

FREE THINKER

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THE STINGING FLY

IT IS ALWAYS with relief that a Freethinker turns from Jesus to Socrates. His calm assumption of human decency is a welcome change from the clenched-fist attitude of the evangelist. The Christian claim to have originated morality seems to be as long-lasting as it is absurd. "The natural course," said Socrates (470-399 BC) is that "... one must not even do wrong when one is wronged." Crito, however, didn't altogether agree, believing that Socrates would be justified in "wronging" the state which had so wronged him—by running away. But having stayed and faced the consequences, Socrates could still say "I bear no grudge at all against those who condemned me and accused me..." He insisted that courage, integrity and self-control "or, in a word true goodness" is made possible by wisdom. Not a word about faith; a very un-Christian attitude.

Whereas the angry Jesus complained to an audience, "What an unbelieving and perverse generation! ... How much longer must I endure you?" Socrates bade his listeners "... if you will take my advice, you will think very little of Socrates, and much more of the truth ... if you think that anything I say is true, you must agree with me; if not, oppose it with every argument you have ..." Instead of the Christian "Have faith, believe in the incredible, follow me and you will be rewarded ..." he said, "It is our duty to do one of two things: either to ascertain the facts, whether by seeking instruction or by personal discovery; or, if this is impossible, to select the best and the most dependable theory which human intelligence can supply, and use it as a raft to ride the seas of life ..."

"You know how, in an argument," said Socrates, "people who have no real education care nothing for the facts of the case, and are only anxious to get their point of view accepted by the audience?" (If he had been speaking today, he would no doubt have included the educated!) "No one but a fool is entitled to face death with confidence," he said, "unless he can prove that the soul is absolutely immortal and indestructible. Otherwise everyone must always feel apprehension at the approach of death ..." Yet, while contemplating his own, he could explain, "How selfish I am!" and admit that he, too, was

in danger of behaving like the "uneducated". At the same time he calmly considered the alternative argument, "if death is extinction". And if it were, he said, "... if there is no consciousness but only a dreamless sleep, death must be a marvellous gain".

What Socrates was most interested in, however, was not death or immortality, but life; and "the important thing is not to live", he insisted, "but to live well". Can anyone imagine Jesus saying (as Socrates said to Euthyphro) being laughed at is "nothing to worry about ..."

In his introduction to the Penguin Classic edition of *Plato: The Last Days of Socrates*, Hugh Tredennick says that Socrates was not merely a moralist: "he was a sincerely religious man. So much is certain." But he adds, "although it is not possible to say exactly what he believed. ... The fact that Plato (or his translator) often makes him speak of 'God' or 'the god' proves nothing, because these were common forms of speech ..." Socrates was no pedant, prig or fanatic. Hugh Tredennick refers to his quick perception, kindly heart and unflinching tact, his impish sense of humour, patience and cheerfulness, and calls him "the ideal companion". All the same, it is suggested that he "must have been a most trying husband" and "there is nothing in Plato's account to suggest that Xanthippe was a shrew, although there are two outspoken comments on her in Xenophon, and many unkind anecdotes in later writers. She should not be judged too harshly."

Although Socrates refused to try and escape from the end to which he had been condemned, he did not indulge in martyrdom. "If you expect to stop denunciation of your wrong way of life by putting people to death," he said to the court, "there is something wrong with your reasoning ..."

For all the Christian devotion to the idea of the "divine", we still compliment a man by emphasising how "human" he is, or was. It is the humanity of Socrates that is so endearing; and his humility. "We should recognise," he said to Phaedo, "that we ourselves are still intellectual invalids; but that we must brace ourselves and do our best to become healthy." With his "down to earth" common sense, he announced, "If you put me to death you will not easily find anyone to take my place. It is literally true (even if it sounds rather comical) that God has especially appointed me to this city as though it were a large thoroughbred horse which, because of its size, is inclined to be lazy and needs the stimulation of some stinging fly. It seems to me that God has attached me to this city to perform the office of such a fly ..." Gods apart, it doesn't sound comical at all to the Freethinker-Humanist, who knows as well as anyone just how much our own lazy society needs this sort of stimulation today.

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A SPIRITUAL MOUSE

F. H. Snow

WHAT KIND OF MAN is the American evangelist, Billy Graham? He came to London to convince people of Christ's wonderful love, and make them want to qualify for heaven by repenting their sins and changing their lives through the grace which God would give them through his Son. He came to tell English people what he had told them on previous visits, and what he has told his own countrymen through years of revivalistic preaching.

One would have thought there was need enough in the United States for the exercise of the outstanding eloquence with which he believes God endowed him for the purpose of saving souls. Graham would know that he has only touched the fringe of the great community of the "unsaved" back home; yet, answering an interviewer as to his reaction to a possible disappointing result of his London crusade, he said if but one person were brought to Christ, he would deem it worth while. By the same reasoning, it should have appealed to him that, as his absence could cause one person less to be recruited for heaven in the States, he should have stayed there.

This bland yet tremendously forceful orator for God is incapable of honest logical thought on the subject of his heavenly master's salvation project, else he would be unable to conceive its originator as taking the same view as himself regarding the saving of a single soul through a great campaign to publicise his boundless love and mercy. And if Graham was not so dogmatic in his preaching the redemption scheme he passionately preaches might suggest itself to him as a monstrous naïvety on the part of an All-wise. He might even discern the nonsense of a salvation that is conditional on revolt against natural instincts—a mental insurrection which all the evidences of history discount as inoperable save amongst a minute portion of humanity—a spiritual and behavioural transformation of which the generality of people have evinced incapacity during nineteen centuries of Christian teaching.

