestant RI is given, then the RCs have an argument for wanting schools of their own. In 1944 the Education Act slipped through because we were otherwise occupied. The churches gained by our apathy. A determined minority could push anything through, said Mr Hawton, and I hope that the audience realised that this doesn't just apply to the enemy! By 1976, the population of RC schools will be one-sixth of the total. We have to look ahead. The RCs with their opposition to family planning are making sure that they will keep up the supply.

Mr Hawton spoke with a conviction and purpose which must have warmed many hearts chilled by recent Humanist-Christian flirtations. The Catholics were aiming at a polite sort of ghetto. The attitude of compromise, "half a loaf is better than no bread" (do the RCs ever say "half a dogma is better than none"?) and "Eric or Little by Little" is just no good. He was not enthusiastic about the Humanist-cum-Christian pamphlet on RI, with its 2 days of worship and 3 days "off" proposals, and he drew attention to the support of our own ideas amongst Christians themselves, from John Grigg of the *Guardian* to the RCs who had written honestly and critically of their own Church in recent publications. In mixed marriages the dictatorship of the Pope remains exactly the same. All right, said Mr Hawton, we want an "open society", but this does not mean we agree with Government subsidies for the enemies of freedom and toleration. By contributing our rates and taxes to Roman Catholic schools we are paying for children to be brought up in fear, to be indoctrinated with miserable and terrifying ideas about hell and sin, liable to anti-semitism and the arrogance of believing that "there is no salvation" outside the Church of Rome. He quoted Roman Catholic writers who had

stated more strongly than many Humanists that Catholic education breeds a dishonest state of mind.

Audience participation

The audience then took over with interested and responsible questioning and a lively discussion. It is fashionable in some Humanist circles these days to scoff at NSS meetings, drawing attention to the "lunatic fringe" which does, admittedly, sometimes appear, although I cannot say I have noticed them absent from the Humanist groups I have

LOCAL RADIO

IN HIS INTRODUCTION [to *Possibilities for Local Radio* by Rachel Powell (Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Birmingham University, 5s)], Professor Richard Hoggart writes:

We think that Rachel Powell gives a new depth and detail to the idea of local radio, and shows what could be meant by the imaginative use of broadcasting within small communities. Essentially, she is asking us to dare to think about creative amateurism, which is neither parish-pumpery of a narrow kind nor the professionalism which is so easily a form of patronage. This sums up what seems to me an excellent piece of work.

Rachel Powell has examined the question from all angles and the conclusions she reaches would, I think, be shared by many secularists. Fundamentally she wants to see local radio stations at the service of the community, at the transmitting as well as the receiving end, and she cares a great deal about the quality of the output. She believes that local radio could provide "democracy with a voice" and suggests that we need, "socially, educationally, culturally and politically", new tools which an openly structured radio system could provide. She sees such a system as an important element in the creation of cohesive communities. How will all this come about? Rachel Powell has practical suggestions to make.

Freedom first

First and foremost such radio stations must, she says, "be free of political, industrial or financial interest". After serious research into existing organisations, she recommends a national structure of local stations under BBC control. Her arguments certainly convinced me. Radio Manx has proved that if more than about 45 minutes of local material a day are used, advertisers are not attracted enough to make an independent system viable. The question as to how advertisers can be attracted while still offering a responsible radio output seems insoluble. Yet another station carrying virtually nothing but pop music is clearly to be avoided. Even if the public could tolerate yet more current "hits", this would be a complete waste of local opportunities and disc-jockeys still have to be paid. Anyway, cheap transistor radios can receive only on long or medium wave whereas local stations would be more efficient on VHF. And who would buy a new set when he can get his Beatles from Luxembourg and the Light Programme?

Cultural and educational

Local radio stations under BBC control, however, could offer a full and varied diet for a wide range of tastes. Information about local functions, organisations and so on could of course be included, but there could also be a serious attempt to stimulate concern for the needy in the community, to offer an up-to-date picture of the local

attended. Well, there was no "fringe" on Wednesday night and I believe the NSS can feel proud that it has taken active steps to break the dangerous apathy referred to by Mr Hawton. Indeed, by doing nothing, we are giving not only our money for Christian indoctrination, we are giving our good will and assistance. As the Chairman reiterated in his closing remarks, what we need now is more action, constant lobbying of our MPs and pressure in every possible place where it can affect the thinking of individuals and the action of governmental groups.

