

FREETHINKER

Registered at the G.P.O. as a Newspaper

FOUNDED 1881 by G. W. FOOTE

Friday, May 27, 1966

BILLY

Sinners, beware. Satan, shiver. Courting couples, hie away from Hyde Park. The Rev Dr William Graham is HERE.

London last Tuesday, Oxford and Cambridge on Sunday, the opening crusade meeting at Earls Court next Wednesday, a month of soul-saving at the exhibition site, a grand closing rally at Wembley Stadium on July 2. A wonderfully glossy press folder gives biographies and 7 x 5 photos of Billy and eight lieutenants, detailed itineraries and a 3-page glossary of campaign terms (*Devil—A fallen personality who is against God, good, and Christians; sometimes called Satan—a deceiver and tempter; Evil One—Same as devil; Fornication—Unnatural sex behaviour; Perdition—State or place of everlasting misery and loss; Satan—Same as devil; World—The world system, usually as in the control of evil and wicked powers, together with their ungodly ways*). Mindful of the slow acceptance by English clergy of Transatlantic hotgossiping, the organisers are today softening up ministers at Westminster Central Hall. TV, radio and press; press, radio and TV.

In one of his press releases Billy says

The secret of my work is God. I would be nothing without him.

Be that as it may, he would be less than nothing without huge financial backing and a vast public relations machine. As crusade singer Ethel Waters (in Carson McCullers's *The Member of the Wedding*, "at the top of the theatrical profession", found Jesus in Madison Square Garden in 1957) put it, "God don't sponsor flops". At his first crusade (Grand Rapids, 1947): - 500 inquirers; at his 1955 London crusade: - 23,806; total attendances and inquirers since 1947: - 34,551,137 and 985,343 respectively; sales of *Peace With God*: - 1,400,000; radio listeners to **Hour of Decision**: - untold millions.

For the next month we may expect more denunciations of London's "immorality" (which London's best hotels provide a good view of); hysteria; neurosis-building; anxiety states; undermining of reason, self-help, science, personal responsibility and the United Nations.

INSIDE

- BROADCASTING AND PROPAGANDA *Otto Wolfgang*
- DR SIR RAGHUNATH PARANJPYE *C. Bradlaugh Bonner*
- ASIA, CHRISTIANITY AND THE WEST *Avro Manhattan*
- WAYSIDE LAWYER *F. H. Amphlett Micklewright*
- THIS WORLD : LECTURE NOTICES
- NO COMMENT : REVIEW : LETTERS

FREETHINKER MESSAGE

While Londoners are saved from sin FREETHINKER readers are saved from my editorship. The two events are quite unrelated. The only light I saw at Billy's press conference last Wednesday shone from his expensive cufflinks.

When I took on the job last January it was entirely, like Pope John's pontificate, as a "stop-gap". I trust that I too have passed on without stirring things up too much. To judge from the many letters kind friends have sent me, the changes made have, with one exception, met with general approval. That exception was verse, which has now been excluded.

Most welcomed the inclusion of current political comment though they did not necessarily agree with particular comments. Lest there be any doubt, the editor has been to blame for all unsigned material and makes no apology for blunt words on Rhodesia and Vietnam.

I should like to thank all who have helped me in my task, particularly contributors. I know of no other publication depending entirely on voluntary contributions which is able to maintain so consistently high a standard. It would be invidious to mention names, though some have appeared more frequently than others. The reason is simply that they have contributed good material more frequently. The aim has been to have as wide a representation as possible, and perhaps no other period has been so varied. New (though not unfamiliar) and perhaps surprising names have appeared. Excellent letters have been published too. They appear in small type to fit more in, not because they are deemed unimportant. Of contributions, the future seems assured. If only the financial future were as bright! Some kind readers have contributed to the sustentation fund; most have not. Some have taken out subscriptions for friends, persuaded them to do so, had the paper placed in local or college libraries; most have not. Please help us all you can. We are not without influence. It would be tragic if we had to fold.

In a world used to Kremlinology it is always tempting to see two editorial changes in six months as a struggle for power. The truth is not so colourful. It is simply what in industry is called the "mobility of labour".

With great pleasure and confidence I hand over to Kit Mouat. Former ballerina and artist, author, founder and organiser of Humanist Letter Network (International), she combines a broad culture with unsurpassed knowledge of the Freethought-Humanist movement. She will be the first women editor of the FREETHINKER and one of the first in this field in the world. All her many friends wish her well.
DAVID TRIBE

BROADCASTING AND PROPAGANDA

Otto Wolfgang

HOW IMPORTANT are elections nowadays when more or less everything is mass produced—from ready-made suits to broilers; from tinned food to music records; and our thinking makes no exception? Public opinion too is a commodity off the conveyor belt of press and radio. Consequently, as was said over a century ago, the “dominant ideas are the ideas of the dominant social class”.

