

FREE THINKER

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June 24, 1966

CHRISTIAN UNITY AND HUMANIST DIVERSITY

A CARTOONIST MIGHT DEPICT the struggle for Christian unity by drawing the Pope at sea sitting on a life-raft, with the Archbishop of Canterbury (still in the water) hanging on to the side-ropes, and Lord Soper clutching Dr Ramsay round the waist. The heads of non-conformists, liberal or fundamentalist, might be shown bobbing in the water while the paddle boat, *SS Gospel Theology* would be steaming away into the distance. If indeed the Christians all managed to climb aboard the "unity" raft (and ultimately the Pope will decide), instead of sinking with all hands on board, it might well take on the aspect of a nuclear submarine. The probability of such an event happening metaphorically (as in reality) is small. The danger to Secularism, to Reason, and therefore to progress, lies, of course, not in some new demonstration of love or solidarity among Christians, but in the amount of money they can raise and the number of laws they can rely on to back their propaganda.

When Humanists smile at the efforts of those who talk so much about "loving their enemies" (never mind their "neighbours") to be able to pray, cross themselves, sing hymns, eat their God, and generally carry out their rituals in each others company, Christians are liable to turn round and say something about the equal lack of unity among Humanists. There is, of course, no comparison. Humanists do not claim to be in the possession of an Absolute Truth of which "Two-and-Seventy jarring sects" must make nonsense. We don't worship One God, nor turn to One Book of Scriptures. We don't even claim to "love one another", although we may try as hard as anyone. Nor do we all follow the same Master. In spite of all this, we can get together and disagree in each other's buildings. We have no problems about "mixed" marriages between one sort of a Humanist and another. We even marry Christians without insisting that our children be dedicated to Humanism...

Humanist diversity is not only inevitable, it is a sign that we are thinking. We do not all share the same temperament, upbringing, experience; we cannot, then, expect

to share the same reactions to religion or even to Humanism. But if we don't have to struggle for the sort of unity Christians might logically be expected to achieve, we still need to co-operate more with each other if we are to present an effective opposition to all the religious and superstitious influences in our society. We shall continue to join which of the Humanist organisations we think has the best policy, but we need to be sure that the organisations **can act officially and swiftly together** when the need arises. And we may feel strongly that outsiders, coming upon Secular Humanist ideas for the first time, are not able to find enough information about the *choice* of organisations that is available. We surely cannot afford any competitive struggle for membership that involves withholding information about that choice.

Considerable efforts have been made by some people to bring about a more efficient co-operation between the Humanist organisations. There has been disagreement, for instance, about what should be done about RI in schools, when the Humanist Teachers adopted the policy of the President of the NSS, rather than the compromise BHA suggestions. But on so many matters we speak with the same voice; or, rather, it *ought* to be the same voice, and not just a number of separate whispers. How can we encourage a more lively liaison? How can we increase the fund of mutual goodwill that does exist? What are the obstacles?

There are several. As we have seen with the Vatican dialogues and Professor Ayer's article in *Encounter*, there is a tendency for a few Humanists to speak for the movement as a whole when in fact they only represent a part of it. This inevitably angers those who don't know what is going on, and might not agree if they did. The answer to this problem is surely simple enough. There is a tendency for some people to consider the BHA (in spite of its extreme youth) as a "Father Figure". This is unrealistic and irritating to those whose organisation may have a long and proud history. Some Humanists perhaps tend to patronise, although godness knows their pedestals are strictly do-it-yourself. If some Humanists are embarrassed by militancy, frightened that someone will produce a banner and start waving it, others are equally embarrassed by smiling inaction, well-educated inertia and lost opportunities. Humanist toleration seems sometimes to be more active towards the dithering Christian than towards the committed secularist, and although charity need not begin at home, it should arrive there sometime.

Within the Movement individuals must be free to move about, from one organisation to another without petty comment. Mutual aid and self-defence under real or imagined injustice may be better than "turning the other

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cheek". Cheek-turners often look down on a developing shoulder-chip. Of course there must be rules of membership, and the clearer the policies the better, but any Humanist group that sets up its own Humanist orthodoxy and starts ejecting heretics, must be challenged. Alongside serious and thoughtful criticism (as presented this week by Phyllis Graham) we can be ready to cheer each other's successes from which we all benefit.

The FREETHINKER, then, bows in acknowledgment

to all the Humanist organisations, old and new, to their achievements, to the years of individual effort, patience and sustained activity. Now, while the BHA is taking new shape, this paper makes a strong plea for a genuinely Secular Humanism with a policy for all to see. With more co-operation within our diversity we shall be able to present a much more effective Humanist attack against our mutual enemies of Unreason, Superstition and Ignorance, while the paddle-boat sinks and even the raft become Holy-waterlogged.

EDITOR

OPEN FORUM: THINKING ABOUT THE FREETHINKER

Suggestions:

"I AM WONDERING if you could print each week, for say 12 weeks, a column (500 words) entitled "A Free-thought Approach to . . ." (Patriotism, Money, Love, Suffering, War, Marriage, Work, Education, Politics, Racialism, Censorship and Tolerance). Some readers might be prepared to write on one of these subjects, and such comment might help to widen the appeal of the paper, which in the past has tended to be directed to those people already convinced. The emphasis is on simplicity, so that the non-intellectuals can hold their own in discussions with non-Humanists." (John Shaw, Birmingham.)