Kit Mouat

labour market so that redundancy might be anticipated and the trends of labour studied. In conjunction with the LEA or a local university, adult education (with English for foreigners) could be fostered with, perhaps, grants from the Department of Education and Science or the Ministry of Local Government. Schools' broadcasts could deal especially with local geographical or sociological surveys with local writers and musicians also making their contributions.

Miss Powell doesn't actually make the point, but she could have mentioned the scope for breaking down the barriers between boarding and day, Grammar and Secondary Modern, Church and State schools by joint debates and discussions. Children would learn to acquire self-confidence and radio technique and some of the gaps between the generations could well be narrowed. Local gramophone, dramatic and operatic societies, too, would have a new medium and, one could hope, a higher standard to aim for.

A local forum

A sense of community . . . demands an open channel for public argument. Political, religious and miscellaneous organisations already exist for communication of opinion but these are always inadequate.

No one knows better than the secularist just how urgent the need is for a greater freedom of speech for responsible but unorthodox ideas, and one would hope that Humanists would make the most of what might prove very valuable opportunities if and when local radio stations are set up. Miss Powell suggests that time would be allocated (and the allocations published) but could not be bought. Time would be offered to established organisations, with a ballot for 10-minute spots for not-so-established organisations and individuals.

"Where debate was accepted", the author goes on, "it should be broadcast live and in full frenzy". Bravo to that, Miss Powell, if you can ever get the BBC to drop its inhibitions. A **Question Time** for local or national officials is also recommended. Such a radio system would obviously take on the character of its own locality, and so an interchange with programmes from other areas would be particularly valuable.

As Humanists we talk a lot about the integration of nations in the world, of races into nations, of the individual into the community, and I am much encouraged and stimulated by Miss Powell's vision of local radio as a driving force for making this "vital involvement in local life" a reality. It could prove a valuable weapon against the isolation and loneliness which increase sadly as our population grows.

(Continued on page 133)

THIS WORLD

Humanism on the Move

SIXTY Humanists from North London and East Anglia, including 12 from Havering's active group, met at Chelmsford recently. Margaret Knight, down from Scotland, and Derrick Lee were the main speakers at the rally, the first to be held by Humanists of the area.

Virtue in Jeopardy

LED by Mr David McKay, 92-year-old President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Utah Mormons began two months ago a "concerted movement to fight pornography wherever it may be found, in books and magazines, on the screen, or in material sent through the post". Whereupon Provo passed an ordinance requiring the classification of all matter as adult and non-adult and preventing access to the former by juveniles. This fortified a State provision banning the sale of alcohol by the glass. Unfortunately a leading news company and the Utah theatres association, pointing out the impracticality of the Provo provision, is fighting the issue in a Federal Court and has gained a preliminary injunction. Local businessmen are especially voluble at present about the state's puritanism, as they are hoping to get the Winter Olympic Games for Salt Lake City in 1972. You cannot serve God and mammon, and when it comes to the barricades the issue is seldom in doubt.

CLOSER home, Maria Immaculata of the Clean Uppers protested against the "appalling bad taste" of the last programme of BBC 3. Whereat Mrs Avril Fox of the Cosmo Group pointed out that it was the *last*—the third demise of a satirical series. She challenged Mrs Whitehouse to state by what right she sought to deprive the millions who enjoyed such programmes, how many paid-up members she had and whether she would throw open her viewers' and listeners' convention in Birmingham to all shades of opinion.

Evergreen Secularist

AFTER reading Mary Beesley's *The Wider Horizon and an Old Lady's Gleanings* (privately printed, cloth 2/6), it is difficult to believe that the writer is 85 years old. Packed with commonsense on subjects as diverse as death and character-building, will-power and evolution, and illumined with quotations from philosophers and poets, the book shows the power of Freethought to keep its sustainers young.