Letters are addressed to John Brown Esquire, although he is no “shield-bearer” to a noble knight but a market porter, and his good lady has to be addressed as Mrs John Brown as if she were his chattel of pre-suffragette times. But what is far worse: the means of our “opinion” factories are in the hands of rich tycoons—such as press millionaires—and accordingly spread the gospel of the rich. As a consequence, no election however “free” gives the expression to the aspirations of the under-dog or the minority of independent thinkers. Democracy does not—and cannot—mean equality for all. From the very day of his birth the son of the wealthy starts life from a vantage point in society. Democracy only lays down the rules of the game that give the man-in-the-street the feeling of having a say whilst leaving the decisive direction of public affairs in the hands of Big Business and its managers. In order to prevent any fundamental change in the existing set-up of our society, the BBC has laid down that only political parties with at least 50 candidates in the field are entitled to viewing and broadcasting time. It is clear that these rules are crudely discriminatory against new ideas and minority opinions.

A few years ago, near a youth hostel in Norway, I fell in with a group of English girls. When I asked the leader why she too wore those ludicrously pointed shoes that were the fashion then, she replied: “You wouldn’t like us to feel frustrated through being different from other young girls?”

I replied: “I should have liked you to think for yourself and live up to your lights.”

Thought should lead to action

Humanists, among others, are able to think independently; but how many are courageous enough to *act* accordingly instead of tacitly conforming? Most sensible people will agree that it is ludicrous to choke our ordinary postal channels with trashy Christmas cards uttering magical wishes to people whom we probably wish well all the year round; yet who will break the habit? And parents go to incredible lengths of idiocy to persuade their children that the expensive presents they could hardly afford were brought from heaven by a red-robed pagan and shoved through the chimney! Let alone the traditional stocking—a symbol of Fortuna’s *cornucopia*.

At least in urban places religion has lost its hold, but most people consider it polite and “good form” to conform; how then can we expect the BBC governors not to play it safe, the more so as the churches are very rich and therefore belong to the hidden set of our real rulers? This alliance will last until we show more militancy and less mental inertia.

Seeing that Humanism has come to stay, the BBC has made some utterly weak gestures on the Third where Humanism is offered as a sort of philosophical creed or *Ersatz* religion. This may satisfy those who cannot dis-

pense with the emotional trappings of religion, who want atheism too wrapped up in sentimental ceremonies and pomp.

Different attitudes

Just as there’s a whole gamut of Socialists (from Scientific Socialists or Marxists to Christian Socialists or National Socialists), so we have all shades of Humanists (from Quakers to Atheists). Marx called religion the opium of the common people; Freud showed from the behaviour of the pious that they suffer from obsessional neurosis. Consequently, far from spreading this mental affliction we ought to protect people from it.

Broadcasting interests

Because of the close connection between religion and Big Business, it stands to reason that Independent Television, being an extension of the Press trusts, will do everything possible to spread the Holy Smoke. And there is not much we can do, as we do not pay for their programmes. But—and here’s the rub—we do pay for our BBC licences and therefore have a right to expect the programmes we pay for.

Owing to its Charter, the BBC is in fact more independent than Independent TV, the BBC is paid out of tax money but is not accountable to Parliament. This paradoxical situation must cease.

We are not satisfied with the sham when, once in years, a genuine Freethinker is interviewed by a Reverend (with all the odds against us) and when on Saturday mornings at a time when housewives go shopping and the rest of the family are “baptizing” their motor vehicles, Reverent Humanists are allowed to stress their tolerance and how glad they are when they may turn the other cheek. We request time for, say, history to be explained without the dead weight of biblical legend (i.e., the interpolation of mythological events like the 40 years’ wanderings in the desert and legendary personages like the Patriarchs), just as astronomy may be explained without recourse to the scriptural image of our world. We are not primarily interested in the philosophical niceties of belief *versus* non-belief, but in the relationship of convictions to life. For instance, soon after Christmas the BBC had in its news that in Belfast a newly-built church collapsed in a freak storm, and that in Mexico this happened even at the consecration service, killing scores of people including the officiating priest. Yet nobody dared deduce from these facts the uselessness of belief in a just deity.

A positive Humanism

I for one am not concerned with the silliness of religious ideas but with their retarding influence on social progress. Nor do I believe that Reason is the touchstone of Humanism (people’s opinions on what is sensible differ widely and it’s no good setting up Reason as another supreme God and arbiter). The difference between religionist and Humanist, put in the briefest possible sentence, appears to be one of relations. The Humanist seeks improvement in his relations with other human beings, the believer wants the best and most profitable relations with the imagined spectre that keeps haunting him. The ethics derived from these opposing attitudes frequently exclude each other too. Consequently, humanist programmes can have nothing to do with religious outpourings, least of all the “highly

advertised prestige programmes put on for the occasion of a Christian festival" (Pilkington, pp 91-2).

In November 1960, the National Council for Civil Liberties made a written representation to the Committee on Broadcasting, with clear-cut suggestions on how to supplant the wishy-washy BBC Charter—with BBC-nominated members on so-called advisory committees—by some democratic control of broadcasting. It recalled what the Beveridge Report had already stated (Recommendation 65):

The allocation of opportunities for ventilation of controversial views should not be guided either by simple calculation of the numbers who already hold such views or by fear of giving offence to particular groups of listeners.