Billy Graham's sincerity is beyond reasonable doubt, but his mode of journey to England ill accords with his lowly Master's precepts. Why did he travel first class in the "Queen Elizabeth"? So dedicated a man ought to have sought the humblest accommodation. It would have been a more eloquent gesture to sinning London than his widely advertised Earls Court crusade. Those with whom example outweighs admonition, would have admired the self-abasing evangelist who, in the spirit of the Christ he venerates, chose the commonest quarters in the liner, instead of the most luxurious.

Strangely enough, in these days when the ordinances of Christianity's founder are literally ignored, most people esteem, in those who set themselves up as gossellers, a closer identification with the literal sense of those ordinances than Graham exhibits. Does not Billy's enormous choir suggest a most unapostolic reliance on showmanship to boost his spiritual wares? How does he reconcile the great cost of his circus and campaign with the starvation and disease that afflict undeveloped peoples, and which, if he obeyed the injunctions of the Christ he crusades for, he would be unable to furnish? Graham is vehement in asserting the Bible's veracity. He believes God rained fire on Sodom and Gomorrah. He believes Christ said what Scripture makes him to say. He believes that when he told his hearers to return good for evil, offer a smiter the other cheek, love their neighbours, observe the law, be righteous for righteousness' sake, and incur poverty, if need be, to

help the necessitous, he was also addressing our twentieth-century selves. But, like the vast majority of Christians, the thirsty-for-souls Billy doesn't see fit to put the last injunction into practice.

Yes, indeed, that God rained fire on the Sodomites is literal truth, according to Billy. The Bible says so, and we must believe it. But when Jesus tells us to sacrifice our worldly goods to relieve the needy, we don't have to believe he meant it. In other words, we are to use the commonsense about that which we mustn't use about Sodom and Gomorrah. Of course, Graham wouldn't put it that way, but he's very comfortable about following the Christian custom of interpreting his Lord's words so as to nullify the obligation to forego amenities and advantages for the sake of the famished and destitute. Christ is vividly real to Graham. He sees him stretching loving hands towards humanity from his heavenly home, as alive as before his savage crucifixion, although dumb for all of nearly two thousand years since. He is "big business" to Billy, but only in the salvationing sense.

The evangelist from the land of millionaires has described his London campaign as a huge success. He claims to have made forty-two thousand converts, and thinks Britain is on the verge of a great moral and spiritual revival. His final meeting, at Wembley Stadium, drew a crowd of Cup Final size. It was a highly gratifying end of his crusade for Jesus Christ.

A strong moral uplift here would be a great thing, but what are its chances? There is plenty of hysteria in the States, but nothing mildly suggestive of a moral upsurge, from anything we read or hear, in spite of Graham's high-pressure gosselling. Billy's conjecture regarding Britain is undoubtedly based on the numbers that came forward for spiritual counsel, but, as he should have the sense to realise, Christians were mainly responsible for his huge congregations with the weak-kneed seeking dedicating stimulus. That even a considerable proportion of those caused by his emotional oratory and choral effects to declare for Christ were fresh penitents, or real penitents, is extremely dubious. What does a declaration for Christ certify? Nothing in the way of a spiritual transformation, or any change, save that of desire. For Graham to count these wishers as converts is sheer nonsense.

One should accept some of Billy's "newborn" have been convinced of experiencing salvation, and may retain that elevating assurance, but it is a reasonable assumption that most of them are as before, except that some feel better. Some will probably become churchgoers, or attend church oftener, be more law-abiding, be nicer to wives, husbands, children, friends. What more may be expected from the most changed of those who religious ideals are patterned by Graham's comfortable Christianity? Billy's spiritual mountain has given birth to a mouse.

FREETHINKER FIGHTING FUND

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The FREETHINKER, 103 Borough High St., London, SE1

NOT SINCE THE DAYS OF "BLOODY MARY"

Aliquis

SUCH WRITERS as G. K. Chesterton were wont to paint a picture of merrie mediaeval England—before the Industrial Revolution, before the dour reformers and the sour Puritans—of cakes and ale, feast-days and holy-days, pageants, pilgrimages and openly expressed and confessed religion in mystery plays and public ceremonials. There was a good deal of imagination in this picture. There was another side to it—the feudal and ecclesiastical oppression delineated by Dr Coulton, so thoroughly documented that it has never been refuted. If anyone wishes to doubt that wherever Roman Catholic activity raises its head it remains much the same, in spite of the passage of centuries, they should read Avro Manhattan's *Vatican and World Power*. If what goes on behind the scenes has not changed in essence, but only in externals (according to the century), nor has the Catholic desire and love of theatricality and showmanship altered much either. In recent years, by virtue of increased travel to the Continent, to Oberammergau, Seville, and similar centres, and by virtue of television, the image of externalised and ceremonial Catholicism has come upon the public eye, and it has grown accustomed to it.

It is a funny thing, but only a decade or two ago, the elaborate liturgy of the Roman Catholic church was something which the average, rather Puritanical Englishman, who did not really know much about more solid reasons, invariably adduced as a reason for rejecting Catholicism. He would speak of all the gaudy trappings of popery in a way which rather puzzled English Catholics, used to small and humble chapels and churches, usually rather plainly furnished, and who usually saw nothing much more fanciful than a *missa cantata*. And, to be truthful, in spite of popular Catholic art, and plaster statues, one does not need usually to quarrel with Catholicism's aesthetics. It was the patron of *quattro-cento* Italy. The real quarrel lies deeper, in the realm of ideas.