"I WOULD LIKE to see articles on Feminism in which women are not treated as a race apart, but as human beings; a denunciation of the Christian Scientists; something about the activities of the Jehovah's Witnesses and the RC Church in socialist countries . . ." (John Sutherland, Surrey.)

"I FEEL that more attention might be given to Schools Broadcasts, as these so often contain a quite unwarranted Christian slant on history, literature and even science at times. These could usefully be monitored and a monthly report published in the FREETHINKER. There might also be an increasing emphasis on the political and financial side of Christianity . . ." (Elizabeth Collins, Brighton.)

"I AM CONCERNED ONLY with the gigantic fraud perpetrated by the churches, together with the stupidity and/or hypocrisy of their adherents. You could fill your paper for years by demolishing the bible chapter by chapter, and if this did not provide sufficient humour (so lacking in your paper) a defence, preferably by a Jehovah's Witness could be printed in parallel." (R. Flemming, Kent.)

"I AM PARTICULARLY IN FAVOUR of making the paper more "social" in recording (as it once did) the doings of people and sections of the movement. Even Free-thinkers like to read about themselves, or the activities of others of like mind, and this gives a greater sense of community among people who, especially in the smaller towns and in the country, can feel very isolated. The repeated grinding of the purely "philosophical" machine becomes dreary at times to the distant and cut-off member of the movement. I heartily endorse the proposed policy outlined, and will do all I can to help." (Francis J. Corina, Bradford.)

Favourite items

"The Editorial (before KM's editorship), "Window on the World" (Otto Wolfgang), Readers' Letters . . ." (John Sutherland.)

"Articles by the main body of writers in whom we are most fortunate, especially Amphlett Micklewright, Otto Wolfgang, David Tribe, Margaret Knight and Kit Mouat . . ." (Elizabeth Collins.)

The price

Mr Sutherland would pay 2/6 but Mrs Collins writes, "I doubt if a price increase at this stage would be advisable as it might adversely affect sales at week-end open-air and Branch meetings".

How to widen our circulation ?

To summarise: order from the newsagents rather than from head office; take two copies and distribute the spare one; every reader who has a letter published should order 20 copies and give or sell them to his acquaintances; large scale advertising; leave a copy in the train or 'bus . . .

Readers' Letters

"I feel strongly that opponents' views should be strictly rationed in our limited space. After all they have practically all the rest of the country's Press at their disposal as well as radio and TV while we are rarely afforded reciprocal facilities." (Elizabeth Collins.)

(The Editor is grateful for all these suggestions and looks forward to receiving more before making any comment.)

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

CENTENARY LECTURES THE MEANING AND VALUE OF FREETHOUGHT

Chairman: DAVID TRIBE

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, WC1

BY MENDACITY OUT OF GREDULITY: A TISSUE OF LIES

E. Hughes-Jones

BERTRAND RUSSELL in his writings extols the qualities of Veracity and Kindness, qualities which, reinforced by intellectual ability and integrity, would be likely to lead to Humanism. It may be claimed that in Britain since the Second World War social kindness has increased. I would say that the contrary is true of Mendacity, which I define to cover not only outright lies but deception of any kind: suppressions, half-truths, deliberate misleadings, evasions, distorted and cooked percentages ("lies, damn lies and statistics") the planting of rumours to facilitate financial jiggery-pokery, fake press leaks, fake packaging, slanted newspapers with prejudiced reports, grossly exaggerated advertisements, tax dodging, etc. J. B. Priestley has described an advertising agency as "a small army of extremely clever and quite unscrupulous persons trained to lie with enthusiasm". A prominent politician in this country some sixty years ago said that a political party "had lied with vigour and persistency and unanimity which have almost elevated mendacity to the rank of a virtue". Abraham Lincoln pointed out that though governments could not fool all the people all the time they might fool all the people some of the time and some of the people all the time. It seems to me that many governments do! History provides so much evidence of this that the term "a Politician" is now often used as one of disrepute. Similarly in the relations of State with State truth is, to say the least, often trimmed. At worst it is a sorry story of perfidy, secret "diplomacy", secret alliances, half-promises, hidden escape clauses, spying, etc.

In manufacturing, commercial and financial affairs, veracity is so frequently ignored, evaded, or subordinated that many people seem to bear the chicanery apthetically as "rackets" inherent in our industrial society. But intelligent and robust-minded workmen are alive to these rackets and recognise that the realistic practice is the "out-smarting" of people. These workmen are determined to maintain improved standards of living, and reply to frequent exhortations for wage restraint by damning the devil-take-the-hindmost way of life, by referring to frequent high profits and to currency speculators who hamstring and generally bedevil our national economic affairs. These workmen say, in effect: the operative law is that of the jungle; you have prescribed, "do unto others before they do it unto you". The morality which motivates your jungle is one of cunning, and, in carrying it into the community, it seems that your only forgivable failure is to be found out; the jungle morality must be changed for a community-partnership or we also will fight like tigers.