BBC policy

What does the BBC do whenever a somewhat heretical view is mentioned? A cleric is immediately called upon to oppose it; it is never the other way round. At one time a few sham discussions were staged between upholders of the faith and some obscure personages who in the end had to admit defeat. When this bluff was called, on two occasions authentic Freethinkers were invited and pitted against priests—a performance which, as could be foreseen, ended inconclusively because the contestants spoke from different worlds in different tongues (for instance, the term "sin" does not exist in the practical world of human relations). Religion is irrational and cannot be decided by rational argumentation—and if Freud is correct, discussions with sufferers from obsessional affliction can serve no purpose at all. What I want is unfettered, uninhibited and uncensored programmes on purely Humanist lines at certain times, so that no religionist has a right to object to programmes expressly billed as non-religious.

This had been demanded by the Pilkington Report. On p 292 it said:

Claims have been made by non-religious bodies such as the Humanist Group, for a small but regular allocation of broadcasting time. . . . Organizations of people who believe that morality is independent of revealed religion should be treated similarly.

And although the Committee still accepted the claim—which can no longer be substantiated—that this is a Christian country, they nevertheless held it important that the non-religious bodies are allowed their fair share of time in controversial broadcasting outside the periods set aside for religious broadcasting.

Religion by the back door

So far, BBC pundits have rather done the opposite and caught listeners and viewers unawares by charging even documentaries with religious propaganda. On several occasions, I have taken them up on this fraud. The reply was non-committal or none at all. Would they not have the decency to play fair? Once I asked Harman Grisewood, Chief Assistant to the Director General. He rejected this request out of hand.

"Religious belief"—he wrote—"is an accepted motive in art and human affairs." So is murder and horror; but he who dislikes violence can at least stay away, if given a warning in advance. If however we get our dose of what we dislike wrapped up in innocent-looking documentaries or soft sells like *Ten to Eight*, we must protest at having the poison injected by the back door, so to speak. But to utter believers like the Grisewoods this seems to be the proper way of propagating. In conclusion, "Show more tolerance", he advised me!

The incredible arrogance to request toleration from those who so far have been denied even the most elementary tolerance can be explained only by their "I'm all right, Jack" mentality.

Post-Pilkington

Early in 1962 the Pilkington Report was published. One year later I had to write an article, "BBC Viewers Bamboozled to the Greater Glory of God". In it I reported an irresponsible rape of history, when a documentary on the temples of Abu Simbel—erected by Ramses II and then threatened with destruction—had been used as a foil for scriptural propaganda. Under the quite ludicrous pretence that Ramses II was the "Pharaoh of Exodus"—a theory now dismissed even by serious theologians—whole passages of the Old Testament story were declaimed.

First I wrote to **Points of View**, a programme that regularly invites viewers to send in their opinions. Nothing. Only when I stepped up my letters to the BBC did I get, two months later, a reply from the Secretariat. My opinions had now been brought to the knowledge of the editor responsible for the original programme. His "reply" had been that "nobody knows for certain when the Israelites left Egypt" and that he thought his "idea was as much likely to be correct as any other interpretation".

No apology

They admitted therefore that they did not know the facts but had misused their authority to give the stamp of historical fact to a pious legend. My request to correct the impression given was passed over in silence.

I had expected a violent protest from some of our Egyptologists; but obviously nobody else had taken the trouble to put his finger on a foul piece of deception. There was no rumpus in Parliament and no apology by the Director General, as was the case when Roman Catholics took offence at a birth control skit.

The BBC's biggest success was the programme **TW3**. It was buried to please the religious pressure groups who are quickly up in arms whenever not enough respect is shown to their Sacred Cows. What they lack in numbers they make up in the volume of their hue and cry, accompanied by open threats of stopping subscription or advertisement or of organized boycott. We are still waiting for legislation to make such blackmailing an indictable offence.

Ordained criticism only

If you want to make some criticism of traditional beliefs, you must at least be an Anglican bishop. God, the Bishop of Woolwich has said, is

- (a) intellectually superfluous
- (b) emotionally dispensable
- (c) morally intolerable

and therefore must die. This was of course a theatrical way of expression, since if God exists he cannot die, and if he does not there is nothing that can. What he meant was the IDEA of God in the traditional form must die and every modern man must, to a certain extent, be an atheist.

However, being a cleric he had to end on a note of mystic experience, recalling the teachings of Bonhoeffer and Martin Buber. This, of course, is not the conclusion we would draw, and therefore we must demand the right to put our ideas over as we want them expressed. There are thriving Humanist groups in the universities and they too must be mobilized to clamour for a hearing. The alternative is: Not mention religion at all.

Protest necessary

I am a firm believer in a Turkish proverb which runs like this: "It is always the child that cries who is taken to the breast".

