

FREETHINKER

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SUBMISSIONS TO THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS COMMISSION

The National Secular Society

IN *A History of Winchester College* (1899), Arthur F. Leach observes:

"The only working definition of a Public School then is, that it is an aristocratic or plutocratic school which is wholly, or almost wholly, a Boarding School, is under some form of more or less public control, and is, in the hideous jargon of the late Royal Commission on Secondary Education, 'non-local'."

It is safe to say that most of the founders of public schools would not acknowledge this definition and that only an agonised return to their foundations would persuade them of its *de facto* accuracy.

Up till the nineteenth century it was usual for the sons of the aristocracy and country gentlemen to be educated at home by governesses and tutors. In the twelfth century Pope Alexander III instructed every cathedral church to appoint a schoolmaster for the gratuitous instruction of poor and friendless boys; that is, those selected from the largely illiterate masses. Some cathedrals, such as Canterbury and York, had long since done so. Religious orders occasionally set up their own schools for general instruction, or assisted the cathedral schools by supplying free hostels for their students. Monarchs and wealthy merchants, especially in the sixteenth century, followed their example. These 'grammar' schools were for 'fifty boys, poor and destitute of the help of their friends' (King's School, Canterbury), 'seventy poor scholars' (Winchester and Eton), 'fatherless children and other poor men's children' (Christ's Hospital), 'one hundred free-placers' (Merchant Taylors' School), 'Foundationers to receive the instruction of the School free of all charge' (Rugby). Harrow School was founded as the 'Free Grammar School of John Lyon', still its official name, and there is no record of any payment

except the entrance fee at Shrewsbury till 1798, over two hundred years from its foundation.

The schools were intended to be essentially local schools. In days of poor communications this was usually taken for granted, though the rights of local citizens were jealously written into the constitutions of some, notably Rugby, Shrewsbury and Harrow. 'Foreigners', just as rich or aristocratic children, seem to have been admitted to many of these schools from their early days, but it is clear that this was more of an essay in mediaeval democracy than the fulfilment of the original, and till the nineteenth century the main, object of the school.

In 1864 a Public Schools Commission made recommendations which were the main inspiration of the 1868 Public Schools Act. This was announced as, and in many ways was, a reforming measure. Various abuses had grown up over the centuries. The schools had been endowed by wealthy bishops (Winchester), merchants (Merchant Taylors', Harrow and Charterhouse) and monarchs (Eton and Westminster) with great lands and other incomes. These appreciated in value down the centuries and were not always properly administered. Sundry provisions relating to the ages of students, salaries of and restrictions on (eg, bachelorhood or religious tests) masters, provision of education for boys withdrawn from religious instruction (where this was allowed) and subjects (both relative and absolute) in the curriculum did not have in Industrial Revolution Britain the relevance they had had in earlier times. It was necessary to give the governors powers to change their constitutions. But the suspicion remains that, just two years before the Forster Education Act introduced a state system of education, this act was designed to circumvent any plans that school boards might conceive to integrate the public schools into the national scheme, where, by their origins, they naturally belonged. So governors were given powers to make changes, or legalise those already made, along the lines of the Thomas Arnold cult at Rugby, which set the pattern for the modern public school. The original character of the schools was changed by greatly increasing the total number of students and laying down stiff fees, making it more difficult for poor boys to become foundationers by decreeing that much which had hitherto been free was not really covered by the original (spartan) endowment and would be charged for, and removing local restrictions. So that the inhabitants

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of Harrow-on-the-Hill today have as much influence on the life of Harrow School as the herdsmen of Dartmoor have on the Gaol.

This history has been gone into to support the contention that, irrespective of their charitable status and consequent taxation and rating advantages—which introduce wider issues—the older public schools arose to cater for the public and not an arrogant elite, and should return to the public. It is to be hoped that the governors will appreciate the justice of this contention and co-operate with local authorities in planning integration into the maintained system. If they will not, the Government should, in our submission, lay down the way in which this is to be done: eg, appointing a controlling proportion of governors on the board. Some schools will be large enough to become local comprehensives; others are too small for this purpose but have special library, museum or sporting facilities or buildings of historic and architectural interest to make them suitable as sixth form colleges, art schools, physical training colleges and the like. With the assumption of local authority control, such institutions as compulsory chapel, religious instruction and cadet corps, fagging for and beating by senior students should, where they exist, be terminated. The aim of true education is to encourage the potentialities and thoughtfulness of the individual and not

to impose mindless conformity by a régime of physical and mental duress.

There are other public schools which are nineteenth and twentieth century foundations established by private subscription, where the case for state take-over is not so apparent. These schools at least do not pretend to be what they are not. Many of them are religious foundations and take their religion much more seriously than the older, nominally Anglican public schools (whose interest in Anglicanism consists solely in the fact that it is established). They are unashamedly in theory as well as in practice middle or upper class. The Woodard Schools conceived by Canon N. Woodard in 1848, were to be of three types: (1) for sons of clergymen and other gentlemen; (2) for sons of substantial tradesmen, farmers, clerks and other persons of similar station; (3) for sons of petty shopkeepers, skilled mechanics and other persons of very small means that could be thought of as lower middle class. Anything lower was not considered. While there may not be a case for taking over such schools there is clearly no case for according them the lustre and charitable status of 'public school', with all the advantages that accrue to students on seeking profitable employment or university places, and they should be allowed to subside into the generality of private schools.