Time running out

I am convinced that, if we are to escape from lurching along from crisis to crisis in our present national and international economic bedlam, mankind needs a drastic change of economic practice; short of this change, economic disruption in our own country is a great risk, and, if the international bedlam continues, nuclear war before the end of this century seems very probable as the nuclear powers increase in number and capacity. The Sphinx of Fate, "the strangling one", has put this riddle of disorder to mankind. Not to answer it or to answer it incorrectly is to be destroyed. We have a dwindling chance to answer by drastic adaptations of political and economic affairs, but the sand is fast running out of the hour glass. Either we adapt soon and correctly, or we probably perish. Now my plea is that Humanists collectively and

severally should be in the forefront influencing mankind towards a right and rapid answer. This means politics. A Humanist body free from the shackles of Charity Status should campaign vigorously towards the practical application of Rationalism in important community affairs; Dynamic Humanism for me, is the real impact and issue of rationality in *any* aspect of community affairs (and not merely in the non-party, so-called non-political ones of charity status). The BHA seeks charity status again, so what body other than NSS can do this vital work? I would say to those who shun positive collective Humanist action on major political subjects that the foundation of Rationalism is the desire and search for truth *to apply it*. In an increasingly secular-minded community I suspect we avowed Humanists are few because of our relative collective silence and impotence concerning political affairs. How can we stand aside from national problems and those of the whole human family, indolently and silently to accept, condone or endure the irrationality, mendacity or cruelty of some practices and institutions? Humanism is not a mere theory, it is, or should be, a way of life. Either we live it, apply it, individually *and collectively as far as we can vigorously contrive*, or it is perfunctory and meagre. Although not identified with any one particular political party, we ought to have important collective political views and proclaim them boldly; I believe that we would gain, grow, recruit far more members than we would lose.

Substitute the study of Reason for indoctrination

To pursue political aims collectively does not of course imply any diminution of the individual humanist's responsibility as a citizen for carrying his own banner wherever he can; nor does it in the least mean any easing off in our collective efforts against myth and superstition, and on this point I suggest we need to try harder to stop the rubbish being instilled in childhood and youth. Nature provides for the elimination of bodily waste, and there are purges and other aids available, but men seem to resist evacuating the mental bosh they have accumulated over years, and nobody has yet devised satisfying methods to overcome this mental costiveness; therefore let us collectively and severally concentrate harder on stopping the rubbish at its source especially in the schools. General curricula still make little *direct* provision for developing the analytical, participating mind; they are usually designed for the passive assimilation of instruction. I gladly acknowledge that many teachers, often handicapped and harassed with conditions and equipment, do their best in the course of ordinary lessons to instil the beginnings of a spirit of enquiry and the scientific temper, which of course should be promoted whenever practicable. But I think we should be pressing now for the curricula of all senior schools to include specific provision for the study of Reason and training in thought analysing statements, checking, testing, exposing fallacies, and studying the present needs of our shrunken, swift and tangled world. Education should mean so much more than the assimilation of knowledge to satisfy examiners. It should resist a meaningless acquiescence in existent things. An erudite classical scholar can nevertheless be an abysmally ignorant man, while brilliant technology without the direction of challenging Reason can run amok. Only by reason can wisdom be achieved, and the social needs of *all* mankind recognised. We should be insisting on specific studies of the subject so as to promote *early* advances towards more mature minds and an altogether better standard of values.

NEWS AND NOTES

THE HOME SECRETARY, Mr Roy Jenkins, has announced that it may be necessary to change the Race Relations Act to deal with racist literature.

"At the same time," he said, "we should not make the mistake of thinking we can do everything by compulsion. . . . The only way we shall overcome prejudice against Commonwealth immigrants and foster mutual understanding and tolerance is by bringing together the local authorities, the voluntary organisations and the immigrant leaders in areas where immigrants have settled, so that they can tackle the various problems together. . . ."

Only 2 per cent of our population is coloured and Mr Jenkins pointed out that since the Norman Conquest we have been constantly jolted out of our natural island lethargy by a series of immigrations. The latest arrivals are making a major contribution to our national welfare and prosperity. Well said, Mr Jenkins.

Another case of Too little doubt

CHRISTIANS (reports the *Church Times*) will have little doubt that the chief factor responsible for juvenile delinquency of all sorts is the casual attitude adopted by many parents, who do very little to bring up children to lead a godly and Christian life. Anne Scott-James (*Daily Mail*, 9/6/66) writes, "Most of us would admit, after the first shocked denials, that we are dishonest in something. . . ." and she asked, "Have you a licence for your garden hose? Have you ever swindled a parking meter, got off a bus without paying. . .?" and so on. She could have added, perhaps, "Have you ever said, 'I believe' when you don't, promised 'until death us do part' when you meant 'until marriage becomes intolerable' or prayed, 'there is no health in us. . .' and meant it?"

Good for the BBC

IN SPITE OF Mary Whitehouse, "Up the Junction" is to be shown again on TV. Some MPs are expected to attack, led by James Dance, member for Bromsgrove Worcs.