Backward Children

SEEMINGLY UNABLE to cope with brilliant children, Britain is no less retarded in her care of the backward. Every teacher knows that most secondary modern schools have in them children who should be in special ESN institutions. Not only are practical provisions inadequate, but research is virtually non-existent. Manchester University has a site but no money for this work. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, has a Research Institute of Defectology, established in 1920 and now staffed by well over 100 scientists and 17 professors. Mr A. B. Boom, one of the four members of the British Guild of Teachers of Backward Children who visited Russia last June and have just reported (*Backward Children in USSR*), saw one school for severely subnormal children with 590 children and 329 staff, including 8 fulltime doctors.

Disarmament

YESTERDAY in London, distinguished Secularist Mrs

K. Tacchi-Morris was one of the guests at a Dorchester luncheon in honour of U Thant, Secretary General of the United Nations. Tacchi, as she is known to her innumerable friends throughout the world, has been accorded the singular honour of collating for Lord Chalfont, Minister for Disarmament, the views in this field of all the women in the country. In practice, she is working through regional organisers, as she explains in an article on her work shortly to be published in the FREETHINKER, and through organisations. She hopes, for example, that the National Secular Society will depute a woman to undertake this work. Through John Ennals she has already enlisted the support of the (British) United Nations Association. On June 13 there will be a World Disarmament Conference at Helsinki. In a personal letter to the Editor she pertinently observes:

It is important to get the women as they are bringing up the next generation and can do much to help their children.

Nun by the Brave

THE banning of the Rivette film *La Religieuse* from showing both in France and abroad by the Secretary of State for Information at the instigation of Catholic pressure groups has rebounded. A nation-wide explosion is rocking the wretched man in his Ministry *sanctum*. Producer Georges de Beauregard has launched *le manifeste de 1789* in demand of cultural freedom, and has already gained the signatures of leading artistes and intellectuals including Bardot, Sagan, Mauriac, Truffaut, Chabrol, Clara Malraux, Prévert, Genet, Duvivier and Daquin, in addition to personalities as diverse as the President of the *Ligue des Droits de l'Homme* and Prince Louis-Georges de Bourbon. The film is to be entered for the Cannes Festival; 500 film clubs have promised their support; a Paris theatre has announced a "Diderot Day" to present *Le Neveu de Rameau* and the play based on the same novel as the film; protest meetings are being held up and down the country; the Church is getting one of its worst presses in recent years.

Catholics in Germany

NEWS of a different sort, scarcely more encouraging to Catholics, has come from West Germany. N. Greinacher and H. T. Risse have just published *Deutscher Katholizismus nach dem Kriege*, the subject of a long article in the *Catholic Herald* (April 15). It is estimated that of all German Catholics, 20 per cent are devout, 30 perfunctory, 40 marginal and 10 quite outside and virtual atheists. Loyal Catholics tend to be very old or very young, female, poor middle class, simple and frustrated. More are officially renouncing the Church (notice of refusal to pay Church tax) than entering it.

THOUGH officially Catholics are generally inferior socially and intellectually and number 45 per cent of the population to 51 Protestant, they dominate politics and have managed to prohibit the establishment of Family Planning Clinics. But not free enterprise in this market. An interesting article in the *New Statesman* (April 15) on "Germany's Supermarket Sex" shows how human nature will out. It is estimated that over 3,000 abortions are performed every day and 64,000 illegitimate babies born every year. Frau Beate Uhse has cashed in on the public demand for contraceptives with a huge postal service for over 21s and sex supermarkets in Flensburg, Hamburg and Frankfurt. French perfumes and chocolates accompany letters, and nude photo equipment can be obtained to enliven jaded *liaisons*.

More Catholic Snippets

AT an "Ecumenical Meeting" seen on TV, the Catholic

FREETHINKER

103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, S.E.1
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THE FREETHINKER can be obtained through any newsagent or will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates: One year £1 17s. 6d.; half-year, 19s.; three months, 9s. 6d. In U.S.A. and Canada: One year, \$5.25; half-year, \$2.75; three months, \$1.40.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC

Items for insertion in this column must reach THE FREETHINKER office at least ten days before the date of publication.

OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mound)—Sunday afternoon and evening: MESSRS. CRONAN, McRAE and MURRAY.
Manchester Branch NSS (Car Park, Victoria Street), 8 p.m.: MESSRS. COLLINS, WOODCOCK, and others.
Merseyside Branch NSS (Pierhead)—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.; Sundays, 3 p.m. and 7.30 p.m.
Nottingham Branch NSS (Old Market Square), every Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

King Alfred School (Manor Wood, North End Road, London, NW11), Day Conference, "Ethical and Moral Values in Education". Speakers: JOHN WILSON, JAMES HEMMING, JOHN WREN-LEWIS and MARGARET KNIGHT. Saturday, April 30th, 9.30 a.m.—6 p.m. Conference fee (including morning coffee, lunch and tea) £1 1s. 0d. Details from Edwin Savitt, 25 Grove Court, Circus Road, London, NW8.
Birmingham Branch NSS (New Victoria Hotel, Corporation Street), Sunday, May 1st, 6.45 p.m.: RICHARD CLEMENTS, "Charles Bradlaugh and his Circle".
Brighton and Hove Humanist Group (Regency House, Oriental Place), Sunday, May 1st, 5.30 p.m.: Tea party and annual general meeting.
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Humanist Centre, Red Lion Square, London, WC1), Sunday, May 1st, 11 a.m.: Professor HYMAN LEVY, "The Conflict between Public and Private Values".
Thomas Paine Society, 175th Anniversary of the publication of "Rights of Man". Exhibition of books, prints, pictures, coins and pottery. Co-operative Education Centre, Heathcote Street, Nottingham. Monday, May 9th—Saturday, May 14th. First day, 7.30 p.m. to 9 p.m., other days 2 p.m. to 8 p.m.
West Ham and District Branch NSS (Wanstead and Woodford Community Centre, Wanstead Green, E11). Meetings at 8 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of every month.
Humanist Letter Network (International): send s.a.c. to Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

THIS WORLD continued

Archbishop of Dublin conspicuously snubbed his Church of Ireland counterpart. More Protestant—and Freethought—consternation has been occasioned in Liverpool ("Little Rome") by civic authorities who are paying for children in their care to go on a pilgrimage to Loudres. But life is never rosaries, rosaries all the way. The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council has just ruled that a circular of the Maltese Medical and Health Department prohibiting anyone on its premises from having a copy of the Labour Party *Voice of Malta* proscribed by the Archbishop "hindered" freedom of expression and was thus unconstitutional. In America Bishop John J. Wright of the Pittsburgh Catholic Diocese said that atheism was "a powerful force in our civilization", non-believers were in "the very, very large majority", and all religions "must be prepared for a long winter of unbelief" (St Louis *Secular Subjects*, March).

The Unloved One

SINCE his symbolic death on Easter Sunday, tributes to novelist Evelyn Waugh have splashed the nation's press. Few will begrudge these posthumous honours. Most of us are in his debt for *Decline and Fall* and *Vile Bodies*, his early *comédie grise* if not *noire*, whatever we think of the heavier later novels. The autobiography of his early years, *A Little Learning*, reveals a figure at once unhappy and bitchy—a picture which emerges from the tributes, however much isolation is made to look like contemplation and rudeness like repartee. Perhaps significantly it was shortly after his divorce from his first wife that he turned to Roman Catholicism in 1930. Horrified by liberal speeches at the Vatican Council, he would have moved on if there had been anything more reactionary to move on to.

THE European première of his satire on the American way of death, *The Loved One*, is now showing in London, hailed as "the film that threw America into a state of shock". Whatever physiological effects it had in America, Tony Richardson's modernised version is unlikely to strain the first aid services of Britain. But there is some good scripting by English *émigré* Christopher Isherwood and exquisite portrayal by John Gielgud and Robert Morley of the English colony in Hollywood and by Rod Steiger of mom-dominated Mr Joyboy. A line to remember from the Blessed Reverend, bogus boss of Whispering Glades Cemetery, unmasking himself at a board meeting: "There must be a way to get those stiffes off my property".