So, by all means, let's cry out. We must learn from the religionists how to pester and make ourselves a dreaded nuisance if we expect to be heard. But if we go on being lethargic we must not complain about the unbroken religious monopoly on the air.

THIS WORLD

Who is Intolerant ?

RECALLING comment on the Government proposal to increase subsidies to church schools and the NSS deputation to the Minister of State, distinguished Secularist Brigid Brophy aptly observed (*New Statesman*, May 13):

It was the freethinkers who were called a pressure group, not the churchmen whose original representations prompted the government to change its policy. "Intolerant", too, was flung at the freethinkers, not at those religionists who, considering the ordinary state schools contaminating and unfit for children of their sect, lay their fellow citizens under levy to provide them with segregated ones.

THE *Times Educational Supplement* said there was an equal case for secularists to have religionless schools, but Miss Brophy pointed out that by this reasoning there was in fact justification for militant atheist schools. These were not demanded because of freethought hatred of indoctrination from any source.

The membership card of the National Secular Society declares belief in "equal freedom of speech and publication" and "liberty . . . of right to all". As a member, I am committed to struggle as ardently for the Christian's right to go to church as for my own not to. Nothing in his creeds pledges him to any zeal for my rights as an unbeliever or for the rights of pagan believers.

FINALLY the question of parental "demand" for religion in schools was laid bare.

If parents are too uncertain of God's existence to go to acts of worship themselves, what puts the state in a position of such certainty that it dare vouch for Him by Act of Parliament ?

Conservation

A NEW SOCIETY has been formed to consider the problems of the population explosion: urbanisation of the country, contamination of increasing areas with noise and industrial byproducts, danger to wild animals and pressure on natural resources of every kind. Founder and provisional secretary Dr D. M. C. MacEwan (28 Abercromby Place, Edinburgh 3, Scotland) is a research scientist at the University of Madrid. In an introductory pamphlet he sums up the society's aims:

We believe world population should be stabilized, possibly actually reduced. We think that wild land, wild animals and space are essential for mankind's well being. We think that a cautious approach to raw material utilization will benefit us, help to create a stable civilization, and improve our countryside and towns.

Royal Humane Society

AT THE MERCERS' HALL, London, the 192nd Annual General Court of the Royal Humane Society (Watergate House, York Buildings, Adelphi, London, WC2) was held last week. According to the degree of risk and selflessness of the rescuer, the society makes annual awards for gallantry in cases of drowning, accidents in ships or aircraft, cliffs or other heights, asphyxia in confined spaces and electrocution.

IN his chairman's address, Rear Admiral Piers K. Kekewich thanked all those, especially chief constables, who helped to validate applications. Vice Admiral Sir Peter Gretton, from a family winning awards since the eighteenth century, referred to works by Lord Moran and Field Marshall Slim as classics on courage. Slim said that "courage is not a virtue but the virtue", greater than faith, hope and charity. In every act of heroism, said Sir Peter, there was a practical and a moral side. A capacity to act came from learned skills such as swimming and resuscita-

tion techniques and from discipline, self-control, sacrifice and service (*a good summary of Secularism*). These qualities had to be developed young, and now National Service was gone the schools were entirely responsible for seeing that the instinctive reaction was the right one. He wasn't worried about modern youth. From his personal experience, compared with the past

The young sailor today is better educated, seems more intelligent, and when well led is just as reliable.

Who is on the Lord's Side ?

IN A DEBATE on the motion "That This House Deplores the Secularisation of the Sabbath" between two officers of the Lord's Day Observance Society and the President of the National Secular Society and Dr David Kerr, MP (who may sponsor Lord Willis's bill in the Commons) at Durham University, the main sabbatarian argument was that the public was on the Lord's side. Unfortunately in an audience consisting largely of divinity students the motion was lost by a 2:1 majority.

Young Humanists

ROBIN M. PAYNE, Secretary of the Humanist Youth Service Committee (46 Rimington Road, Cowplain, Hampshire), would welcome offers of hospitality for a party of Dutch Young Humanists visiting London for three nights in August.

IN JULY Executive Director of the American Humanist Association Tolbert H. McCarroll is bringing over a party of American Young Humanists. The National Secular Society hopes to mark the event with an Anglo-American public meeting.

Protest

CARD is stepping up its demonstrations against estate agents, accommodation agents and newsagents with notice boards who are assisting "Sorry, No Coloured" landlords. Forced to seek accommodation with already overcrowded compatriots, coloured immigrants are then accused of preferring *émigré* slum colonies. Such discrimination is technically illegal in America.

IN *Tribune* (May 13), Peggy Duff gave details of Vietnam International, born in New York in January. Besides educating the public it plans

- (1) Widespread silent vigils outside American Embassies and Consulates on American Independence Day, July 4.
- (2) A high-level delegation of European intellectuals to President Johnson.
- (3) Direct contact between similar groups in Europe and America.