Boring for us

NOW that the Lord Chamberlain has lifted the ban on actors portraying the Christian "Christ", a spate of such plays is expected. Arnold Wesker is reported as saying that "The subject calls for great imagination or great scholarship. . . ." No comment.

"The Day of Decision"

FROM JULY 1 English language religious programmes are to be dropped from Radio Luxembourg. Dan O'Neill reports in the *Guardian* that "it is impossible to say how many people will feel deprived. . . ." The Lutherans are pinning their hopes on Radio 390 which has a potential audience of 26,000,000 listeners.

New Christian realism

IN New Christian, June 2, Ray Billington writes, "The Anglican Church, by the consequence of being the Established Church, maintains the façade of significance on State and other national occasions; but without these special occasions, and by having to do with those buildings and priests that congregations could afford, the Church of England would begin to look decidedly threadbare" (Prof. Ayer, please note). Mr Billington goes on, "It is among the young people of today that the most massive indifference to the church is to be seen. . . ." And he quotes from a letter from a teen-age girl, "Atheism is not confined to a small circle of highly intelligent doubters. It is for this reason that all teaching that pre-supposes a belief in God is valueless. It is no good preaching that Christ is the Son of God if people are going to say, 'What God?' . . ."

Or, she might have added, "Which christ?" Mr Billington has really no solution to offer, except to scrap the church as everyone knows it and to go in for a *non-church*, which, I suppose, will be just what secular-Christians with faith in the non-God of religionless-Christianity are looking for. . . .

Warnings and investigation

THREE doctors from the University of St Andrews' Dundee, have reported in the *Lancet* the danger to pregnant women of vaccination against smallpox, which can kill the unborn child. Sir Dugald Baird, an Aberdeen gynaecologist, has publicly called for contraceptives to be made available free to everyone on the NHS. "If the present family size of 2.3 rose to three", he said, "the situation would be catastrophic".

Dr James Brodie, lecturer in public health at Aberdeen, has warned that pregnancy tests—even the latest—are not always accurate.

Which? has produced a new revised edition (for subscribers only) about contraceptives.

In Philadelphia an unmarried mother (described as having the mental age of 12) murdered her four-day-old son. She had 3 other children, all in foster homes, and could not face up to the problems of the fourth.

Completion of the Vatican's Birth Control Commission's work does not mean that the Pope will give an immediate decision on the issue. 500 notable Catholics in 18 countries have signed a document urging the Pope and the RC Bishops radically to change their teaching. The *Guardian* reports that "if the Pope and his commission ignore it they will indeed run the risk of a split in their Church".

A pity

THE Church Times is advertising *An Inquiry into Humanism* under the heading "Religious Books".

Ape art

CINDY-LOU, the chimpanzee, paints, and her paintings will be auctioned in aid of the World Wildlife Fund. Her keeper, Miss Wood, has called one of the pictures "Head of a Dolphin" and another "Pig in a Thicket". She admits that it needs some human imagination to read this into them. Let's hope that we continue to be spared crucifixions and bleeding hearts.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

LUNCHEON - WREATH-LAYING CEREMONY AT
THE BRADLAUGH STATUE - PUBLIC MEETING

CENTENARY RALLY

NORTHAMPTON

SUNDAY, JULY 17th

Speakers include:

C. BRADLAUGH BONNER DAVID COLLIS
REGINALD PAGET, QC, MP DAVID TRIBE
Dr DAVID KERR, MP HECTOR HAWTON

Transport from—

BIRMINGHAM (Mr W. Miller, 62 Warwards Lane,
Birmingham 29. Telephone: Selly Oak 1121)
LONDON (Mr W. McIlroy, 103 Borough High Street,
London, SE1. Telephone: HOP 2717)
LEICESTER (Mrs Evans, 18 The Brianway, Leicester)

DON'T LET'S BE BEASTLY TO THE CATHOLICS

Colin McCall

I HAVE HESITATED A LONG TIME before writing this review. I have a great deal of admiration for H. J. Blackham, the author of *Religion in a Modern Society* (Constable, 21s), and for the work he has done for Humanism; moreover, I am a firm believer in co-operation between the various sections of the movement. I believe, however, that if Mr Blackham persists in his present line, he will undo much of his good work and make co-operation impossible. With far less—if anything—to gain, he has responded to the Catholic call for “dialogue” as readily as the Communists. I heard with amazement of the first meeting in Utrecht between “progressive” Roman Catholics and members of the International Humanist and Ethical Union. What did Mr Blackham and his colleagues expect to learn about the “faith” that they didn’t know already? Did they hope to influence Church policy? The whole affair seemed pointless. Friendly though the discussions might be, they could scarcely get very far: there is, after all, an intellectual gulf between those who believe in an incarnate god—and eat him!—and scientific humanists.

Of course we have to live with Christians—of the Roman Catholic and other varieties—as we have to live with the devotees of other faiths; and in so far as Mr Blackham’s book has a point it would seem to be just this—hardly novel—one. The blurb leads us to expect much more exciting things, but I never found them. Christians of the “Honest to God” variety may succeed where I failed. Indeed, they will probably welcome the book with open arms for, although it contains a criticism of Dr Robinson, it is in the same category as his best-seller.