THE TYRANNY OF HOLY HUMBUG

Harry Lamont

WHEN CHRISTIANITY TRIUMPHED in the ancient world, unbelievers were treated with incredible savagery. During the rule of the Inquisition in many parts of the world, heretics were tortured and roasted over slow fires for the good of their immortal souls.

If a bold person questioned the *credo* he was considered *ipso facto* to be wicked and depraved, capable of every villainy. It behoved one, therefore, to pretend to be pious. Only those in holy orders could become heads of schools and colleges. So hypocrisy flourished for hundreds of years. Indeed it still does. If a person refuses to swear on the Bible in court he is deemed by some to be wicked and unworthy of credence. I have seen a witness glared at and brow-beaten by a stupid magistrate because he preferred to affirm.

I listened to a wireless discussion about our empty churches. It was pathetic as parsons tried to explain our religious apathy by the triumph of sin. It was assumed that the Gospel was absolutely authentic and valid. But nowadays intelligent people are no longer terrified by threats of hell and eternal damnation. Of course there *may* be a God and a future life, but we know nothing about them. The idea that God is a glorified man seems to me absurd. Naturally people fear death, so postulate eternal life beyond the grave. Religion has a tremendous grip on simple people because drowning wretches clutch at straws.

It is fashionable in certain religious circles to sneer at humanists because we admit we don't know anything about the deity and the hereafter, but then nobody does. Despite legends to the contrary, nobody has ever come back from the grave to tell us what happens after our demise. Shakespeare reminds us we prefer to bear our present ills than fly to unknown ones.

I don't believe in any future life. This one is quite enough for me. The idea of heaven and hell is a concept for simple primitive people. Bacon said that if you abolish churches you will have to double the police force, but such a notion is gradually being discredited.

The power of the Church in Western Europe and elsewhere was due partly to the fact that the priest terrified the moribund with threats of hell and eternal damnation. The dying person gave his money and lands to the Church to ensure salvation.

Many years ago I read a book by Tolstoy called *My Religion*, in which he said that when Christians were thrown to the lions in ancient Rome and died with fortitude, the faith spread, but when the western powers became Christian in theory (but not in practice), the religion languished. His argument is that if we abolish the police and the armed forces and turn the other cheek, evildoers would triumph momentarily, but soon we would convert them by the force of our example, and bring about the kingdom of Christ upon earth.

Such an idea may seem fantastic, but it is no more absurd than the spectacle of so-called Christian countries pretending to follow the teaching of Christ while behaving like heathens. The combination of religion with militarism has always seemed loathsome to me. We go to war with God in our baggage waggons like a tribal fetish. I still recall chaplains dressed as officers preaching to the troops that God wanted us to kill as many Germans as possible.

There is an essay by Bertrand Russell called *The Evil That Good Men Do*, that is amusing but contains much truth. A good man in the conventional sense is one who doesn't smoke, swear, touch alcohol or tell improper stories. He spends much of his leisure sniffing for sin, like a hog sniffs for truffles. The holy man frowns on simple pleasures as displeasing to God. He sees sin in a pack of cards and considers sex (save in marriage with a licence to procreate) as Satan's lure to eternal damnation.

I listened to a wireless sermon the other day by a wise-acre who assumed that sex is dirty, whereas I believe (with D. H. Lawrence), that it is the sunshine of life.

When religion is paramount one has to conform or suffer obliquity. The freethinker is suspect. One rotten apple will contaminate the barrel, therefore he must be elimin-

ated. There is nobody so cruel as the real bigot; he is merciless to the agnostic whom he regards as public enemy number one.

In a book I read many years ago Edgar Hoover (one-time Head of the American FBI), stated that gangsters became what they were because they did not receive religious instruction in youth, but such a notion seems to me fallacious. My pals and I were indoctrinated with holy humbug as children, but it did us no good at all. When not in chapel or Sunday School we behaved like the worst type of heathen.

In *Death of a Hero*, Richard Aldington said that religion is such an easy excuse for being nasty. I knew tyrants who got away with murder because it was assumed that a religious person must be actuated by the highest motives.

Piety is a good racket. I knew a rogue who wangled a commission in the Army because of his religious influence on his men, but it was all bogus.

But if you want to be respectable it pays to pretend to

be pious. It doesn't matter how wicked a scoundrel you are, so long as you conform outwardly to the conventions of holy humbug. Every day in an Oxford café I dine next to four fat unctuous hypocrites who preach the Gospel of Christ while living like fighting cocks.

The other day a local parson died and left £9,700. In his life he had preached the Gospel of Christ who said, "Give your goods to the poor, take up my cross and follow Me".

