

Freethinker

Registered at the GPO as a Newspaper

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

VOLUME 89, No. 38

Saturday, September 20, 1969

Sixpence Weekly

A COURT TO END WARS?

THE MOVEMENT towards world government received a boost last week at the fourth 'World Peace through Law' conference in Bangkok. A report, the result of a two-year study of the peaceful settlement of international disputes by an international committee of eminent jurists, was presented by the committee's chairman, Mr Terje Wold, the Chief Justice of Norway. The committee also included Mr Philip Jessup and Mr Kotaro Tanaka, justices of the World Court, and Mr H. Golson, the director of the Human Rights division of the Council of Europe.

Mr Wold said that a judicial mechanism for settling international disputes was urgently needed if chaos and war were to be avoided. The committee therefore recommended that compulsory jurisdiction for the settlement of international disputes be universally accepted. Mr Wold further pointed out that the treatment of individuals was no longer a matter solely confined to the internal jurisdiction of individual states, but was the concern of all nations.

The committee have worked out a detailed plan for the workings of such a court. Briefly they suggest that there should be a series of regional courts, in America, Asia, Africa, Europe and so on. These would be made up of seven justices, familiar with the social and economic conditions of the region and who would command respect from the member states. Such courts would settle disputes within their region. Should disagreements arise between states of different regions, then each state would nominate three judges, who would themselves elect a seventh as chairman. Should they be unable to agree on the chairman, he would be appointed by the Secretary General of the United Nations. In order to avert the possibility of justice being administered differently in the different regions, there would be one world supreme court to hear appeals from the regional courts. The committee suggested that appeals would only be upheld where the regional courts had clearly exceeded their duties, or reached a decision in conflict with the basic principles of the United Nations charter.

Clearly foreseeing that the adoption of such a system would be a long and arduous process, Mr Wold acknowledged that hitherto it had been impossible to yield jurisdiction in international disputes to the existing International Court of Justice, despite the strictures contained in the Charter of the United Nations. The main stumbling blocks, said Mr Wold, were the old and new nationalistic conceptions of the supremacy of the individual state. The United Nations seemed to be less inclined than ever to make use of the International Court of Justice. However, Mr Wold went on to say that regional courts had made considerable progress. He singled out the European Court of Human Rights as the most outstanding example, and said that experience and practical considerations demonstrated that the regional approach would provide the best starting point for a system of international justice.

Obviously Wold and his fellow committee members are men experienced enough to suffer no utopian delusions. Thus their message is not only abundantly clear but abnormally heartening. Despite the news that many of the

114 delegates to the conference have registered their doubts as to their government's willingness to participate in such a scheme, there can be no doubts in anyone's mind as to the desirability and workability of the scheme. The committee have put their finger on the all-important fact, that any scheme for international justice or world government must radiate from a centre rather than descend from above. The European Court for Human Rights is a comparative success because it operates in a geographical region, where different states appreciate more than in any other region that they are interdependent. As science and technology progress this interdependence between nations will grow also. The prospects for international justice will therefore increase immensely.

Nevertheless, to consider this all important question without reference to the East-West split would be patently unrealistic. The split is and will be the prime cause of international disagreement and until it ceases to exist as the major feature of world politics, it is hard to see how the committee's proposed system could work. It seems very unlikely that in any conflict, where the West is backing one side and the East the other, the six justices chosen by the participants would agree on their casting voter. When called on to choose the arbitrator their seems little reason why the United Nations Secretary General's views should be accorded any more respect than they are now. The same situation would exist which renders the existing International Court of Justice so helpless.

This is not however, to pour cold water on the committee's baby. The scheme is both intensely encouraging, and convincing in its realism. It can gain support with the increase of regionalism, which is already apparent, and with the demise of nationalism, which is not so apparent and therefore a thing to be worked for. In the final analysis practice alone will show whether international justice can end the terrible twin tyrannies of private and state capitalism, or whether their extinction will be a prerequisite for a workable international system of justice.

RELIGIOUS SUICIDE

LAST WEEK there was an inquest on a twenty-year-old female Christian Scientist who died from a wasting disease—a disease which causes its victim to reject food. She refused medical aid. Active freethinkers have, almost by definition, awarded themselves the right to attack religion

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Freethinker

Published by G. W. Foote & Co. Ltd.

Editor: David Reynolds

The views expressed by the contributors to FREETHINKER are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Board.

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and endeavour to convert the religious to an atheist or agnostic life in which the individual is supreme, guided by his reason instead of a 'God'. The reaction of a freethinker hearing of such a tragic event *after* it has happened would be to say that it was unnecessary. Yet what would we do were we confronted with something of this kind—if someone close to us preferred to die or suffer rather than utilise the scientific discoveries made in the field of medicine. In the FREETHINKER of September 6 a correspondent raised the question of Jehovah's Witnesses who refuse blood transfusions. The ethical problem is the same, and can be tackled by the outsider who becomes involved in one of three ways. Either he can do nothing and let the religiophile die. Or he can reason with him and attempt to persuade him to accept medical aid. Or if he is legally in a position to do so, he can force the person to undergo medical treatment.

Though the number of people whose religion holds such a power over their reason is small, and it is unlikely that freethinkers will come into close contact with them, it is worthwhile to speculate what a freethinker would do in these circumstances, since the moral problems involved are not unlike those associated with the ordinary suicide. A freethinker must of course uphold the right of any person

COMING EVENTS

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, SE1. Telephone 01-407 2717. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the NSS.

Humanist Letter Network (International) and Humanist Postal Book Service (secondhand books bought and sold). 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 and McRae.

Manchester Branch NSS, Platt Fields, Sunday afternoon, 3 p.m.: Car Park, Victoria Street, Sunday evenings, 8 p.m.