When the Bishop discusses the extent to which the God of tradition has become “intellectually superfluous, emotionally dispensable, and morally intolerable”, but then goes on to say “all the same . . .”, it is, as Mr Blackham says, unlikely that many will “continue to listen”. Yet Mr Blackham expects us—or perhaps Christians—still to listen to him when he tells us that to remove religion from the “foundations” to the “superstructure” of modern society is “by no means a disparagement” and “does not diminish its importance”. Or when he urges us not to misunderstand the retreat of Christianity in the face of science. Modern culture has, he says, “provided an entirely new context for the Gospel. If the Gospel were in conflict with modern culture it could hardly survive. It cannot be in conflict with science as a method of inquiry . . .”

The retreat of Christianity has been a “withdrawal from territory to which it no longer had any justifiable claim”. But has Christianity a “justifiable claim” to any intellectual territory at all? Mr Blackham seems to think it has. (I say “seems” because it is not always clear what he actually thinks.) At any rate, he talks of its “unique identity” which “survived powerful influences and irresistible pressures from ancient Egypt to modern science”. It is quite an achievement, I concede, to survive *irresistible* pressures. However, in so far as the claim has validity it might equally be applied to, say, Judaism or astrology; and with as little significance. Christianity has unique features, but so has every other identifiable religion. No wonder Mr Blackham is welcomed by the Catholics! There is, he writes, “nothing comparable in any religion nor philosophy and his Christ.

sophy” to the personal relationship between the Christian

The question, as Mr Blackham sees it in his existentialist way, is not whether “the Catholic view of contraceptives, of abortion, of the extinction of monsters at birth, and so on, is simply superstitious and silly; the question is how people who hold such views can live in the same society with others who do not, without violating their conscience or imposing their own beliefs”. The question shirked is, whether a modern civilised society should allow monsters to survive birth, unwanted children to be born, the population explosion to go unchecked.

The Danger in Dialogues

The Roman Church “may see reason to review its rôle in relation to the schools”, says Mr Blackham. At present, however, its “review” consists of a demand for increased financial support from the state. There is a danger, I suggest, that Mr Blackham, after his dialogues with “advanced” Christians, both Catholic and Protestant, tends to treat them as representative. How seriously his judgment has been clouded may be seen from his statement that, “it has reasonably been said that Christianity made a major contribution to the development of both science and democracy, and is therefore at home with modern culture”.

Let humanists, then, forget their Whites and Drapers, and go hand-in-hand with Christians into the “open society” in full consciousness of “our acknowledged interdependence”. But wait! Perhaps even Mr Blackham doesn’t believe it to be quite so easy as that. “The possible eventual consensus may or may not be religious in character.” And in any case, “The time of consensus is not yet”. Except in Utrecht.

REVIEW

David Tribe

THIS IS THE LAST CHANCE to visit the old Unity. When the present production, *Inherit the Wind*, is finished, a £40,000 rebuilding scheme will begin. The old building will not be recognisable, but the old traditions of folk art and artistic excellence will linger on.

It is appropriate that the final show under the old roof should be a “propaganda” play. We have had the theatre of the absurd and the theatre of cruelty and the kitchen sink and the theatre of stage gimmicks and—yes—they’ve all given us something. But have they really given us as much as the theatre of ideas? Now that Shaw is coming back into fashion we may look forward to a revival of this *genre*, and no better drama than the present could usher it in.

To Freethinkers the plot is particularly apposite: the trial in Dayton, Tennessee, in 1925 of John Scopes, a young biology teacher who dared to teach evolution to his class in defiance of a state law against it. Whereupon began a trial that was to achieve national and world prominence as a battle between two of the leading advocates in the country and behind them the forces of advance against the vested interests of reaction. The Bible Belt, where the people cared “less if a man murdered his wife than if he murdered an old wives’ tale”, saw a confrontation between distinguished sceptic Clarence Darrow and equally distinguished William Jennings Bryan, three times Democratic Presidential candidate and leading Fundamentalist lay preacher who put “the Rock of Ages before the age of rocks”. Overwrought at what turned out to be defeat in victory he collapsed at the end of the trial and shortly afterwards died.

Almost every word in this eloquent plea by Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee for the right to think will stir the head and move the heart. The present production is effectively staged and directed and its great moments, the prayer of the local pastor, the trial examination of “witness” Brady (Bryan) by Drummond (Darrow) and the collapse of Brady, came off magnificently. An event no Freethinker should miss.

REVALUATION OF RELIGION

Phyllis K. Graham

Miss Graham writes with the authority of first-hand experience in the Church of Rome, and 20 years as a nun.

AT LAST THE VEIL of mystery is withdrawn. Those Humanist-Vatican "dialogues" have five columns in the June *Humanist!* It provides a photograph, too, of Harold Blackham, who not only led our deputation into the lions' den but actually promoted the hair-raising adventure (or at least gave it impetus) by his initial letter of enquiry to Cardinal Koenig, head of the recently set-up Secretariat for Unbelievers. A quick response which must have been gratifying to a Pope brimful of Peace and Love even for atheists.