I am not against religion, but I am against intolerance and the holy humbugs who frown on simple pleasures and believe they are God's emissaries. Organised religion tends to become static, tyrannical and cruel. The cleric in his robes is usually a solemn, pompous ass.

Let us enjoy life and not go about with long faces because a jealous God is watching us. Usually orthodox religion becomes a strait jacket and its adherents unpleasant killjoys.

Margaret Green

YOUNGER VIEW

I RECENTLY ASKED several children between 5-10 years their ideas of Jesus and God. All the children were having scripture lessons at school on an average of one hour a week (plus Morning Assembly). Many of them also went to Sunday School, Scripture Union, Bible School, and/or Church. Most 4-year-olds I found were too young to answer seriously. One said, "Jesus is my teddy bear and God is Father Christmas", and another, simply, "Jesus is Jesus and God is God", so I confined the questioning to Primary School children, and listed below are their answers.

Age	Jesus	God	Other remarks
5	Don't know—we pray to Him.	Don't know.	
5½	Don't know.	Don't know.	The same.
5½	God.	Jesus.	
5½	At Christmas it is His birthday.	Don't know.	
6	A man.	A man.	
6½	Man who helps people who are sick, ill and poorly.	Man who takes a long time to speak to people.	
6½	Don't know.	Don't know.	
6¾	Christ, God.	Someone who died for us.	
7	Man who did miracles.	Don't know. We have stories about it at school.	
7½	Don't know.	Don't know—He's dead.	
7½	A man.	A man.	
7¾	He hanged for us.	He made the earth.	
8	He makes people better.	Don't know.	
8¼	Same as God.	Man who goes around doing good.	
8½	A spirit.	A spirit.	Spirits are white things that fly.
8¼	God's son.	Man who made the earth.	
9	Any kind of person—a man.	Like a ghost.	
9¼	God's son.	He made the world.	If you break a promise God can kill you.
9½	A man.	Don't know.	I used to go to Sunday School.
9¾	God's son.	Don't know.	I used to go to Sunday School.
10	Son of God.	Don't know.	I don't listen to all that stuff, it's not very interesting.
10¼	I believe in Him.	A soul.	I can't believe in miracles.
10½	Son of God.	The Lord, the Creator.	
10¾	Same sort of thing as God.	Some sort of ghost.	I don't really understand it all.

There was generally slight embarrassment in answering the questions, which could account for some of the 'don't know's'. But why should religion be embarrassing? If children were used to talking *about* the subject and not being talked *at*, this would not be so. Apart from the 'don't knows', other children gave pat textbook answers which could not be elaborated on, and often ended in 'don't know'. Almost all of them said heaven was 'up in the sky', or where dead people go, but two said they didn't believe there was such a place.

One 10-year-old said her teacher sat and fiddled with a piece of chalk throughout the lesson, and it was so annoying that she found herself watching the chalk and not listening to what was being said. Comment from a 7-year-old was, "I don't think God could just make flowers and hippopotomuses if they weren't seeds and baby hippopotomuses first, and He couldn't just make a man and a woman if they weren't children first. But we had a story at school and it said He did."

Another boy, a 6-year-old, asked his mother a similar question. His parents showed him the similarity between monkeys and man and explained how man had gradually developed. But how confusing it must be for children to hear one thing at school and another at home.

What a pity this valuable school time isn't spent in discussion. Even quite young children are capable of sensible, interesting discussions. So much can be gained in talking over with children subjects, which are often thought to be beyond their intelligence. If their views and ideas are expressed, misinterpretations and misunderstandings can easily be seen and cleared up. (My own son for a long time was singing, "All things bright and beautiful, all *teachers* great and small"!.) Had the 6-year and 7-year-olds been able to talk over their points, it would have been far more useful than just listening to, and supposedly accepting, the stories.

Religions in all their forms should be talked *about*—their development, the historical and mythical backgrounds, wars caused by them, customs associated with them, distribution throughout the world, etc. In this way children would gradually learn about the *people* connected with them and the reasons for many differences between countries.

(Continued at foot of page 100)

NEWS AND NOTES

IN THE LAST eight months, 125 publications (including *Last Exit to Brooklyn*, *Tropic of Cancer*, and *The Reasonings* by Aretino), have been seized on orders from Rome's local authorities.

The Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, has commended Rome's public prosecutor, Signor Pedote, for his good work and said that the journalistic profession should purify itself.

Amendment to Obscene Books Act

MR JENKINS, Home Secretary, is to table an amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill which will ensure that private prosecutions under the Obscene Publications Act will carry the right of a claim to trial by jury.

The amendment will not annul the right of a private citizen to bring a case against a bookseller or publisher. But it will have to be brought under Section 2 of the 1959 Act, which would enable the publisher to produce expert witnesses to argue a book's literary merits.

Publishers make the point that forfeiture procedure under Section 3 of the Act is essentially a means of dealing with bulk pornography. Mr Jenkin's amendment will mean that only the police or officials of the Director of Public Prosecutions may apply for a warrant under Section 3 to seize obscene literature.