Englishmen, as a historical fact, rejected Catholicism for doctrinal and ideological reasons, and readers of this paper will mostly hold with the author that the advances of the last four centuries, and our present pattern of life, liberty under the law—a pattern which spread beyond the seas, with incalculable results—would have been impossible without the initial revolt from papal dogmatism and supremacy in the sixteenth century.

The memory of man is short, and the memory of the Church is long. From its central position in Rome, the Church has been accustomed to watch its boundaries ebb and flow through the centuries. If it has not yet given up hope of recapturing Russia (and potentially the universe is hers), still less is she likely to have reconciled herself to the loss of "the English province". In fact, she has not, but regards it as her bounden duty and responsibility to God to win it back, not for our harm, but for our salvation, and for Catholic unity. The intention is benevolent, but we don't want the gift!

From their expulsion, and active suppression of its activities in the sixteenth century by men who had first-hand experience of them, they have come a long way. The memory of the Church is long. From that moment it began to work for a day of reconciliation not yet arrived. But the memory of man is short, limited, at least, to a couple of generations or so. That the Church is very well aware how this operated in practice is shown in Belloc's *How the Reformation Happened*. It is a work which Free-thinkers should try to read for themselves. For the Church

has always hoped to reverse the process therein described (a not untenable theory of the mechanics of the English schism in Henry VIII's and Elizabeth's reigns), and in recent decades has been able to go faster than ever before.

The fact is, what initially gave her the opportunity was 1829. Liberal and enlightened statesmen like Peel did not want to withhold from a small, persecuted minority normal citizen rights. But Eldon and Ellenborough, and a host of forgotten pamphleteers, when they issued solemn warnings, based on 1662 and 1688, were probably right in opposing it. They were unheeded and emancipation became a fact.

Catholics had won it by pleading that they merely wanted private freedom; they used it, and had *intended* to use it (in their inmost councils) for expansion. Within a few years we had the Oxford Movement, Manning's conversion, the assumption of territorial titles, Wiseman's arrogance, the Second Spring, the reintroduction of the teaching orders. In this century the habit is seen again. In the street, nuns and priests on TV, heavy subsidisation of schools, pressure groups in the journalistic sphere and Anglican rapprochement. Moreover, all the built-in safeguards of 1829 are a dead letter, if not actually repealed.

This infiltration is insidious, insistent, continuous and all-pervasive. Agnostics are ignorant of the problems. Old-fashioned protestants have gone, mistaken and quite false tolerance does nothing to hinder it.

On Sunday, June 27th, 1966, at Mitcham, one extraordinary example of unhindered exhibitionism was, quite accidentally, witnessed by the present writer. It so shocked her, and should profoundly disturb others, that she felt attention should be drawn to it in these columns.

Processions of Catholics are not uncommon in England and have not been for some years past. Once upon a time, say fifty, even twenty years ago, such processions, for Corpus Christi usually, had to be confined within convent school grounds, or omit the monstrance, and would probably meet jeers and hostile criticism. Having tried and tested the patience of the public in this regard for some decades, the Roman Catholic body is now embarking on a new thing.

Mitcham Cricket Green is famous for its sport. It is surrounded by houses. Sunday, June 27th, saw an open-air Benediction on this *public* place—a full-scale demonstration of Catholic strength, with archiepiscopal visitation, many hymns and litanies, censers and other gadgets, all blatantly disturbing the whole area by means of loud speakers. Unfortunately, provided prior permission is obtained, and such ceremonies are conducted in an orderly manner, there is no legal bar to them, and the Roman Catholic clergy are the people to take full advantage of every toleration afforded them under English democracy, and to stretch the law to its limit to advertise themselves. The matters raised by this are so serious that we cannot afford to be indifferent; to be "polite". On that Sunday, Mitcham Cricket Green stepped back five hundred years into the Middle Ages. It is a Green for games. Keep transubstantiation inside the churches. We must express our disapproval publicly. If we do not, this will continue, here and elsewhere. In due course, the Catholic church will complete its take-over bid, and agnostics will be pressurised out of society. *We must act now.*

[It would be appreciated if any similar incidences were communicated to the writer, through the courtesy of the Editor.]

NEWS AND NOTES

THE FOLLOWING LETTER from the Ministry of Health was received by Mr. W. McIlroy, General Secretary of the NSS, on 3rd August, 1966. It is quoted in full and is self-explanatory:

"The Minister has asked me to write to you on the subject of religious discrimination in London Teaching Hospitals, about which you wrote to him on 14th January. He regrets the delay in replying, but, as I understand has been explained to you on the telephone, the principles involved have been discussed with representatives of the hospital authorities, both in London and in the rest of England and Wales. It is understood that there should be no discrimination or prejudice on religious grounds in making appointments or promotions. Application forms should not include a question on this subject—and where they have done in the past they are being amended. The Minister understands that this is a point to which the Society (i.e. the NSS) wishes the Minister's attention to be drawn.

As regards prayers in the London Teaching Hospitals, the Minister assumes that the reference in your letter is to a practice which a few of these hospitals have traditionally of prayers being read at night in the ward to the patients by the Ward Sister. He is advised that this brief observance is for the patients, and student nurses or staff nurses are not present. Should any Ward Sister not wish to read the prayer, alternative arrangements are made. The Minister is not aware of hospitals where prayers are compulsory for any nurses."