Unclassified Advertisement

APPLICATIONS are invited for the post of Editor of the *Catholic Herald*. The person selected will have had a good Catholic—preferably convent—education and will be of a tactful and amenable disposition. No mere ideas man need apply. Journalistic experience an advantage, but secondary to willingness to obey the Catholic Hierarchy. For the right man this will be a permanent (*deo et ecclesia volente*) and pensionable post, affording unlimited opportunities for travel to such favoured European tourist resorts as Loudres, Fatima, Turin, Trier, Loreto and La Salette. Free luncheon vouchers and perpetual novenas.

LOCAL RADIO

(Continued from page 131)

Money needed

Miss Powell has not neglected finance. At the moment councils are empowered to spend up to a 6d rate on the arts, though few do. Few would probably devote more than a 2d rate to local radio but with an increase of 5s on the BBC licence, together with a local levy, basic costs for a nationwide complex of 90 radio stations could be covered. Why not start with an experiment in the Channel Islands, asks the author?

A lot would depend, of course, on the station managers. One would hope that they would be free from the current BBC censorship as well as from the small-minded bigotry of so many local editors. It would be an enviable job and one which women, I think, could probably do well.

This *Occasional Paper No. 1* is too good to miss. It should stimulate Freethinkers into considering seriously the scope for local radio presentation not only of their alternative to Christian faith but of a much wider aspect of Humanism from the arts to social welfare. Thank you, Miss Powell.

RATIONALIST ANNUAL 1966

Richard Clements

THIS ANNUAL*, now in its eighty-third year of publication, is rightly regarded by Freethinkers, Humanists and Ethicists as a source of ideas, opinions and contemporary criticism. Its appearance is an event in our year. The current number, skilfully edited and admirably printed, creates an immediate impression of being a somewhat "mixed bag". Then, too, older readers are bound to miss the magic once exercised by the great names amongst its former contributors, such writers as J. M. Robertson, John Hobson, Graham Wallas, William Archer and Sir Arthur Keith. Particularly do we miss the scintillating thought and powerful writing of the late J. B. S. Haldane, whose genius lit up every subject he touched.

However, there is much in this year's *Rationalist Annual* which readers, old and new, can turn to for both information and stimulation. The eight essays chosen for the present collection range over a wide field of knowledge and speculation—philosophy, religion, science and literary criticism. Five of the eight contributors are academics drawn from the teaching staffs of English and American universities. It is perhaps this fact that lends to these essays, when they are considered as a whole, a learned and somewhat didactic air. This is a defect of quality in this class of writing, rather than a grave fault.

Ghosts

The volume opens with Trevor H. Hall's essay entitled "The Wesley Poltergeist", which tells of the supposed doings of a noisy and mischievous spirit at the Epworth Rectory in Lincolnshire, during the incumbency of the Rev. Samuel Wesley in the second decade of the eighteenth century. Amongst the strange happenings said to have taken place were "second-hand accounts of groans heard by a maid", miscellaneous knockings, bumps, footsteps in the attic, and "the manservant seeing a creature like a white rabbit on two occasions", etc. In fact, all the ingredients of a gripping ghost story. The essayist describes it as "one of the classical cases in the history of psychical research". He adds: "Frank Podmore, one of the most sceptical investigators of alleged physical phenomena ever associated with the Society of Psychical Research, London, described it as 'the most fully authenticated case in the literature of the subject'."

Further, as Mr Hall in his careful and well-written study shows, the case became the subject of a book by Mr Dudley Wright (*The Epworth Phenomena*, London, 1917). Then, again, he records that the theme was also handled by Andrew Lang, Sacheverell Sitwell, Hereward Carrington, Nandor Fodor, Frank Podmore, G. W. Lambert and Harry Price.

Personalities

It has to be remembered, of course, that the widespread public interest in the case was perhaps due to the simple fact that Epworth Rectory was the family home of several eminent men, amongst them being the Rector's most famous son, the Rev. John Wesley. It is noteworthy that neither he nor his brother Samuel Wesley junior had any experience of the phenomena in question. It is no less revealing to observe how the story gathered additions and momentum as time went on—as is usually the case with such folklore material. Mr Hall's own comment is: "It is in these later accounts that startling events were described which had not been mentioned in the contemporary letters." The reader who wants more of the details and

**The Rationalist Annual*, edited by Hector Hawton; Barrie & Rockliff, with Pemberton; cloth, 7s 6d; paper 5s.

arguments about the case must study Mr Hall's essay and come to his own conclusions about it.