The Chairman of the BHA has not, however, accorded such VIP treatment to his Unbelievers. We've had to wait till now, with the Vatican flirtation a *fait accompli*, for any sort of response to our surely not unreasonable questions and protests. Free at length from more intriguing business with Religion, he gives ear to these rumblings of resentment from the Irreligious and admits that "a full and frank explanation of what lies behind and what has been the outcome of these conversations is due to members of Humanist organisations". Yet not without a mild reproving slap. Having listed—according to his lights—the belligerent emotions aroused in some of us by the attitude of those whom he delightfully christens "soft-centred Humanists who are religious at heart", he warns: "Such feelings are the more powerful, because they do not flow only from rational considerations".

Well, hallelujah! If powerful feelings are still discernible in the hard core of the Humanist Movement, let us all be thankful! But Mr Blackham's inventory of our hostile motivations could have included at least two wholly grounded in "rational considerations": (1) Objection to high-handed action by Humanist "representatives" without any reference to those they are supposed to represent, which seems to some of us a violation of democratic principles. (2) Dislike of the secrecy surrounding the whole transaction, too closely resembling the miasma of Vatican intrigue to be tolerable for ordinary Humanists.

The Transformed Church

However, the Chairman of the BHA is enlightening us. . . . First, as to "what lies behind". He tells us that "something supervened" on Vatican II, causing a sudden and violent diversion in the course of events. A sort of *avant-garde* pentecost flamed through the boredom of Council routine and set a lot of fiery tongues crackling ferociously. Civil war between progressive bishops and the die-hards of the Curia resulted—after "a stubborn and bitter rear-guard action" by the latter—in a Curial *defeat beyond recovery*. (Hard to credit if we hadn't Mr Blackham's word for it.) Immediately (or so we gather, as the sentence follows straight on) "there was a transformation of the Church". A pentecostal dawn of democracy, in fact, heralding more power for bishops, more influence for laity, more kindness for "separated brethren" plus readiness to engage them in helpful conversations, and "a much more realistic attitude" to the modern wicked world.

According to Vatican representative Professor Girardi, who read a paper on the Catholic position, the Church "is entering a new phase in its evolution". Totalitarianism he dismisses as a thing of the past: there is really nothing left now to evoke hostile response from "atheistic Human-

ists"! We are asked to believe that the old "mutual intolerance and rejection" are absolved with a plenary indulgence on both sides. Dialogue, with "collaboration" on all points vital to "the general project of human development in the world" must henceforth be the programme. (Even on thin-ice subjects like "the population explosion", which, it was agreed, "was a threat to the dignity and value of human existence which the Catholic Church was required to take with the utmost seriousness"). But don't let Humanists delude themselves: this is no one-sided bargain. The "transformed Church" *requires* from us in return *a new response, a revaluation of religion.*

The Transformed Humanist?

Now this is where my mental machinery gets stuck on a matter of semantics. How, will someone please tell me, can a Humanist "revalue" religion and remain a Humanist? Presumably he made up his mind on the subject when he decided to become a Humanist, or recognised the fact that he was one. A rational being (which we assume a Humanist to be) doesn't wantonly throw out an article of value. If he suspects he has done so by mistake, reason will tell him he must try and retrieve it. In this case it's the reasoning of the RC Church—supported, apparently, by Mr Blackham—that "requires" him to "revalue" what he once rejected as valueless. But surely if he grants a new value of religion he ceases to be a Humanist . . . (unless he adopts the new type of hermaphroditic mystico-Humanism, which will certainly disqualify him as a rational being, let alone thinker). The subtleties of philosophy may supply Mr Blackham—and certain of the élite—with a solution to the problem. The Humanist in the street remains baffled.

Not that we "ordinary unbelievers" are unworthy of notice. Mr Blackham, in the course of discussion with the opposite camp on different types and grounds of atheism, "pointed out that atheists and agnostics . . . were not merely intellectuals". He mentioned those "thousands of ordinary people not articulate or reflective enough to give an adequate intellectual justification of their atheism, who recognised in organised Humanism their own voice, the voice of common sense". (That's so, but not perhaps as clearly and constantly as we could wish.) And we do indeed, as he remarks, identify ourselves with Humanism, though we are by no means always sure of being "justified by its spokesmen". Yet if we are far from certain at present What Humanism is About, at least we are (as Mr Blackham tells us) "discovering" ourselves in it.

Yes, but we're discovering a lot more. We're being "required" to fall in line with the Church (Transformed). Either, it seems, we must forfeit the company of angels and leave the ranks of the Reverent Ones (probably to sell our souls to the devil or join the NSS) or else get down to the complicated business of Revaluation. The Humanist of Post-Vatican II is indeed on the horns of a dilemma.

Society—Open or Oblique?