THE NSS is to be congratulated on tackling this important problem, and we are grateful to the Minister for his attitude and the steps that have been taken to enable nurses to avoid taking part in other people's devotions. But now what about the patients? Having once been rushed into hospital on a Boxing Day with a Salvation Army group singing hymns at the end of the bed, making all rest impossible, and having more than once suffered the unwelcome attentions of hospital clergy, the Editor suggests that no religious sect or church has the right to thrust its rituals on the sick public at large. Even a nightly "brief observance" is unnecessarily irritating to those who do not share the faith. And if members of all different religions were to be given an opportunity publicly to demonstrate their faith in the wards, the "observance" would be anything but "brief".

Christian "Science"?

MORE THAN 10,000 people heard the editor-in-chief of the *Christian Science Monitor*, Mr Erwin D. Canham, lecture at the Albert Hall on September 18th on religion and science in the modern world. "We no longer believed in the glorified being sitting on a throne in the sky" he said (the *Times*, September 19), "but the purpose of all human striving was to seek and understand truth. To deny the existence of God was to deny the existence of truth". Or, as we might put it, if you have given up believing in the God of the Bible, then spell "God" T-R-U-T-H and you can go on proving that it (sorry "He") exists . . .

Lest we forget . . .

CARDINAL HEENAN is supporting Ottaviani in his drive to bring Catholics smartly to heel (*Sunday Times*, September 25). "Christian unity," says Heenan, "is a glorious and growing work of the Holy Spirit. Protestants and Catholics now genuinely seek to understand and cherish each other. But this does not involve insincerity. We do a poor service to our separated brethren if we pretend that any Catholic dogma can ever be discarded." He went on to remind Roman Catholics of their duty to "bring the light of faith to those walking in darkness" and said, "It would be a tragedy if in our anxiety to co-operate with our fellow Christians we were to forget that most of

our fellow countrymen profess no faith at all". Which in turn perhaps will serve as a timely reminder to some Humanists.

Seeing things in black and white

The *Observer* (September 25) reports a story of teenagers testing the employment market and finding that jobs are given according to the skin-colour of the applicant. These boys did not actually need jobs and were filling in time before going on to university, but the situation they have revealed is a disgrace. The Campaign Against Racial Discrimination (CARD) has produced 20 cases of coloured teenagers who failed to get jobs in Manchester. In each case, a white youngster who went in afterwards was offered the job or told it was still vacant. The colour bar which operates in this country hasn't even the virtue of being open and declared. It was tempting in the Hitler years to wish that all Germans could be given transfusions of Jewish blood, and it would be consoling now if all those who harbour colour prejudice were to wake up black just four days a week to see how it feels. In July the *Sun* reported that a Trinidad-born nurse, Cynthia Sandy, was refused a job by an agency which supplies home nurses to wealthy clients. As Lena Jeger wrote (*Guardian*, July 15), "No lady would forbid her drawing room to the Aga Khan or hesitate to dine, on grounds of colour, with Sugar Ray Robinson, or with the man who used to be called Cassius Clay. . . . Coloured people may amuse us, but not work with us . . . Colour is like sex. Equal pay for the posh ones, discrimination for the poor."

H. G. WELLS CEREMONY

ABOUT sixty people attended the unveiling of a plaque at 13 Hanover Terrace, Regents Park, London, on September 21st. The date was the hundredth anniversary of the birth of H. G. Wells, and the plaque commemorates his residence there until his death in 1946. Those present included the famous writer's two sons, Professor G. P. Wells and Mr Frank Wells.

Lord Snow, who performed the ceremony, said that Wells was unique in English intellectual and literary history. He was still a figure of controversy as he had been in his lifetime. Lord Snow referred to the fifteen-volume edition of the works of Wells which had been published in the Soviet Union last year, and hoped that some British publisher would show similar enterprise.

From E. HUGHES-JONES, Dorset.

DEFINITION OF HUMANISM ON A POSTCARD

"HUMANISM" (1) relates to *all* mankind and seeks their common welfare; it *persuades man towards* a rational, educated, clear-thinking, responsible way of life, global kindness, compassion, understanding, tolerance, and *away from* superstitions, ignorance, divisions, tribal hatreds; it emphasises human responsibility for social progress or catastrophe in a shrunken, nuclear-frightened world;

(2) stresses human high potentialities, environmental powers and obligations as the future main evolutionary agent to create a peaceful, just, society of dignity, freedom and plenty, recognising that human nature is not fixed, immutable, but a variable, influenced by environment for better or worse;

(3) considers that morality stems from social need and Man must be his own saviour in striving for a better way of living *on earth* with higher standards of morality and values; also that the invoking of supernatural authority is intellectually unjustified, futile, wasteful, and, concerning human failures, a dereliction of responsibility.

[Your own definition is invited in 150 words. Send it to the Editor]

VIETNAM

G. L. Simons

IN THE FREETHINKER (July 29) we read that the "weekly *Freedom*" is "refreshing to read amid the howls of the anti-Americans and anti-Communists". On perusing the subsequent quotation we learn that the *Freedom* writer, Jeff Robinson, is both anti-American and anti-Communist. He talks of the Vietnam situation and tries to show that both sides are equally objectionable. I believe that this thesis is indefensible. It is useful to recall the FACTS which led up to the present conflict in Vietnam.