Free-art

AT A MEETING convened by the National Secular Society at the Academy of Visual Arts on March 13th it was decided to sponsor the formation of an affiliated group to be called 'Free-art'.

Affiliation was felt to be more appropriate than full identity because it was considered that art which was bound to express the secular viewpoint was no more free than art in the service of the church or authority, and that it would be more in accordance with the concept of Free-thought to encourage all forms of creative expression, whatever their motivation.

In the popular and socially conditioned sense such terms 'profane', 'heretical', 'indecent', 'obscene', become epithets of derogation when applied to any form of art which does not toe the party or 'moral' line; furthermore such art appears to be falling more and more under the censure of the authorities, with the result that cases are continually coming before the courts in which individuals are being punished for seeking forms of expression which are true to their artistic natures.

It was felt that by forming such a group as Free-art under the protective umbrella of the National Secular Society it would be possible to provide a focal meeting point for individuals concerned with freedom of expression in all fields of art, and that by arranging meetings for the informal participation in and examination of such free expression, that individual creative workers would not feel such a sense of isolation and reproach.

It was agreed that a first informal meeting of Free-art would take place at the Academy of Visual Arts, 12 Soho Square, London, W1, on Friday, April 14th, at 8 pm, when Jean Straker would explain by demonstration and illustration some of the difficulties and challenges which beset the presentation of the female nude in photographic art arising from today's censorship laws.

It was Jean Straker who organised the teach-in on Censorship in the Arts at Hampstead Town Hall last October, and who is now petitioning the European Commission on Human Rights on grounds that he is a victim of certain violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms relating to freedom of expression.

Admission to the Free-art event will be by ticket only, price 5/-. obtainable from the National Secular Society, 103 Borough High Street, London, SE1.

Humanist Film Society

THE FIRST PRESENTATION by the Humanist Film Society (recently formed by the National Secular Society) will be at the Asquith Room, 2 Soho Square, London, W1, on Sunday, 16th April, at 7 pm. The film will be *JAN HUS*, which was made in Czechoslovakia and received the Edinburgh Diploma of Merit in 1954.

It depicts the origin of the Hussite movement and the basic ideas of the philosopher Jan Hus. In the early 15th century, with the Church split by the grave problems of papal schism, Jan Hus tries to return to Christ's original teachings and bring about "God's Kingdom on earth". He is summoned to the council of Constanza, declared a heretic and in 1415 burnt at the stake.

Admission is free, and there will be a collection.

NSS Annual Dinner

READERS are reminded that the National Secular Society's Annual Dinner will be held on April 8th at the Hanover-Grand and that tickets *must* be obtained in advance. Speakers include Miles Malleon, Lord Willis, Baroness Wootton and Margaret Knight.

YOUNGER VIEW

(Continued from previous page)

At the same time the reasons for a good moral code, independent of any religious belief, should be explained and discussed. Not because God or the Head Teacher say so (which are common answers), but because of the way behaviour affects other people and oneself.

It is lack of understanding which creates most friction. Yet considerable time is spent drilling our children along one narrow line of thought, so they are unable to appreciate other ways of life. There is much talk of abolishing religious teaching in its present form in schools. Don't abolish it completely, but make it a discussion on Religions, and create a greater understanding and broader outlook on life.

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ADMISSION FREE

NEW THINKING ON WAR AND PEACE: I

A. C. Thompson

Philosophy and War

This is the first of a series of four articles which look frankly into the causes and prevention of war. The remaining articles, which will follow weekly, are: II, Sex and War; III, Liberty and War; and IV, Education and War.

AS LONG AS human beings have lived upon the earth, they have faced a necessity of being "moral", but they have not known why. Our superstitious progenitors of prehistoric ages said that the reason was to please unseen spirits, whose capricious wills dominated all events beyond the control of man. Morality has ever since, to the present day, been interpreted as homage and service to a never-seen being and as obedience to his supposed "will". In ancient Greece, one Socrates brought into existence the deliberate study of the nature and origins of and reasons for morality, and he thereby instituted that division of philosophy known as ethics. Through the centuries from his to our times, philosophers who succeeded Socrates have presented to the world a variety of ethical theories, chiefly in an effort to provide a "principle" of morals—a formula, a standard, a criterion—which would rationally identify the good and the evil, and declare the reason why it was good or evil. They failed, because of certain philosophical difficulties.

This variety of ethical theories included those of Cyrenaics and Cynics, Hedonists, Epicureans, Stoics, Utilitarians, Pragmatists and Existentialists; ethical theories have been elaborated by the philosophers Grotius, Hobbes, Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, Westermarck and others. It is fair to say that philosophers have never reached agreement. The student who pursues moral philosophy in university is surprised, perhaps frustrated, to find that 20 centuries of ethical thought have produced no reliable way of telling right from wrong. There has been found no natural principle of ethics which can be proved to be valid, or universal, or obligating.