For my own part, I found most interesting the pages in which the essayist traced his thumb-nail sketches of the members of the Wesley family at Epworth Rectory, their associates and servants; together with Mr Hall's own naturalistic and at times ingenious explanations of what really happened.

The most topical and apposite essay in this collection is that by Kathleen Nott, "Reflections on Teilhard de Chardin". She is no stranger to the readers of the *Rationalist Annual* or audiences of progressively-minded people in London and the provinces. She is also known and admired by a wide reading public for her notable achievements as a poet, novelist and literary critic.

Teilhard de Chardin, a Jesuit priest of brilliant intellect, who, since his death in 1955, has won posthumous reputation as his scientific and philosophical writings became available to readers on the European continent, in this country and in America. There is at present a mounting tide of public interest in the man and his work.

Why is this? Many answers spring to mind immediately. Kathleen Nott suggests some of them in the early pages of her article. For example, Father Chardin's continental heritage, especially the influence upon him of French philosophy, science and culture. Then, again, many students have come to know of the man's dedication to science, and the delicate position in which this placed him in his relationships with his own Church authorities. It was known that he was forbidden to teach publicly, but he secured permission for his works to be published posthumously. These restrictions were to him a source of both regret and sorrow, for he stoutly resisted his superior's opinions about the heretical nature of his teachings.

Emergent evolutionist

What, in essence, were his major contributions to modern evolutionary philosophy? First, he was a consistent evolutionist and—like Sir Julian Huxley and Professor Waddington—might correctly be described as belonging to the school of emergent evolutionists. There is nothing startlingly new about this in itself. Most of these ideas are accepted today by the majority of scientific workers. Teilhard de Chardin, during his long years of research and study in China, thought out and expressed his seminal ideas in the pages of his brilliant and imaginative book on the *Phenomenon of Man*. This aspect of his work, important as it is in the context of modern science and philosophy, perhaps caused least concern to the Catholic Church; though, no doubt in this—as in the more speculative elements in his teachings—he went much further than the authorities would have wished in places.

Secondly, Kathleen Nott puts her finger neatly on a number of other difficulties. For example: "Teilhard was in love with matter, a natural imaginative attitude for a geologist, but one which may have generated some difficulties for his orthodoxy. Stephen Toulmin . . . has given reasons for supposing that the Church—which during Teilhard's lifetime consistently refused its *imprimatur*—had good grounds for regarding him as heretical. One of these could have been Teilhard's views on 'Christogenesis' in the world. Surely his understanding of the Incarnation was unorthodox—his account of the immanence and emergence of Christ in matter seems to be straightforward pantheism."

(To be concluded next week)

WOMAN'S LETHARGY AND GUILT

Sonja Biersted

IN THE LIGHT of cosmic knowledge woman's lethargy and guilt are responsible for mankind's miserable and unhappy lot. We know, for example, that the Golden Age of Greece was established on spiritual perversions coupled with scientific and technological know-how—an imbalance that caused disaster. Scientific and technological advancement without cosmic equality tipped the scales against mankind, and Greece was no more a "Golden Age".

America's "Great Society" will meet a similar fate. It is comparable with the Golden Age. Our spiritual barrenness is evidenced by our search for God in creeds and in "magic" plants.

Delphic utterances

The oracle of Delphi approached the gates of "heaven" by trickery—she was a thief. So is the Christian approach to "heaven" via the mass-eucharist and LSD thievery:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door of the sheepfold, BUT CLIMBETH UP SOME OTHER WAY, the same is a thief and a robber"—John 10, 1.

Truth is the *only* door leading to cosmic knowledge. All the masses-eucharists, paraphernalia and "magic" plants in the world can only deceive us and lead us to eventual total insanity.