THIRTEEN students were arrested outside Leeds Town Hall this month during a Vietnam demonstration to coincide with a visit by the Foreign Secretary and the Duchess of Kent. The following day they were charged in court with "blemishing the peace". What, one asks, are American bombs doing in Vietnamese villages? A girl demonstrator alleges police assault and a Vietnam Fund (University Union, Leeds) has been set up.

THE National Council for Civil Liberties issued a strongly worded statement on the fatuity of relying on universal fingerprinting in the conquest of crime and on the cynicism of suggesting we are all potential criminals.

On the Side of the Big Battalions

THE loosely-knit Congregational Union is to be welded into the Congregational Church. Congregations are not expected to increase.

FREETHINKER

103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, S.E.1
Telephone: HOP 0029

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

- Havering Humanist Society (51 Percy Road, Mawneys, Havering), Tuesday, May 31st, 8 p.m.: Dr. G. WEISMAN, "Authoritarian and Democratic Education".
Worthing Humanist Group (Morelands Hotel, The Pier), Sunday, May 29th, 5.30 p.m. Tea-Party and Annual General Meeting.
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.
Progressive League and Plan: enquiries to 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London, W8.
Humanist Letter Network (International): send s.a.e. to Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

THIS WORLD *continued*

The Unbeliever

IN its series *Against the Tide*, BBC Home recently did a programme on Charles Bradlaugh written and narrated by C. R. Hewitt. The series concerns

those who refused to conform to the beliefs and conventions of the society in which they lived and whose acts of rebellion had a dramatic and formative influence on their surroundings (*Radio Times*, May 5).

LATER in his introduction Hallam Tennyson gives this tribute to Bradlaugh:

Through all the controversy and vituperation Bradlaugh displayed a dignified integrity: and it was a minor scandal that, after his death, continuing prejudice should have denied him his place in the first edition of the Dictionary of National Biography.

Take It to the Lord

DURING the annual service for the Port of London Council of the Mission to Seamen at St Martin's-in-the-Fields last week, the Archbishop of Canterbury introduced a special prayer for the settlement of the strike. The following day special masses and prayers were said in Spanish towns near Gibraltar for the return of the Rock to Spain. Notwithstanding, intense and presumably redundant terrestrial negotiations continued over both questions. O ye of little faith.

NO COMMENT

"St Genesius of Arles, whose feast day falls on August 25, is invoked as the heavenly intercessor of stenographers and typists"—*Faith*, May.

"It all started 36 years ago when a hot-eyed, chain-talking evangelist had a call from God while praying on a log in the northern wilderness of British Columbia . . ." "Suddenly, one day in 1936 I was invited to the home of Mr William G. Jaffray, owner and publisher of the *Globe*, Canada's national newspaper, who with his deeply spiritual wife, lived in Oakville. I had been praying with him regarding the sale of the paper and God had answered . . ." Next morning Mr Jaffray gave \$20,000 toward the purchase of the church, and shortly after that the staff of the *Globe* received pay cuts. . . His son, Paul, carries on in a zealous way. At present he is fighting a bitter, loud battle to retain the death penalty"—*Globe Magazine*, March 26.

DR SIR RAGHUNATH PARANJPYE

C. Bradlaugh Bonner

THE WORLD UNION OF FREETHINKERS deeply regrets the death on May 6 of its Honorary Vice-President for Asia, Dr Sir Raghunath Paranjpye. He celebrated his 90th birthday on February 16 last. Somewhat earlier he had sent a message of greeting to the 1966 International Congress and to the National Secular Society on its Centenary.

He was outstanding as an educationist, a liberal and a rationalist. He had been a Senior Wrangler at Cambridge, Principal of Fergusson College, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Lucknow, Minister of Education, High Commissioner for India in Australia, and Chancellor of the University of Poona. From 1927-36 he served on the Council for the Secretary of State for India in London, and while here wrote *The Crux of the Indian Problem* and *Rationalism in Practice*. He was opposed to Gandhi's civil disobedience campaign and was president of the small though influential Indian National Liberal Federation.

International Freethought activities always had his interest and encouragement.

THE TALBOT HOTEL, KIRKGATE, BRADFORD

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY
SATURDAY, MAY 28TH, 7 P.M.

CONFERENCE DINNER

Speakers include

DAVID TRIBE, F. J. CORINA
and Dr CYRIL BIBBY

Tickets 7/6 (members) and 10/6 (non-members) from
Head Office, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1

ANNUAL CONFERENCE (members only)
SUNDAY, MAY 29TH at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

ASIA, CHRISTIANITY AND THE WEST

Avro Manhattan

CIVILIZATIONS, like nations, and nations, like individuals, cherish and feed on illusions. But illusions can be harmful. More, they can be dangerous. And if used as palliatives for a harsh reality, they can prove fatal. Reality is the genitor of concrete situations, and concrete situations need concrete solutions.

Today the dominating reality is that the world of tradition has collapsed. Ancient structures have fallen, seemingly impregnable fortresses have capitulated. New ones have risen and are rising with ever increasing rapidity.