This has been due to grievous philosophical difficulties. David Hume pointed out that all ethical theories start with certain facts and end by declaring an obligation, although there can be no logical passage from an 'is' to an 'ought' proposition. G. E. Moore brought forth reasons why 'good' is essentially indefinable. Obligation has been declared unknown either by induction or deduction and there is no other way of knowing. No principle can be ultimate, for it is always possible to ask for a more ultimate one. No principle has been found universal, for all admit of exceptions.

Yet, on the other hand, there has been in all times and places almost universal agreement among all peoples that right and wrong exist, and also about which acts are right and which wrong. This agreement argues that there does exist a binding ethical principle, if it could but be located and stated, that morality is more than custom, that it is not purely a matter of individual opinion.

Recently, a new ethical theory has emerged, which escapes the difficulties of all the others, which can be proved *a priori* by pure deduction from first principles, which claims to be universal, ultimate and inescapably obligating. This is the "Social-Survival" theory of ethics, which maintains that good is that which conduces to the survival of society. Without society, survival of the individual would

be difficult, for man is not by nature adapted to solitary life, and as long as one individual interacts with another in a society, the principle which must guide their interaction logically requires that their society must endure. The reason why government exists and why laws are made is to preserve society. The reason why there are morals and customs is to permit human interaction to continue. The reason why children are reared and educated is because society must do so to preserve itself. The reason why religion has endured through the ages is that religion is a chief tribalism which unites a society into a cohesive whole. The reason why we hate foreigners, or people of other race, nationality or belief is that we do not fit into one another's own societies. The reason for the world's intolerance of new ideas and its persecution of original thinkers is the fear that change will disrupt society. Society must be preserved, at all costs. Sex morality according to the Social-Survival principle has been discussed in two previous articles in the FREETHINKER.

This principle of morality is that which has been recognised implicitly as long as men have existed on the earth, but it has never before been put into words or proved deductively to be a logical necessity. It is a curious fact that, in all their moral acts throughout the ages, men have followed this principle but have not known it, and have said instead that they were obeying divine laws, while philosophers devised most elaborate arguments for other theories. It is a principle which people have had to follow, whether they were able to verbalise it or not, because it is a logical necessity, logically imperative, logically inescapable. If any people at any time may have allowed the behaviour which they approved to depart from this principle, they would have faced the breakdown of their society, and they would have modified such approval with alarm and haste. Any race of people who persisted in ignoring this principle, if such a thing is conceivable, are now extinct. The Social-Survival principle has that simplicity which is required for observance by a simple-minded savage at the dawn of human life; any complicated or abstract theory of ethics is necessarily a false one, for it could not have guided the morals of our early ancestors or of savages today.

But the discovery of this ethical principle has brought with it a new and startling revelation: that there is a logical moral necessity why men fight. Through the centuries, all who have thought about the causes of war have declared them simply human wickedness—greed, cruelty, lust for power. Candid examination of history in the light of the Social-Survival theory shows that it is not thus at all. People who go to war think they are right in so doing, that God is on their side, and are prepared to give their lives freely in defence of what they think is noble and good. Few instances exist of people who went to war believing themselves to be simply brigands. People go to war for the survival of their societies; and this can be maintained to be the universal cause of war.

It is only the true understanding of the nature and cause of war which can effect its banishment, because as long as men have misconceptions about why they fight they are unlikely to remove their grievances. The striving by one people for imperialistic control over others, the struggle for independence and freedom, competition for resources or for markets, efforts to gain control of strategic locations,

these are all frantic endeavours of peoples to preserve their own societies. And people feel that they have moral obligation to do these things. War is essentially a moral necessity; and any formula for world peace which ignores this law is based fundamentally upon error. Papers, such as international peace pacts and UN documents may denounce war, but they will not change its fundamental character simply by condemning it. Much expense and effort can be wasted—indeed, many human lives can be lost, many human bodies can be cruelly maimed and much of man's construction can be destroyed—in a foolish effort to secure peace without a basic understanding of the nature of war.

Neither armament nor disarmament, for example, will prevent war. There are those who assert that huge stockpiles of nuclear weapons constitute a "deterrent" to war, and should be increased; and there are those who assert that because they arouse fear and distrust, they incite war, and should be reduced. Armament has never prevented war; it has reinforced courage to fight and has alarmed other people to arm themselves for their own survival. According to the Social-Survival standard, especially unilateral disarmament would be immoral: for a government to throw away the people's defences would expose society to destruction and it simply would not be done. Disarmament does not extirpate the roots of war; the best it can do, if it were possible, is reduce the casualties and damage. The basic weakness of both armament and disarmament proposals is that neither alleviates the deep political and social tensions which divide societies.

On the Social-Survival principle of ethics, as will be shown in the articles of this series, most war is simply a moral error. It is because mankind has been unable to recognise explicitly the true nature of morality, because men have clung to primitive, superstitious explanations for why they are moral, that they have been blinded to the actual source of their hostility. War is an endeavour to remove a threat to the survival of one's society by risking the lives of individual members. By its very nature, war

tends to destruction rather than to survival. Candid examination of history reveals that the threat to survival which initiates hostilities is more often imaginary than real, or rather that it is more often reciprocal fear than actual peril.