From colonial domination to independence

Before the Second World War Vietnam was a French colony. During the war the French were pushed out by the Japanese. The Vietnam People's Army, an essentially nationalist army led by the communist Ho Chi Minh, fought against the Japanese and eventually, towards the end of the war, drove them from the country. In 1945 Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnam a republic. It is important to realise that at this time he had the support of the vast majority of the population. A nationalist war had just been fought and won: for the first time in modern history Vietnam was free from foreign domination.

Re-invasion

The French, however, were eager to regain their former colony and with the aid of British troops re-entered Saigon. In 1945 the Vietnam People's Army again took up arms against a foreign invader. By 1954 the French forces were on their last legs and the United States of America was bearing most of the cost of the French war. In the impartial Eyre and Spottiswood account of the war we read that "the American Government undertook to underwrite the entire cost of the war, allocating \$1,175,000,000 for that purpose".

When it became apparent that despite the immense American assistance the French were going to be defeated they agreed to talk, and the Geneva Conference on Vietnam commenced. Soon afterwards the bulk of the French forces were totally defeated at Dien Bien Phu.

Elections agreed upon

The Geneva Conference, attended by nine interested nations, resulted in two Agreements: The Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities, and the Final Declaration. I advise readers to study these two documents. The principal features were that a "provisional military demarcation line" was to be fixed solely to facilitate the disengagement of the French and Vietnamese troops. This line was drawn between North and South Vietnam. Its *provisional* nature was stressed in Article 1 of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities and in Paragraph 6 of the Final Declaration. **The boundary was never intended to be a permanent political division of Vietnam.** The Final Declaration specified that free nation-wide elections should be held in 1956 to unite the country; it also specified that North and South should discuss how these elections should best take place—the discussions were arranged for 1955.

Hence the situation in 1954 was that the Vietnam People's Army under Ho Chi Minh, having defeated the foreigners in their own country, withdrew into North Vietnam, pending the discussions in 1955 that were intended to lead to unifying elections in 1956. At this time Ho Chi Minh was the undisputed leader of Vietnam; Ngo Dinh Diem, the installed leader in the South, was selected from an American college by the Western delegates at the Geneva Conference. The American Govern-

ment did not sign the Geneva Agreement but stated, in regard to all its articles that it would "*refrain from the threat or the use of force to disturb them . . .*"

Agreements violated

In 1955 Ngo Dinh Diem *refused to discuss with the North the proposed elections; in 1956 he refused to permit the elections.* In both these actions he was fully supported by the Americans. This is not communist propaganda. It is freely conceded by the Western Press and by Western publishing houses, and it represents the *first important violation of the Geneva Agreement.* The reason is not hard to see. It was clear that Ho Chi Minh would win any fair elections in Vietnam. Eisenhower admits this when he says in his biography, *Mandate for Change*, that if elections had been permitted, 80 per cent of the population would have voted for Ho Chi Minh (page 372).

Between 1955 and 1959 Ho Chi Minh frequently appealed to Ngo Dinh Diem to permit the proposed elections to take place. This was never permitted. By this time it was clear that Diem owed his position solely to the promise of American military support. In about 1959 the Southern uprising started. Under the terms of the Geneva Agreement many South Vietnamese had withdrawn to the North with the People's Army. Families were broken up; hasty marriages were made; husbands expected to return to their wives after the specified two years, in 1956. As late as 1959 they had not been permitted to do so. (See page 142 of *The Last Confucian* by Denis Warner).

It was also clear that whereas Ho Chi Minh was still regarded as a national hero, Diem was seen to be a dictator, supported by American capital and hostile to democracy. It is significant that in 1956 people were arrested in South Vietnam for discussing the terms of the Geneva Agreement with their friends. (See pages 157-159 of *Vietnam Divided* by Murti.)

The relevance of these considerations to the present situation is obvious. The "infiltration" from the North only started when it was clear that the puppet authority in the South was not going to permit nationwide elections. Many of the infiltrators were men (and women) who had been born in the South. And despite the infiltration, the "North" Vietnamese only represent about a quarter of the Southern forces fighting the American troops: *this proportion is according to recent American figures.*

The conclusion is a simple one: the Americans have no moral or legal right to be in Vietnam at all. *Anyone who has read Article 16 of the Geneva Agreement knows this.* If you do not accept the thesis that I am supporting, consider the following facts:

(1) The American bombing of South Vietnam is considerably more extensive than the bombing of the North.

(2) During the American "peace offensive" last Christmas, when the bombing of the North was suspended, the bombing of the South continued, chemicals were used to destroy rice crops, gas was used extensively, there was a massive build-up of American troops, and bombs were dropped on Laos for the first time.

(3) **The only foreigners in Vietnam are fighting against Vietnamese.** There are *no* foreigners fighting on the side of the National Liberation Front.

(4) The recent Buddhist demonstrations were anti-American. The people of South Vietnam are 70 per cent Buddhist.

(Continued on page 319)

THE FREETHINKER MOVEMENT IN AUSTRIA

NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

This report was read to the September Conference of the WUF by Mr Salomon.

THE AUSTRIAN Freethinker Movement has not quite overcome a recent crisis. Nearly 90 per cent of the Austrian population belong to the Roman Catholic Church, and only less than 4 per cent confess to belonging to no religious community. The church is correspondingly active.

Prior to the war the Austrian Freethinkers were firmly established and closely linked with the Austrian Social-democratic Party. Since 1945 the Austrian Socialist Party, representing two million voters cannot support the freethinkers, especially as the conservative party is closely linked with the church.