Asia awakens

Within the compass of less than five decades, there has taken place the Bolshevik Revolution, two world wars, the rise and fall of Fascism, the subsidence of France and England, the gargantuan growth of the USSR and of the USA into two dominating global giants, and now the apocalyptic awakening of a dormant Asiatic continent from the stupor of centuries—an awakening whose swift-ness, although foreseeable, has stunned, bewildered and frightened the West.

The causes of political events, like meteorological ones, however, can be not only detected but also scrutinized and, indeed, classified. Numberless factors have provoked such tumults. That their main begetters are the ever multiplying applications of science—the promoter, if not the sire, of a global ideology sponsoring world revolution—is probable and possibly correct. That, besides these, the resentment against the claims of the West is a paramount factor in the sudden awakening of Asia is not only correct; it is a certainty.

Asia is on her feet. She is on the move. But no longer under tutelage. She is parting company with the West. Indeed, she is marching against the West. Hers is not simply a reaction against foreign political imperialism or exploiting economic encroachment. It is something deeper; it is the spiritual revolt of the Asian mind against the alien Western one. The longing for economic redress is a mighty lever. The longing for racial redress can prove even mightier. A spiritual rebellion animated by the two is well-nigh irresistible. And the Asian rebellion, besides being directed against Western wares, is also directed against Western ideas. For the articles of export of the West were not only such items as movies and printed fabrics, but also religion—ie, Christianity.

The rôle of Christianity

But if the value of goods is best judged by the demand for them, the universality of lofty principles is gauged not by abstractions but by the concrete deeds of their heralds. How do Christian doctrines and practice emerge when examined with the critical eyes of non-Christian races? The judgment is unflattering and, although biased, correct. Christianity never meant or practised what it preached! Particularly when dealing with non-Christian peoples, Christian missions were never Christian missions alone. They were invariably preceded, accompanied, or followed by Western warehouses, Western diplomacy and Western armies.

Whichever the sequence, the result was eternally the same: the partial or total loss of the regional, national and racial liberty of the Asiatics, wherever and whenever the Cross and the Western hat had made their appearance.

The voluntary or forced acceptance of both was proclaimed to be the victory of Christian civilization. And Christian civilization came to mean whatever tended to be dominant—in other words, whatever was Western. Success very often depending on the appearance of naval squadrons off the coasts.

Colonialism

And the inseparability of the trader and the missionary soon yielded ample dividends, namely, the transformation of practically the whole globe into a colony of the West. Backward and highly civilized peoples alike lost their independence. Their cultures were ridiculed; the colour of their skin became a mark of opprobrium; their past, present and even potential future achievements were scorned and despised. Their very claim to partake of human nature and thus to have an affinity with the white race was often resented. This while, at the same time, Western religion preached universal brotherhood, Western democracy the rights of all men, and Western idealists the equality of all races.

In most of the dwellers of Asiatic towns, and even of the four million Asiatic villages, a peculiar conviction grew: that Christianity was synonymous with the West, and the West with Christianity, and that their dissociation was an impossibility. This became a belief not only of the Chinese coolies and Indian peasants but also of the Western nations themselves. To them all, Christianity was the religion of the West. It was an intrinsic part of the West. It was the West. Which was true, as religion, whenever striking roots within a given civilization, soon partakes of the nature of the races forming it. Since its transplantation from Judea, Christianity in fact had become Western, and since it had become Western, it became the dominant world religion, not through the strength of its principles but through the physical dominance of the white race. In spite of (or, possibly, because of) this, Christianity is still spurned by most of Asia as being hopelessly identified with the rapacity of the Western world, of Western imperialism, and of Western white supremacy.

Christian militarism

The Asian rejection, however, was prompted by additional, not insignificant, reasons. Prominent among them was the fact that Christianity has always blessed wars, not only in the lands of the "heathens" but also in the wholly Christian West. Christian nations have stubbornly exulted in recurrent reciprocal massacre and the monstrous promiscuity of church bells pealing with the explosion of dynamite. The two greatest wars ever to ravage mankind were caused neither by Buddhist nor by Islamic peoples. They were ignited by Christian nations. Forty million dead in the first and fifty million in the second world war—indeed, the approaching wiping out of half of mankind with atomic terror—is reckoned a cheap price to save Christian civilization. This, admittedly, is over-simplification. But is not this how the masses see things? In Asia the result is a sudden revolt against both the West and Christianity, the inseparable twins of white supremacy.

Not pie in the sky . . .

To think, however, that Asia has rejected Christianity

simply because it is a by-product of the West would be erroneous. Science and industrialism are Western by-products; yet they are welcomed. Marxism is a by-product of Western thought, yet a few decades have sufficed to plant its seeds throughout a continent in which almost two thousand years of Christian efforts were spent with the most dismal result. In the light of this, Asia's contemporary rejection of Christianity but acceptance of a revolutionary ideology is of portentous significance. In this sense: that, whereas the former is spurned not only because of its Westernization but also, and indeed because of, its eschatological message, the latter is embraced because of its promises of concrete redressment, not in any problematical future existence, but in the present one, here and now.