The second of this series will discuss the origin of and reasons for the separate societies of mankind now inhabiting the earth. The thesis of this series is that a significant contribution to world peace can be made by universal international law, and that such law is possible if it can be based upon recognised, valid ethical principle. Competent jurists have expressed opinions that there is no international law except comparative law (relations of separate countries' laws) plus treaty law, for lack of (a) a lawgiver, and (b) sanctions. In this proposal, rational proof of the ethical obligations of nations would be the lawgiver, and the security of humanity against annihilation would provide the sanction. The criminal who violates his country's laws hopes to escape detection; but the acts of nations are public, broadcast in news, difficult to conceal and subject to world opinion if not to punishment, and most nations try to preserve an honourable image.

Many have proposed world union, under a world government as a solution, but others have pointed out that this is not feasible now, because the differences among societies are real differences which can not be removed by compulsory union. Instead of so extreme an effort as world government, a more moderate step would be institution of international law based on incontrovertible reasons such as are provided by the Social-Survival principle, embodied in a document, a world constitution, or whatever it may be called. Secularists, who are not bound to an extra-mundane morality, would be free to espouse a natural system of ethics and to promote its introduction into ethical relations among nations, for which the present supernatural morality is seen as wholly inadequate.

I do not like to end on an ominous note, but I must point out that mankind may otherwise find permanent peace in the grave.

James MacAlpine

IRISH EVANGELISM

NO ONE need be embarrassed if stopped in Belfast and asked: "Are you saved?" Because it is not intended as a question requiring an answer. It is asked so that the questioner can tell of his own conversion. All that is necessary, for the sake of politeness, is to return the compliment and ask: "Are you?"

Such has happened to me often enough. The last time on the pavement in Great Victoria Street. I listened courteously and learned that he had been saved for twenty-two years. I shook hands with him, and received his blessing.

That Belfast is the home of evangelism I am inclined to believe, because in no other city have I found so many people concerned about my spiritual welfare. In addition to soap coupons I receive a great many tracts; and although such would seem to be unrelated to soap, yet it is said that cleanliness is next to godliness. The tracts use the "before" and "after" technique of advertising, with a picture of "despair" changed to one of "rejoicing". The prescription being a spiritual *placebo*. Most of the tracts are printed abroad, in Canada, and the United States; others in Scotland, especially in Kilmarnock—the home of "Morisonianism"; and the rest locally.

They are all alike, being designed for people with a low

IQ. Such as the man who accosted me in the railway station and told me that his train left at six-thirty-five; and then asked: "What time wud that be?" Or the one who stopped me and inquired how he would get a bus? I pointed out to him a nearby bus stop. He said: "Yes, but there's a "No Waiting" sign there. I repressed a smile and told him that the sign was intended for vehicles only so as to keep the space clear for passengers. "Just fancy", he said, "an' me houldin' back, an' missin' buses!"

Throughout the six counties that comprise Northern Ireland one encounters religious stickers and painted texts on walls and bridges, and any other likely place to catch people's eyes. One I noticed was on the back of a wayside seat, which read: "Come unto me all ye that are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest". There is also a militant form of evangelism with a more direct, personal form of address, such as one set in a field beside a busy road on the outskirts of Belfast, which asks "What think ye of Christ!" Now since Protestant evangelism is founded on a belief in the natural depravity of human beings this sign has special relevance to the bus loads of "sinners" who race past on their various nefarious missions in and out of the city.

THEATRE

David Tribe

I DON'T SUPPOSE Giles Cooper's **Happy Family** will live. Compared with Ibsen and Chekhov, whose construction and mood it somewhat resembles, the characters are too improbable. Unlike Sheridan or Wilde, with their similar Anglo-Irish capacity to laugh at life's vexations, it has no timeless satirical types or *bravura* passages of richly orchestrated dialogue. Some will write it off as an essay in the 1960's theatre of kinks. And yet it is a masterpiece, perfect in its own way. From its opening with the youngish spinster staring across the footlights as the kettle, with comforting associations of English tea, whistles and the front door bell rings, heralding the intrusion of an uncertain world outside, we expect strange and surprising things to happen. We are not disappointed. With rare professionalism Giles Cooper develops his tale of the brother and two sisters who cannot bear to live together yet have not been able psychologically to escape from one another, and the "nobody" from beyond the family circle who for a while figures in their lives. The play can be taken as a surrealist phantasy, full of symbolism. But are the characters really so improbable? How much of Giles Cooper's own tragic life is in the play—how much of our own naivety, bitterness, pretence, inadequacy? Here symbolism and reality are in perfect parallel, and you can take the drama as you like. It is one of the most touching things I have seen for a long time; but its description as a "comedy" is amply justified by bubbling dialogue of constant wit.