While there may be more genuine religious feeling amongst peasants and farmers, townspeople conform out of economic and social fear. Thus only very few parents make use of the legal possibility to have their children exempted from religious instruction in schools, although the procedure is simple enough. The majority of parents are entirely ignorant of this civic right as it is never discussed. Religious belief and the Church are social taboos.

The most important task in Austria would be to fight the apathy against the privileges of the church and to replace social fear by the courage to confess to own ideas.

The Austrian Freethinkers' Association has lost prestige during recent years owing to a political minority which tried to infiltrate the organisation.

A Swiss newspaper cutting of 1955 seems to contain a good definition of a Freethinker:

"A man who declines all belief in miracles and an after-life, and who is convinced that everything that exists and happens has its natural causes, and can be explained according to the scientific knowledge of the time, and who is of the opinion that ethical principles have no need of being justified by metaphysics, but are rooted in this our life on earth."

We welcome all who confess to being Freethinkers. We have lost members who protested against the dictatorship of a political minority, but also members of this minority.

It is now our task to rebuild the Austrian Freethought Association. To attain this we must re-establish confidence

in the organisation and return to its proper aims. The Austrian Movement of the past contributed much to the recognition of the idea. In our attempts to reorganise we appeal to the more fortunate members of the World Union to support us in our work. If we can point out that we are backed by friends from all over the world, we shall be able to rouse hope and courage again in Austria.

I am firmly convinced that a movement against the church can and must exist, for the Freethought movement will be of growing importance.

How can we win more members? Philosophical discussions as to the causes why the Freethought Movement is not exercising its deserved international influence will lead us nowhere. **We have to stand on firm ground and take realistic measures. Let us concentrate on the man of our time.**

People are apathetic about most organisations and also about religion, as we hear the churches complain. The church is no longer able to give man the help it used to do. Especially young people, seeing the church in conflict with actual life, could be roused and made active.

Freethinkers too must cast off old habits and traditions and adapt to social changes. This does not mean the betrayal of principles but only to do what the church has always done so well: to adapt itself in order to appear modern and aggressive.

We live in a world of plenty. Yet it is a life of little dignity, subdued by political, religious and other tyrannies. Man's belief in his own strength and mental abilities is restricted by the church and even today explained by divine revelation or omnipotence.

Young people especially are conscious of their human intellect in the time of sputniks and telstars, and oppose the church quite naturally. Young open-minded students in particular will want to exercise their mental activities. Give youth a chance and do not wait until your adherents, though faithful, dwindle through the lack of renewing cells in their old bodies until, to the joy of the eternal church, their small enlightened circle evaporates altogether.

Let us all help to build a movement that is alive. Youthful enthusiasm and a pioneering spirit will appeal to the people of today, and the period of apathy will be followed by a new spring.

WOMEN AND DISARMAMENT

Kathleen Tacchi-Morris

AS DISARMAMENT was mentioned in the FREE-THINKER of August 26th, readers may be interested to know that I am forming a committee of women from all corners of the British Isles, each member to represent a district or town. To help her, she will have her own committee consisting of a representative from every women's organisation in the neighbourhood, and from every religious, non-religious, political and non-political organisation. These leaders will report their findings to me and I will keep Lord Chalfont informed, and also UNA Women's Advisory Council, so that the representatives of the organisations on the Council can interest their women members. I hope to organise study discussion groups so that women will be able to act through knowledge of all subjects leading to world disarmament. Lord Chalfont is, as far as I know, the only Minister of Disarmament in the world, and he has agreed to accept our co-operation.

Prejudice arising from politics, religion, creeds and colour must be eliminated in this matter which concerns us all. Women as well as men have a point of view to

express and we should be able to help each other in this great task of securing world disarmament.

On April 29th I went to the Dorchester to a luncheon given by the United Nations Association of Great Britain in honour of His Excellency U Thant. Mr Nigel Nicholson, MBE, Chairman of UNA Executive Committee, was in the chair, and the Prime Minister and the leader of the opposition parties both spoke. *But only U Thant spoke on the necessity for disarmament.* On that day, I also went to the "Background to a Teach-In on International Planning in the Development Decade" organised by the United Nations Association and the United Nations Students' Association. It was the first time that all the Co-Administrators and Directors of UN Agencies met together in London at the School of Economics. *They were all men on the platform, and not one mentioned disarmament.* Much was said about starvation in the world, but it seems to me that the waste on armaments should have been brought in as a major reason for this tragedy. Women seem to realise this more clearly, and this is where we have our part to play in forming public opinion. We need to bring commonsense, sound thought, study and ACTION to this problem, which is both psychological and technical and must be solved if the world is to escape annihilation.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

National Secular Society. Details of membership 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. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the NSS.

Humanist Letter Network (International): send s.a.e. to Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mound)—Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs CRONAN, MURRAY and MURRAY.

Manchester Branch NSS, Platts Fields, 3 p.m. Car Park, Victoria Street, 8 p.m.: Messrs COLLINS DUIGNAN, MILLS and WOOD.

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

Belfast Humanist Group (War Memorial Building, Waring Street), Tuesday, October 11th, 8 p.m., Meeting. Speaker, J. J. TOHILL.

Bromley Discussion Group (14 Great Elms Road, Bromley), Friday, October 7th, 8 p.m.: PHILIP RALPH, "The Contemporary Left"; Friday, October 14th, 8 p.m.: W. E. LUCKIN, "China".

Glasgow Secular Society (Grand Hotel, Charing Cross, Glasgow), Sunday, October 9th, 2.45 p.m.: HARRY MCSHANE, "The Humanism of Karl Marx".