Whether Communism, as the inspirer of a world revolution, is beneficial or harmful is anyone's opinion. Its phenomenal spreading, however, is a fact.

It has contributed to a swifter awakening of Asia, to a quicker emergence of Asian nationalism, to a fiercer Asian opposition to Christianity. Such a rejection of Christianity is not only of tremendous importance for Asia: it has a universal meaning. For it signifies that the abysmal poverty of the Asian masses is making them reject the religious conception that misery is an inescapable necessity and a manifestation of a divine will. A rejection of the basic eschatological message of religion, therefore, means one thing—the rejection of all religions. In its ampler meaning this is even more portentous. For it signifies that Asia is leaving behind her past. Not only the colonization of the West, but also the primordial characteristic of her civilization—the resigned acceptance of human suffering.

WAYSIDE LAWYER

THE PROMISES to be made by the non-Roman partner in a mixed marriage remain unchanged even though they may now be made verbally. Insofar as English law permits any contract to be oral save where statute decrees otherwise, it is not easy to understand the full purport of this concession, but the promises themselves do raise questions of how far they can be held to be finally binding upon the promiser.

Promises not contractual

It should be understood that they are in no sense legally enforceable. As there is no valuable consideration here, there can be no contract, and any actual contract between the parties is of privity and unaffected by promises made to a third party, viz the Roman Catholic Church at large. It must be rare under present-day conditions for such promises to be extracted by "duress"—which must imply some degree of physical force. But it must be no rare thing for them to be extracted by "undue influence", exerted at a time of highly emotional pressure. In this case, they are clearly void. The exercise of an undue influence is sufficient to render a contract voidable in English law, a fact which may be applied by analogy to social promises.

The further question may be asked as to whether such promises made freely are not therefore binding morally. Although they do not go so far as to fall under the legal

which religion did so much to nurse and to promote.

... but rebirth on the earth

The transformation of Asia, seen in this light, although unpalatable to Western pride, is a favourable portent for the future spiritual and political confederation of the globe. For the awakening of Asia is part of the birth of a new world. A world based no longer upon regional or racial cultures, superior or inferior races, but upon a universal civilization, scornful of traditional religions and intent, unlike the past, on the physical and cultural betterment not only of a minority but of the vast multitudes of mankind.

Will disrespect for tradition and religion truly sink man into some mechanical, collectivized Dark Age? A negative or a positive answer could prove equally right or wrong. In the uncertainty, one thing should be remembered—namely, that Christianity and religion, or religion and civilization, are not twin brothers. The genius of Greece and Rome shone forth before Christianity was even conceived.

Should Asia and the West, misunderstanding the tremendous significance of the changes now taking place within and outside themselves, befoul the hopes of the future with the hatreds of the past, then what is now happening will be but the final stages in the enactment of another global drama. For truly the fecundity of hate breeding hate is enough to dethrone reason in individuals and in continents. In which case a third world war is not only inevitable but will be the precursor of immeasurable new tragedies held in store for mankind in the bottomless abysses of the future.

F. H. Amphlett Micklewright

ban of those contracts in restraint of marriage which are regarded as "contrary to public policy", they are certainly tainted in this direction. The law looks askance in such matters and, as in the interpretation of wills, it always regards them as void for "uncertainty" if it is possible to do so. Again, it is always dangerous to make a final and binding promise over a long and indefinite period, for the contextual circumstances may change and make a promise, once made in good faith, unfair and burdensome.

One-sided benefits

Once again, it can scarcely be said that the promise is of a kind which promotes an "equitable bargain" simply because it is loaded with all of the benefits upon one side and is therefore not made at arm's length. It might well be suggested that morally the promise may have been made rashly and that room for repentance at having ever made it should be left to the future mind of the promiser. His future fulfilment or breach would then depend entirely upon the circumstances which may arise at an unforeseeable time.

The attitude here suggested may be displeasing to Roman Catholic ecclesiastics, but they should remember that, in English law, marriage is a status-contract and not a sacrament. One may proudly hold that "an Englishman's word is his bond" but that the bond is not binding unless it be wholly just and fair.

REVIEW

THIS is the last weekend to see the stylish Molière double-bill at the Mermaid Theatre. Max Loding has freely adapted and considerably shortened *The Miser* and *The Imaginary Invalid* "to try to remove the plays from the decorative Baroque cocoon which held them and which, to my mind, has been for years the chief barrier to the acceptance of Molière's work in this country". The result is a stimulating and hilarious evening, with ideas, gags and asides flung out at the audience and Bernard Miles as the Invalid paying them one or two visits.

If Molière the moralist hardly has time to get into his stride, Molière the satirist of gullibility and greed and of the rapacious and largely quack medical and legal professions of his day has full reign. The well-integrated ham and camp acting is uniformly impressive, with special period *panache* in Louida Vaughan as the Invalid's calculating second wife and Duncan Macrae as the Miser.