The small cast—Gillian Raine, Michael Denison, Dulcie Gray and Robert Fleming—and director Donald McWhinnie match the faultlessness of the writing.

REVIEW

Simon Ellis

Why I Am Not A Christian by Bertrand Russell. Foreword by David Tribe. Price 1/-. (This publication marks the 40th anniversary of Russell's lecture to the South London branch of the NSS.)

THIS WORK was first given as a lecture forty years ago and the congratulations which one offers to the committee of the National Secular Society, on its decision to reprint it, must be tempered by asking why it took them so long to do so. One hopes it will now become one of the Society's permanent publications.

From its provocative title through to its challenging conclusion, this essay outlines the principal bases which have been advanced for Christian belief; examines the validity of each; and shows them all to be as well-founded in logic and reason as is the fitting of lightning-conductors to churches.

Then as now, consideration of 'Christianity' was complicated by the imprecise connotation(s) given to the word 'Christian'. The author defines it as one who believes in God, in Christ and in immortality and goes on to state his personal rejection of these beliefs. He concludes that such beliefs are founded in fear and childhood indoctrination coupled with a psychological need for a father-figure.

In this work, as so often elsewhere, Bertrand Russell's contribu-

tion lies not only in the technical content of the writing, but also in the "fearless attitude and free intelligence" from which it springs. To the qualities he calls for in his conclusion, "What We Must Do", his own example is the best encouragement.

Perhaps the best commentary on this publication lies in its own foreword which notes that, although it has often produced anger and censorship, it has never yet produced a reasoned answer.

LETTERS

Responsibility for worshipping facilities

ON February 21st *The Times* had an article entitled "Home Mosques annoy the neighbours". In the article the Home Office Under Secretary is quoted as saying that the town council and the Home Office had a responsibility to see that the Muslim community had somewhere to worship. I wrote to *The Times* saying I was surprised to learn that the Home Office and the local authority had the responsibility of seeing that religious communities had somewhere to worship and would it be all right if I went to my town hall and said I wanted a hall in which local residents could meet to worship Bertrand Russell. I don't think the editor of *The Times* knows the answer because "he regrets he is unable to print my letter". Or is it that the new Catholic editor doesn't want religious privilege questioned? Anyway, perhaps the editor of the **FREETHINKER** knows the answer to the question which the editor of *The Times* shirks. Do local authorities and the Home Office have a responsibility to see that religious communities have somewhere to worship, and if so, why should religious communities have this privilege?

D. E. JONES.

[Suggest you write to the Home Office and ask.—Ed.]

Atheism—Agnosticism debate

MAY I reply to Mr G. L. Simons' "Reply to Mr Quoigue"?

Mr Simons quotes Professor Broad as saying that finding no evidence for a proposition is evidence against it, if there ought to be observable evidence for it. He then alters "ought to be" to "would certainly be", in further commenting, and states that Broad's assertion cannot stand. Is that intellectually honest? His quotation of Broad (not its altered form) represents Mr Quoigue's position, and therefore supports it.

He says that he believes evidence for God's existence is as likely to eventuate as evidence for that of fairies. May I add "or for the Greek gods"? Mr Simons knows, like everyone else, that they are hopelessly uneventual, but, to be fully rational (his words), he should believe that their celestial reality is not unquestionable.

He instances viruses, electrons and distant stars as non-eventualities which became realities. But these things were powerless to reveal themselves, and would have remained uneventual but for their scientific discovery. They cannot be categorised with God, who, if real, has power to reveal himself.

Referring again to his quotation of Professor Broad (the unaltered one), no evidence for God's reality is evidence against it, if "there ought to be some observable evidence for it". This justifies Mr Quoigue's contention that God does not exist, for, in the view of any truly rational person, there should be evidence of a living and conscious Creator.

F. H. SNOW.

Lack of Secularist literature

"IN EVERY generation the work of re-education must begin anew". This was the theme of an article "On Learning and Un-learning" by G. I. Bennett (amplifying an observation by Herbert Cutner) published in the **FREETHINKER**, 1959.

Ask any freethinker about the things that were influential to his development and he would immediately give forth with a long list of books and authors. It is therefore most disheartening in this age of communication, this age of the paperback, to witness the decline in the publishing of Secular-Humanist books.

Many people today cannot strictly be called religious, but the equation of religion with "all things good", by those unacquainted with Secularist criticism, continues to befog important questions of social action.

Of course, to publish one needs money. It is about time secularists woke up to the fact that if they don't put effort into the cause they espouse no one else is going to do it for them. We are constantly making demands for broadcasting time. If we put more effort into spreading the word for ourselves, I think that we would get it.

Once more, and this time in the words of Mr Cutner, "One of the greatest difficulties we freethinkers have to face is that each generation, so to speak, has to be re-educated". Publish or be damned!

BRIAN KHAN.

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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 Holidays. Burton-in-the-Wirral, Cheshire: Painting
Holiday, July 29th to August 12th. Details from Mrs M.
Mepham, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey. Telephone,
8796.