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, October 9th, 6.30 p.m.: F. J. CORINA, "Centenary Year, a Time to Remember and Look Ahead".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall Humanist Centre, Red Lion Square, London, WC1), Sunday, October 9th, 11 a.m.: RICHARD CLEMENTS, "Is Britain Morally Bankrupt?"; Tuesday, October 11th, 6.30 p.m.: RICHARD CLEMENTS, "Love Comes of Age".

South Place Sunday Concert (Conway Hall, London), Sunday, October 9th, 6.30 p.m.: DUMKA PIANO TRIO, Dvorak, Beethoven, Brahms. Admission 3/-.

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.

VIETNAM (Continued from page 317)

(5) Ho Chi Minh refuses to negotiate. In 1940 Hitler suggested that Churchill negotiate. Churchill refused and said that Britain would fight on. Whose was the responsibility for the ensuing four years of war—Hitler's or Churchill's?

(6) Annual dividend returns on American capital invested in South Vietnam varies between about fifteen and thirty-five per cent.

(7) Troops are entering South Vietnam from the North. Are they entitled to do so? If not, then were the Free French entitled to be parachuted into Vichy France during the war?

(8) One does not have to be a communist to believe that the American position is unjustified. Witness the stand of

such people as Senators Fulbright and Kennedy, U Thant and Lord Russell, Lester Pearson and Grimond. Witness the position of such papers as the *Observer* and *Guardian*.

The democratic right to choose a government

The American case cannot rationally be defended. We may not like communism, but that is quite irrelevant. The Vietnamese people are entitled to choose their own government, as are any people. If the Geneva Agreement had been honoured by Ngo Dinh Diem there would be no Vietnam war today; there would be no slaughter of simple peasants; there would be no children burning to death.

If we try to justify the American intervention because we do not like communism, are the Americans also entitled to invade China, and Russia, and Cuba and Eastern Europe? And by the same token, if the Soviet Union does not like a Western government is it entitled to send troops to depose it? *I ask you to consider what the world consequences would be if the Soviet Union sent 300,000 troops to Mexico and bombed Mexicans daily with napalm and Lazy Dog, thirty miles from the border with the United States of America.*

Enlightened Americans need our support

There is only one just solution to the Vietnam war—and one does not have to be a communist to acknowledge it. *The Americans should withdraw.* The Vietnamese people are entitled to run their own country. The right course for any responsible citizen is *to give support to the articulate and enlightened body of dissent within America itself.* The American policy is an outrage. Dislike of communism should not blind us to this fact.

CONGRESS CONCERT

BOTH artists and audience united to ensure the success of the concert at Conway Hall, London, which was aptly described in the printed programme as "an entertainment". It was organised by the National Secular Society, and was in itself witness to the influence of freethought amongst leading intellectuals and artists of our day.

Miles Malleon, the experienced actor and man of the theatre, introduced the galaxy of artists to the audience. There could have been no better choice. He was in his best form: relaxed, friendly and lucid, and he kept the show on the move. The audience, which included delegates and visitors from overseas, responded enthusiastically. Particularly did they appreciate the sincerity and sensitivity of Geoffrey Burford's interpretation at the piano of Chopin. He was equally successful as accompanist to the talented violinist, Bernard Miller, and these two young artists combined to give splendid renderings of both Svendsen's *Romance*, and a sonata by Jean Marie Leclair.

Elizabeth Fraser and her ten-year-old twin daughters, Catherine and Isabel Giles, gave a colourful performance as a trio of Alex Rawley's *Irish Folk Song*; and there were also enjoyable solo contributions by each one of them.

Richard Ainly's presence must have reminded some of his admirers of the 1930's when he appeared in so many London productions. Others perhaps recalled his one-man show seen more recently at Hampstead Theatre Club. He made the entertainment memorable by his dramatic readings of some famous passages in prose and verse. His last item was an extract from a speech by Charles Bradlaugh at the International Congress in 1881. It was an imaginative stroke.

David Collis, Constance Cummings and Neelam Narang made splendid contributions to the show.

The evening came to a close with David Tribe's satirical skit on Billy Graham's missionary enterprises in Soho.

RC.

LETTERS

Federalism

IN YOUR most interesting *Report from Paris* you mention Americans who share your views about Vietnam and Germans who do not resent reference to Nazi persecutions. I hope that all those English Humanists who are so keen on world federalism are equally willing to recognise that federalism, like charity, should begin at home. It was federal union that the Scots wanted with England at the beginning of the 18th century but the English attitude from a position of greatly superior strength, was "You'll take incorporating union or ruin".

In view of the outburst of English chauvinism during the recent World Cup finals—a display that appalled even German observers—no English people are entitled to complain about the resurgence of Welsh and Scottish nationalism. Like many other Scots and Welsh, I am all for international co-operation—but with Wales and Scotland as self-governing countries, not parts of England. Under the present set-up even Scotland's ancient allies against the English, the French, can describe Robert Burns as "the famous English regional poet"; Burns who, no less than Hume, was both a citizen of the world and a fervent, patriotic Scotsman.

J. A. S. NISBET

IN "News and Notes" (August 26) the suggestion that Mr Sandys "does the killing" of police murderers would seem to me beside the point. In war a deserter may be shot while running away, as a deterrent to others. After the death sentence by court martial no one man is given the task of shooting the offender. Several men shoot, but I understand only one rifle is loaded.