In our own "glorious" Christian Age we are no nearer cosmic evolutionary progress than they were at the time of the Grecian tragedy. We are also misled by charlatanism solidified by liturgical hocus-pocus. The "priestess" at Delphi supposedly surrendered herself to her god, Apollo. She chewed "magic" plants in order to induce a trance-like state in which she allegedly foresaw the future—a common practice in our confused age too.

Her often incoherent utterances were of course interpreted by the attending "priests", and we may be sure that the latter put the interpretation of her words to their own selfish advantage. Climbing up via black magic to cosmic nearness negates itself. The *only* door to cosmic knowledge and power is TRUTH.

"Therefore thus said the Lord concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I sent them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land; by sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed"—Jer. 14, 15.

Woman a tool

At Delphi the female of the species was forbidden to partake of the "holy of holies", as she is in Christendom. She is merely the passive agent acted on in mute obedience. True, the "priestess" occupied the oracle, where she was again reduced to a mere tool of the depraved and decadent "priesthood". The Christian woman is the tool used to "pray", i.e. manipulate the cosmos to suit the evil desires of men. Christendom has indeed gravitated to the very depths of evil, where false mystics and prophets hold sway, but they shall surely go down in infamy. No wonder the tarnished Golden Age of Greece lasted only three decades.

The Spiritualist Movement declares with vigour, "If it is written by the All-Powerful it will come to pass"—which is quite true. The All-Powerful is truth, and what is spoken and written in truth will come into being. But the Spiritualist Movement is obviously not able to discern between true and false mystics and prophets within its own orbit.

Mysticism behind myth

Mankind's cosmic progress, since the fall of the Golden Age, has been retarded by the usual self-appointed men of God, Allah, Buddha, etc. True mysticism is the revelation of higher truths imparted to the sincere truth-seeking mind. Christianity's static dogmata prove beyond a doubt the regressive state of the "church"—nourished on cosmic perversions of the human spirit and temporarily sustained by black magic.

"That all religious doctrines and dogmas are myths and images means that none of them is literally true. To have perceived this is the contribution made to thought by the sceptics and the atheists, in fact by the scientific view of the world. But they have missed something. They have simply said that the dogmas are not true. In this they were right. What they failed to see was that the dogmas are not merely falsehoods, but they are myths, images, allegories which hint a way of life, a destination, and experience" (W. H. Stace in *Religion and the Modern Mind*).

Yes, when we discover the truths behind the myths, images and allegories we are no longer bound by anti-Christian dogmas as many atheists, sceptics and scientists unfortunately are.

REVIEW

One could say of Peter Watkin's *The War Game* that it was an interesting blend of D. W. Griffiths's moralising captions (though from a very different political standpoint) with the latest *cinéma vérité* techniques, that it contains some very stylish acting by Kent amateur dramatic societies, that every foot of film was specially shot on location. But the really important thing about this banned TV film, now showing to members of the National Film Theatre, is its subject-matter.

The situation is a Chinese invasion of South Vietnam, America's plans to use tactical nuclear weapons, Russian and East German mobilisation round West Berlin, American release of tactical nuclear weapons to NATO, Russian fear of attack and loss of her surface-based and therefore vulnerable ballistic missiles, so her launching of them against the West. Because of her high concentration of cities and Victor and Vulcan nuclear bomber airfields, Britain is a key target. Her Government is decentralised, 15 Regional Commissioners take over, all except able-bodied men over 18 are evacuated to the country. Then the strike of megaton bombs comes.

With graphic detail the film shows the progression of disasters: heat wave; shock wave a few seconds later; fire storm with 100 mph winds and 800° C in the middle; carbon dioxide and monoxide poisoning; acute radiation sickness with destroyed lining of intestines; burning bodies; rats; disease; psychosis; food riots; revolution; moral collapse; chronic radiation sickness with leukemia and loss of red blood cells scurvy and other avitaminoses. We are told that in 1965, when the film was made, there was the equivalent of 20 pounds of high explosive for every man, woman and child in the world, and that 12 new countries were expected to get thermonuclear weapons in the next 15 years. In 1959 the Home Office promised the speedy release of information on Civil Defence in atomic warfare, but—ironically endorsed by the BBC ban—education by officialdom has since been a monumental silence.