LETTERS

Atheism

DISCUSSION of atheism usually consists of whether it is true or false, and the relative merits of atheism, agnosticism, deism, pantheism, etc.; whether a God or gods exist, and what form He or they might take. Definition of terms usually centres around *theos* and *atheos*.

But atheism can be considered from an ethical viewpoint, and the word "God/god" and "godless" are more relevant here. The stigma attached to atheism by Christians and other theists is more understandable when one realises that both "god" and "good" have a common etymological origin in the Old English (Anglo-Saxon) term "god". "Godless" would then presumably mean bad, or at least not-good. Also, the belief of many Christians that if a person ceases to believe in God he will suffer a moral collapse and no longer know right from wrong, becomes explicable. If God and good are synonymous terms or if, psychologically, God is, to a person, a summarised super-ego, a collectivised focal-point for all that is good in society, then loss of this super-ego can be visualised as loss of moral standards. This would seem to be a religionist's point of view from a study of derivations and human psychology.

The atheist need not agree with such a view but may find it hard to dissuade religionists from holding it and persecuting him in consequence. He is also faced with the task of "putting something in its place" and being "positive" instead of just a "negative" atheist. Many atheists seems to deify atheism itself, attributing to it all the virtues of the deposed deity, and insisting that only atheists are truly good. But if God is merely one among many gods, then surely this is to over-emphasise the importance of atheism in the scheme of things?

However, the psychological advantages of a single word or expression acting as a summation of "the good" might bear investigation. "Nature" and "Reason" were the words chosen by the men of the 18th Century Enlightenment to denote their ideal, and although this involved them in the paradox of Voltaire's *Candide*, one could allege that this was due to a too simple expression of their faith rather than that they were basically wrong. For "Nature", or empirical truth, defines man as a social animal, and hence his ethics derive from a rationalisation of this fact. Problems of power, greed, lust, envy, etc are resolvable only *within* this concept and are ethically inferior to it. The "naturalistic fallacy" breaks down in that all ethics concern social conduct, and that since man is a social animal he *ought* to do so-and-so in his inter-personal relationships on the basis of this major premise. There is nothing to say that he *ought* to be social, for outside such a context the term "ought" is meaningless. He can, of course, enlarge his conception of what constitutes his "society" to include other beings; although even here Nature decrees a symbiotic "balance of nature" relationship on the grounds of prudence, and although ethics may not apply, human values, all naturalistically based, might.

If then a super-ego summation term is desirable, in lieu of

"God" one might choose "Nature", or "Reason", or "Human Rights (Values)", or "Mankind", in which case "bad" people would be those who were unnatural (anti-social), unreasonable, inhuman, or enemies of mankind.

D. L. HUMPHRIES (Melbourne, Australia)

THE QUESTION of agnosticism v atheism could be explored a bit further. We know that there was a sect called Gnostics in the second century AD, whose doctrine was that Jesus had never been born, was not human at all and was just a spiritual being sent by the supreme God for a brief ministry to teach salvation, a fictitious being as an ideal to live up to.

Those that tremble at calling themselves atheists I think of as religious hermaphrodites—neither one thing nor the other.

S. WILLIS (Mackay, Australia)

Personality

JOHN SUTHERLAND hasn't really met my point or answered my question.

He says it is "the personalising of God" that he objects to. And in the very next sentence he says that Jesus Christ arranged for him to have a drive in the country each day for three months—and this happened in 1960.

Apparently he doesn't object to the personalising of God so much after all!

I. S. LOW

FIND

There's hope and heart in it, men have their part in it,
Science and art deeply sound it;
So faith might be fed had God merely said:
"I didn't create it—I found it".

A. E. CARPENTER

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

CENTENARY LECTURES THE MEANING AND VALUE OF FREETHOUGHT

Chairman: DAVID TRIBE

Friday, June 10th

FREETHOUGHT AND SCIENCE
Dr. E. H. HUTTEN Dr. DAVID STEWART
Dr LAWRENCE KOTKAS

Friday, June 24th

FREETHOUGHT AND LAW REFORM
DIANE MUNDAY ANTONY GREY

Friday, July 8th

FREETHOUGHT AND LIBERTY
TOM SARGENT AVRIL FOX JAMES SHEPHERD
MARTIN ENNALS

Friday, July 22nd

FREETHOUGHT AND SOCIAL WORK
PETER FRYER KERSTINE RICHARDS

Friday, August 5th

FREETHOUGHT AND THE ARTS
OSWELL BLAKESTON PETER COTES JOAN MILLER
JOHN CALDER KATHLEEN EWART

Meetings commence at 7.30 p.m.

CONWAY HALL, RED LION SQUARE, LONDON, WCI

ADVERTISEMENT

VATICAN IMPERIALISM IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY by Avro Manhattan (412 pp) (42s—40 per cent to FREETHINKER—plus 1/7 postage). At present obtainable in Great Britain only through Freethinker Bookshop (103 Borough High Street, London, SE1). American readers can obtain in America. A book you *must* read.

Details of membership of the National Secular Society and inquiries regarding bequests and secular funeral services may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1. Telephone: HOP 2717.