Furthermore: what of this concept of the "open" society, which Catholics declare they are "sincerely ready to collaborate loyally in creating"? Mr Blackham (who read a paper on this subject) describes "the movement of democratic societies from a 'pluriform' structure of more or less segregated groups and communities to an 'open' (Continued on page 200)

FREETHINKER

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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

Humanist Housing Association, Garden Party, Sunday, July 10th, 3 p.m., Blackham House, 35 Worple Road, Wimbledon (near Wimbledon main line and Underground stations).
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1), Sunday, June 26th, 11 a.m.: RICHARD CLEMENTS, "Huss and Hussites".
Unity Theatre (1 Goldrington Street, London, NW1), "Inherit the Wind" by ROBERT E. LEE and JEROME LAWRENCE. Friday, Saturday and Sunday at 7.45 p.m. until July 17th. Tickets 3/6, 5/- and 7/6. Members only (membership 7/6 per year). Box office, EUSton 5391.
West Ham and District Branch NSS (Wanstead and Woodford Community Centre, Wanstead Green, E.11). Meetings at 8 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of every month.
World Union of Freethinkers, International Congress, Conway Hall, London, September 1st-5th. Interpreters and other helpers urgently required. Please contact Mr C. Bradlaugh Bonner, 23 Streathbourne Road, London, S.W.17. Telephone: BALham 3508.
Humanist Letter Network (International): send s.a.c. to Kit Moutat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

THE PROBLEM OF ANTI-CHURCH UNITY

E. G. Macfarlane

ALTHOUGH IT IS OBVIOUS THAT OECUMENISM (i.e. coming together in unity) of the churches is not going well, it is equally obvious that unity among those who are anti-church is not going too well either, and I don't think it is just a matter of "bad feeling between individuals", as was suggested by Don Baker in your issue of May 13. So let us consider for a moment the problem which faces the anti-church people of the world—especially those who are **pro-Humanist**.

Since it is an observable fact that **atheism**, as such, does not cause different individuals to follow the same line in matters of social reform and choice of political parties, any more than does **theism**, it follows that we have got to probe more deeply into the matter of what causes people to co-operate in a working group and arrive at agreement about general policy easily.

The first question any person asks when approached to join a movement is "What is the aim of the organisation?" and every member should have a meaningful and definite answer ready.

In *Humanist Newsletter* I have been suggesting, without contradiction so far, that the positive aim of Humanism should be *the organisation of the whole of humanity on a basis of world civilisation*.

The assumptions underlying this conception of practical Humanist purpose, as a movement, are as follows:

- (1) The sole source of real moral authority rests with the thinking individual, rather than with any church representative or group of representatives.
- (2) Each person is regarded first and foremost as a member of the whole human race and undertakes to argue social policy on this basis.
- (3) Each person is willing to be tolerant of the ideas of other members of the movement, since there are bound to be differences of opinion on detail among individual thinkers.
- (4) Each person must agree to accept a method of resolving these differences of opinion, e.g. by referendum of the members, so that necessary decisions for the movement can be arrived at from time to time.

Clearly, the common acceptance of such an expression of aim and principles *for the movement* will provide a point of reference during discussion within the movement and thus provide a standard of morality for the movement. For example, let me point the significance of the aim and principles as I see them at the moment.

Aim

Since the aim is *world civilisation* it follows that no member of the Humanist movement could also be a member of any organisation advocating the maintenance of local national sovereignty or any scheme for world peace through international arrangements between sovereign states.

Principles

(1) No member of the Humanist movement could also be a member of any Church or other organisation claiming to be able to provide authoritative moral guidance (e.g. Communism).

(2) No member of the Humanist movement could also be a member of any "racialist" movement (where the word "race" refers to a section of the human race) or to any movement advocating "racial" lines of demarcation, e.g. apartheid.

(3) No member of the Humanist movement could also be a member of any organisation advocating dictatorship or monarchy or any form of aristocracy based on inheritance.

(4) No member of the Humanist movement could also be a member of an organisation which works in secret or includes vows of secrecy.

In conclusion, may I say that I think the challenge contained in this statement of aim and principles and rules will make for the kind of clarity, strength and working unity of a movement capable of practically achieving human survival on this planet and defeating *all* the movements which are now causing division and mass murder, in their worst clashes, in the world around us.

COSMO GROUP

THERE WILL BE A PUBLIC MEETING OF THE COSMO GROUP, which exists to resist restrictive pressures on television and radio, at 7.30 p.m. on **Friday, 17th June**, at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1. Further information from Adele Paul, Miranda, 1 Strawberry Vale, Twickenham (POP 5538)

REVALUATION OF RELIGION

(Continued from page 198)

order in which persons and groups of different faiths would have institutions in common for general social purposes" as "a progressive historic trend which should be encouraged". The condition he postulates strikes one as a little naïve . . . "so long as the stress on common institutions and tasks allowed persons and groups to maintain and develop their own character and to make their impact on policy and on culture . . ." Can anyone imagine the RC Church—even Transformed—doing otherwise? Mr Blackham apparently can, for he laments that "the Roman Church is not likely and hardly able to abandon a ghetto mentality and segregated institutions if Christians have reason to fear that tomorrow the State and public opinion are going to be hostile to religion". Personally I should use "go-getting" rather than "ghetto" . . . and those "segregated institutions" are a must, short of a general purge of the consecrated: they also materially assist that self-development and impact of the Church on society of which he seems to approve. But here is where Humanists Must Help: Mr Blackham puts it to them sternly: "If the Churches are struggling to survive by finding a tenable position and a tolerable rôle in a modern society, what is the public response of Humanists going to be?" I suppose that depends on whether or not they are making a Revaluation of Religion. If not, why help struggling Churches to survive? No value, no rôle. "At least," concludes Mr Blackham, "the old arguments become irrelevant and the old attitudes futile."