NO COMMENT

"A doctor flew 7,000 miles to have an afternoon's talk yesterday with two little girls who, according to their father, 'lived before'. . . The doctor, Hemendra Banerjee, 38, said: 'American and Russian scientists are interested in my work, which is the investigation of telepathy, because they believe telepathy may solve the problem of Space communication over millions of light years. Eventually my computer back in India will come up with something startling, I am sure'"—*Daily Mirror*, April 12.

"Not nearly enough doctors . . . are being trained . . . To translate its aspirations into practical schemes needs a new crusading zeal in India. Perhaps it is now being born"—*New Statesman*, April 15.

LETTERS

Who Should Enlighten Whom?

WHEN I TOLD some Jesuits in Manila that they could be enlightened by scientific atheists as to the nature of the universe, the Jesuits laughed long and loud until their eyes became wet with tears. They said scientific atheists should come to them for instruction in modern cosmology. Science, they said, is only empirical; it is finding facts by observation and experiment. On the other hand, they said, God is revealing truths direct to Popes and cardinals by supernatural means.

I had to tell them they were talking nonsense; that their Popes and cardinals had been shoving so-called "truths" into the mouth of an imaginary God.

They became angry and said they could not argue with a man who had been unfortunate enough to miss a religious education; and that I was probably possessed by a devil.

I told them there were no devils.

They insisted there were devils and probably I was one of them.

How can you deal with characters like that? When they are sick they call for a physician, instead of praying to God. If you remind them of this, they'll tell you they are praying while waiting for the physician; that they need man's knowledge as much as God's love. But if you tell them that the universe never had a beginning, they'll tell you that you are too dull to understand that everything, except God, must have a beginning. And why should we except God? We are asking this question, they say, because we are too ignorant about God. God, as a supernatural Spirit, is both immanent and transcendent in nature; God is both in nature and beyond nature; God is beyond cosmology.

They have to be told that nothing is beyond nature, for nature is as infinite as the universe; that a transcendent God is a figment of the imagination used by churchmen to earn bread, fried chicken and wine for themselves, and cash in millions for the Pope!

GONZALO QUIOGUE

Whose Atrocities?

HOW DARE C. H. Riley associate Nelson and Winston Churchill with atrocities and the type of butchery condoned and influenced by the Vatican! If the so-called warmonger Churchill had not inspired this country to exterminate the Nazi régime led by Hitler (Roman Catholic) and the Fascist Mussolini (Roman Catholic), the Free World would have fallen to these Vatican pawns, who must have been the worst butchers in history. But of course they knew that they could confess.

With regard to the atrocities committed by Britain, first let me state that at no time has she claimed divine right to butcher as do many Catholic leaders.

To say that England is without crime would be bigoted. But, in fairness, all English people are not freethinkers, and we should not have to answer C. H. Riley.

However, the English do not bear a grudge against the Romans for invading us, nor the Saxons, Normans or Danes.

C. H. Riley is obviously distressed that England attacked little Denmark. Of course we are so big ourselves!

It appears that we are hated so much by the Irish because we have exposed an inferiority complex in them. If all nations were

to hold this type of grievance there would be few peoples left untrampled.

Does C. H. Riley realise that it is now 1966 and we freethinkers would like a better world without suspicion and hate? It must be obvious that this cannot come about as long as we have religions. This was proved again recently at the Vatican by the two Irish parsons' attack on the Pope and Archbishop Ramsey.

How many more centuries are Christians prepared to watch human hate prevail in their name?

KELVIN J. HAWKINS

Christian Humility

ONE DAY whilst on the Greek island of Lemnos I got into conversation with a young student and we went to the local shipping office. He had previously told me that he was only partially interested in religion and we were still talking about this subject when we reached the office. While we were talking to the girl behind the counter a Greek priest came in and without any apology to us spoke to the girl and went out.

When I asked why the people permitted this type of rudeness my friend replied that no one questions his right as a priest of being attended to regardless of other people. When I said that in Britain we would not have permitted any priest to show such a lack of manners the young man replied that he would speak to the priest about this matter. The result of this was that he is more firmly convinced of the baseless claims of religion.

JAMES GAFFNEY

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