Humanist Letter Network (International) and Humanist Postal
Book Service. For information or catalogue send 6d stamp to
Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

OUTDOOR

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

Manchester Branch NSS, Platts Fields, Car Park, Victoria Street,
Sunday evenings, 8 p.m.: Messrs COLLINS, DUGNAN, 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

Bristol Humanist Group (Kelmescott, 4 Portland Street, Clifton),
Wednesday, April 5th, 7.15 p.m.: DAVID POLLOCK, "Humanism
and Politics".

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group (Regency House, Oriental
Place, Brighton), Sunday, April 2nd, 5.30 p.m.: Speaker, Mrs
M. S. BOOKER-HALL, Secretary of Mid-Sussex branch of MENZA.

Merseyside Humanist Group (Bluecat Chambers, Liverpool),
Friday, April 14th, 7.30 p.m.: J. FLASHMAN, "Buddhism".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,
London, WC1), Sunday, April 2nd, 11 a.m.: RICHARD
CLEMENTS, "Humanism and Social Work"; Tuesday, April 4th,
6.30 p.m.: RICHARD CLEMENTS, "Towards a Welfare Society".

South Place Sunday Concerts (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,
London, WC1), Sunday, April 2nd, 6.30 p.m. The London String
Trio. Beethoven, Schubert. Admission 3/-.

West Ham and District Branch NSS (Wanstead and Woodford
Community Centre, Wanstead Green, London, E11): Meetings
at 8 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of every month.

LETTERS

Invention of God

RECENTLY I was amazed to spot a most extraordinary sentence
—extraordinary, that is, in the admittedly very fundamentalist and
very conformist daily press of Australia. In the midst of an in-
formative article on modern Israel by an American journalist,
Barbara Tuchman (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, Jan. 28, 1967),
I couldn't believe my eyes as I ran into the phrase, "God was
invented there".

This was the most nonchalant expression of atheism I have ever
met anywhere—an atheism of as matter-of-fact kind as any state-
ment of any popular scientific invention. What a shock it must
have sprung on the Australian fundamentalist mob! But the im-
mediate sequel to it was also amazing: a dead silence about it
in the Letters to the Editors (mine was suppressed).

But the sentence really needed correction, since it was strikingly
a half-truth only. The gods were indeed invented, but it was false
to suggest that the specific god in question, that is, the West
Semitic god Yahweh of Israel and of Christians, the father of
Yehoshuah (Jesus) the Anointed, was invented in ancient Palestine.

Biblical scholars have now traced Yahweh beyond Palestine
as far as Babylonia and as long back there as 2100 BC
(A. Murtonen's dissertation). At least, the experts hold that the
Hebrews adopted their god Yahweh from a wandering tribe of
Southern Arabs, the Kenites (see under "God" and "Kenites" in
the 1963 ed. of *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*).

Biblical scholars also stress that "God" is a translation word
which severely narrows down the Hebrew "elohim" that was
applied both to mythical and real beings, both to gods, angels,
ghosts, demons and to kings, chieftains, even to mountains and
thrones (pp. 36 and 45), simply because its basic meaning was
"mighty" or "strong" (see Oesterley-Robinson, *Hebrew Religion*).

All this semantic information begins oozing, through Pelican
paperbacks, from modern biblical scholarship to the general
public, at least in Britain and USA, if not yet in the bush culture
down under.

GREGORY S. SMELTERS (Sydney).

Why indeed?

AS A READER of your journal for a number of years, and a
Freethinker and Secularist, as well as an Atheist, I was disagree-
ably surprised to find in your issue of the 17th February that the
personal pronoun indicating the Christian God begins with a
capital H on no less than five occasions in the first paragraph
of A. C. Thompson's article "The Christian Trinity (Part 1)".

This is, unfortunately, not the first time that this has occurred
in recent years; there was another instance a few years back in
the FREETHINKER.

One expects this sort of thing from *The Catholic Herald*, *The
Times* (new or old style) or *The Daily Telegraph*, but from the
FREETHINKER—words fail me!

Although human beings have for many thousands of years
worshipped, feared and pacified a god, gods or God, depending
what century or country they lived in, or religion they adhered to,
there is no evidence whatever of any supernatural being existing
in this or any other Universe known to Man; and, in fact, all
rational thought and experience and knowledge lead us to believe
that no such being exists anywhere. And the same thing goes for
a plurality of gods, too, such as ancient Greece and Rome and
prehistoric man believed in.

If this is the case, why refer to "God" as "He"?

E. M. KINGSTON.

Sick

YEAR AFTER YEAR the FREETHINKER has published futile
and fatuous arguments between Atheists and Agnostics. Acres of
your valuable and limited space have been utterly wasted by this
childish internecine strife. I, for one, am sick of the whole silly
business and am minded to give up your paper in favour of
The Universe, the *Psychic News*, the *Christian Science Monitor*
or some other equally comic contemporary. I prefer laughter to
nausea.

C. FRANKLIN.