Do they? I know one thing: there will never be an "open" society so long as religious people have their way. And of course they want their own way and always will, because they believe they have the "truth", and the very highest moral standards, and know what is best for their fellow-men. And they have access to "God", that Invisible Judge to whom they appeal against human rights and human justice. Privileged people at an inner Tribunal, they can override our values and ignore our needs; their occult passwords legalise every sort of unfair dealing and oppression. They never look humanity straight in the face, for one eye's on this world and the other on the "next": their view of both is permanently oblique.

If Humanists want a truly "open" society, where humans meet each other fair and square, all dealings honest and above-board, where progress is not to be continually retarded and action fouled up by the forces of the fantasy world, then—in my non-intellectual but sincere opinion—our most urgent job as Humanists is the revaluation of our own precious heritage, which we ought to have enough intelligence to know is the one supreme value for ourselves and mankind.

LETTERS

Humanism and Politics

IF HUMANISM means anything at all it means "concern for the whole human race in the light of scientific theories of evolution in all aspects of life from the biological to the cosmological". And the correct attitude of mind for a Humanist should be to be willingness to regard ALL human beings as potential fellow citizens of a civilised world.

But this is obviously not Mr Huxley's view (3/6/66). He attacks the ex-Editor's leader for containing "political issues which are not even remotely concerned with freethought . . ." and then

treats us to a revelation of his own political views which are such that they might have gone down well in Nazi Germany or Malan's South Africa. Mr Huxley writes, "Mutual defence pacts with our kith in the Antipodes and elsewhere might be possible. But we should *disown the negroes*. They are not of *our family* (my italics).

Such reactionary views are disgraceful and immoral from my conception of Humanism, and, in your work as Editor on the FREETHINKER I hope you will RESIST pressure from all sides to dissociate your paper from the discussion of political matters of this kind. If the ex-Editor had not written his leader, Mr Huxley would NOT have revealed himself as he has done and I would NOT have had the opportunity of dealing with this IMPORTANT MATTER. So I hope you will be courageous and err on the side of freedom of self-expression during your editorship.

E. G. MACFARLANE, Editor, *Humanist Newsletter*

Scientology

In Vol 86, No 7, you wrote about Scientology. We, as your weekly, are interested in freedom but we do not stop at just freethinking, we advocate and try to achieve for ourselves and others total freedom. Total freedom has been our goal and we come closer to it every day.

STAN DRONSEIKA (Director of Public Information)

The LDOS

WHAT ON EARTH has happened to that most peculiar organisation, the *Lord's Day Observance Society*? After all the bleating nonsense of their secretary and lone mouthpiece, Harold Legerton, earlier on this year—"We will throw a spanner in the works, if Sunday Cricket is allowed in Britain" and "The wrath of God will surely bring about a natural disaster, if organised sport, games, or entertainment are to be part of Sabbath". What do we see? Somerset Cricket Club playing against Essex Cricket Club at Ilford, Essex, on a recent Sunday and a great success in every way, and now, yesterday, Sunday, May 22, organised sports and games on the Imperial Tobacco Company's ground in Bristol, attended by a large crowd of onlookers and contestants, in spite of an almost sunless and very windy Sunday! And, tonight, a meeting in Bristol, to inaugurate a Sunday Football League for this district! Isn't it time our West of England LDOS Representative (a polite name for a paid snooper and informer) Albert Peters, "took his finger out" (to quote Prince Phillip) and *earnt* his salary, and his, "Well done thou good and faithful", from his own little-minded God? As for "throwing spanners in the works—as an engineer, I would say this is a crude and dangerous method of stopping anything, as the spanner may get smashed to bits, and fly in the face of the thrower! As we know, Mr Legerton is a constant reader—surprisingly—of our "blasphemous, infidel, heretical magazine" (vide "Joy and Light" the LDOS's house-mag) the FREETHINKER, so perhaps he'll take warning!

JOHN SHEPHARD, *The Sunday Freedom League*

I WAS ASTONISHED at Mr W. E. Huxley's letter. I think the FREETHINKER should be able to discuss anything. We would indeed have a dull paper if we just stuck to reviling religion. Let us have everything discussed in our paper readers are interested in.

It seems rather strange that we must not discuss Rhodesia because W. E. Huxley has relatives there. His views on the negroes are just shocking, and his remarks on the hospitals are not true; we cannot get white girls to volunteer, the work is hard however high the wages. I think in time that inter-marriage will solve all racial intolerance.

LILIAN MIDDLETON

STOP PRESS!

THE BBC has, after all, decided *not* to repeat the play *Up the Junction*, because of the threat of an injunction involving the possibility of legal proceedings. (See News and Notes.) The Corporation (reports the *Guardian* June 16th) "would not comment on who was seeking the injunction". This is sad news; it will, we can be sure, be taken seriously by Mrs Avril Fox and the COSMO GROUP.

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.