The housing and maintenance of murders is to my mind as senseless as the lavish care of infants whose state of mental deficiency has been ascertained. A constructive alternative might be to use murderers as subjects for experiment as animals are at present used, or abused, in vivisection, for the benefit of mankind. They would be of far greater use even than animals in this way, and the prospect of being a "guinea pig" might even be a compelling deterrent to a would be murderer.

GERTRUDE E. ROBERTS

International Secular Education Congress: Paris 1966

I AM most obliged to you for having published David Tribe's important article about our International Secular Education congress. May I however correct certain inexactitudes? The congress was not held at the initiative of the thirty-three international educators. It was a congress of the International League of Teaching, Education and Popular Culture. The declaration of principle is simply a text stating a conception of the above, and the signatories took no initiative or responsibility in the organisation of the congress.

You also state that the congress was financed by several organisations. You forgot to say that it was essentially financed by the association that organised it and took the initiative—the International League of Teaching.

Finally, the Spanish and Portuguese were not prevented from coming, but in fact the delegates who were present were colleagues from the Spanish and Portuguese Leagues which were both created and function in exile in France. On the other hand delegates from certain Latin American countries that have authoritarian régimes were prevented from participating in our work.

I hope that your own congress at the start of September took place under better conditions. We would have liked to have sent an observer, but unfortunately that was not possible.

A. JENGER,
Paris. *The Secretary General (ILTEPC).*

H. G. Wells

I WAS GLAD to see the article (September 23) about H. G. Wells who thought and wrote and talked more about World Government (or, as he called it, the World State) than anybody else. Since the problem of World Government is the outstanding one of the present day, this makes Wells the greatest political thinker of the century.

It is appalling that Wells, and the ideal he stood for, should have been so neglected in an era when people pride themselves so much on being enlightened. Since 1940 there has been an arrogant disregard of the idea of World Government, and those who support it have been treated almost as criminals (as with all real pioneers and revolutionaries). It is not only conservatives and imperialists that have been to blame; some of the worse offenders have been so-called "enlightened" people—Fabians, Angry Young Men, the Communists and others. These people must all bear their share of responsibility for the Cold War, Korea, Suez, Hungary, Cyprus, the Arab-Israeli conflict and Vietnam.

I. S. LOW

REVIEW

Richard Clements

A New Look at Education

Essays in Local Government Enterprise, Vol. 3 (Merlin Press, 15s). THE third volume in a series about local government work in Britain, contains twenty-eight essays, plus Ellis Hillman's editorial introduction, on the range and diversity of municipal achievement in the field of education. The main themes, surveyed from different angles, are concerned with the present-day needs and opportunities in primary, secondary and further education.

There are also a few lively and searching studies on the philosophy, purposes and practice of education. Notable amongst these are the two factual and closely reasoned essays: by Peter Ibbotson, *The Case for the Comprehensive School*; and *The Argument for Comprehensive Schools* by Peter Townsend. This subject is then carried further by John Daniels, in a critical and hard-hitting contribution, *Beyond the Comprehensive School*.

"English education," he writes, "more classically than in any other country in the world, is deeply divided by class barriers. . . . The British ruling class always, yesterday as today, has been cautious about extending education to the working class."

However, he welcomes the fact that over one hundred LEA's have plans for implementing comprehensive secondary schools in one or two years' time. The outcome of all this, he thinks, means the coming of the *un-streamed* comprehensive school, an American and a Russian dream already realised in a few places.

Ann Dryland writes lucidly and convincingly about the Leicestershire Plan. She has much to say that will appeal to both the teaching profession and the general reader.

"The plan is simply," she writes. "The eleven plus has been abolished, and all children, when they are eleven, go to a common high school where they remain until they are fourteen. At this stage parents are consulted, and all of those who are prepared to allow their children to remain at school until the age of sixteen can send them on to the grammar school. Those children who will be leaving at fifteen stay on in the high school . . ."

"It may well be," she adds, "that the scheme will show that the dichotomy which exists between academic and vocational studies is not only undesirable but unnecessary."

There are other exciting facts in this essay that are worthy of the attention of educationists. On an interim assessment she thinks the results of the plan are encouraging.

Primary education is dealt with by two experienced teachers: William Hamling, MP for Woolwich West, writes with sensitive feeling and insight on the Primary schools and says that they are "the most neglected part of the state educational system"; and Betty Jones writes about *Primary School Teaching in London*.

Of special interest to readers of the FREETHINKER will be the essay contributed by David Tribe, the President of the National Secular Society. It is a clear and incisive statement of the case for Secular Education. He rightly calls attention to the fact that many countries have established secular constitutions and says his was the only equitable way for the state to ensure a hearing of all points of view while not siding with any one of them.

"Neither the United States nor India can be considered anti- or even non-religious," he writes, "but their peoples had good reason to recall that theology is a divisive, not a unifying influence, and that sectarian differences can lead to bitterness and even bloodshed. In a plural society all voices should be heard equally . . ."

From the many telling points in David Tribe's essay I have chosen these:

"Nobody who has investigated the health of worship and RI in schools has done other than shake his head, whether he be atheist or Christian . . . all the educationists in the country who have studied this aspect of schools are dissatisfied.

He quotes the striking words of Harold Loukes:

"While Christians are discussing how to be 'honest to God', Christian teachers have the additional problem: how to be 'honest to children'."

"Assembly is never honest at any level. You cannot suspend judgment about an alleged phenomenon while you are worshipping it."

Tribe concludes his essay with a ringing sentence: "Freedom and honesty can come only with secular education."

I commend this book most warmly to our readers.