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

All Ireland Humanist Conference, Hotel Nuremore, Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan: October 25 and 26: Brochure from Mr S. Potter, Swain's Hill, Ballykeel, Holywood, Co. Down. Tel. Holywood 2863.

London Young Humanists: 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London, W8: Sunday, September 21, 7 p.m.: "Humanism in Industrial Relations", John Garnett, Director of the Industrial Society.

North Staffs Humanist Group: Cartwright House, Broad Street, Hanley (near Cine Bowl): Friday, September 26, 7.45 p.m.: "The Work of the Samaritans", Kenneth C. Lowe, BA.

South Place Ethical Society: Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1: Sunday, September 28, 3 p.m.: 71st Annual Reunion—The Guest of Honour, Mr H. J. Blackham, BA, will speak on "Being British". Tea at 5 p.m. and Songs by Unity Singers.

Sutton Humanist Group: Friends House, Sutton: Thursday, September 25, 7.30 p.m.: Report on BHA Conference.

to kill himself if he wants to, and quite rightly suicide is no longer a crime. However, should the suicide case be of unsound mind, is it not the duty of anyone who can, to try to prevent the disturbed person from going through with it. After all there is no one who would not prevent a blind man walking under a bus.

The problem would therefore seem to resolve itself into a question of whether religion, when pursued to a certain degree, constitutes a form of insanity. Anything if pursued to certain lengths represents a form of insanity, and indeed ultimately drives its devotee to a certifiable state. The determination of the point at which the individual becomes insane is of course a matter for a professional psychiatrist.

It would not seem unreasonable to suggest therefore, that anyone faced with a suicide case, including what might be termed a religious suicide, should consider it his duty *to do all he can* to get the potential suicide to see a psychiatrist—for one does not ask a blind man to step out of the way of a bus, one pulls him.

UPON ME!

To a freethinker the word 'oath' must be virtually meaningless, for any rational man if he wants to affirm that he will or will not do something, the best he can do is to say so. To swear by or on anything is ridiculous. Oaths of allegiance fall into the same category. If one wishes to tell someone else that one is prepared to support them in some undertaking, one tells them so. One swears upon nothing, or at least only upon oneself.

It is thus hard to understand the current furore that is in progress in Kenya. Secret oath taking ceremonies have been alleged to have taken place. It would appear that Mr Kenyatta's government has been trying to obtain some kind of oath of allegiance. The Anglican Archbishop of East Africa retaliated with the following statement: "To a Christian secret oath taking is repugnant and unacceptable. Christians in Kenya pray both personally and corporately for President Kenyatta and his government. Having done this, no further promise, undertaking or oath can be required of us by the state".

The depressing factor in such a meaningless fiasco, is not so much that Christians can be required to pray for a government or for that matter anything else, but that a government, a secular organ, can place so much credence in those prayers that they subsequently attempt to reinforce the amount of faith placed in them by endeavouring to obtain 'oaths'.

SECULAR EDUCATION APPEAL

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103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, SE1

HO AND VIETNAM

G. L. SIMONS

HO CHI MINH is dead.

For decades Ho has symbolised the Vietnamese passion for independence from colonialism and imperialism. For decades he has been regarded—in both North and South Vietnam—as a national hero, as a Vietnamese nationalist perhaps more than a Vietnamese communist. There have been many testimonies to Ho's enduring popularity in South Vietnam and even the Americans have had to concede it. In *Air War—Vietnam*, for instance, by Frank Harvey, an American Major Young is quoted as saying to US pilots "If you are shot down in South Vietnam, boys, don't badmouth Uncle Ho. He's the boy who threw out the French—and they still love him down there". And it was this fact that forced Eisenhower to concede (in the much quoted *Mandate for Change*, p. 372) that had nationwide elections been permitted by the Americans in Vietnam in 1956 (as in fact they had been scheduled in the Geneva Accords) then over eighty per cent of Vietnamese would have voted for Ho.

And Ho symbolised the truth about Vietnam. *There is one Vietnam*—and Ho was a Vietnamese of *all* Vietnam, not just the North. And now his place in history is assured. Cultured, well-informed, multi-lingual, speaking immaculate French, well-travelled, Ho was the archetypal revolutionary—dedicated, persistent and never losing touch with the essential human issues that revolution was about.

There is an important sense in which no man will replace Ho in Vietnam. Ho had a stature enjoyed by few world leaders, and a personal charisma associated with a handful of names—Castra, Che, Mao. . . . But though he carved out a place in Vietnamese history and international communism that no living Vietnamese can possibly emulate it would be a grave mistake to assume that the national Vietnamese will is about to crumble, that the morale of the jungle guerrillas will suffer a death-blow. It would be foolish to underestimate the intelligence and competence of the current Vietnamese leadership. Doubtless the Americans *will* underestimate it—as they have done the Vietnamese capacity to date. The Americans are doubtless rejoicing at Ho's death. President Nixon has said nothing—and this is a silence that speaks volumes. But the Americans, lurching from one hasty expedient to another, cannot be expected to possess mature judgement: sensible people have long since stopped expecting *that* commodity to emanate in any quantity from the United States.

The facts are that the Vietnam leadership is rich in talent and competence. Many of them have worked for decades with Ho, and the business of government and policy-making has been a collective venture for many years. The men most likely to succeed Ho are Le Duan, Truong Chinh, Pham Van Dong, Nguyen Giap, and Ton Duc Thang. Of these Ton Duc Thang is the acting President, and Pham Van Dong and Giap are perhaps the best known Vietnamese to Westerners. Giap of course is the defence minister and was largely responsible for master-minding the Vietnamese victories over the French colonialists in the forties and fifties. Giap is an international figure. His writings on guerrilla warfare have been found in the jungles of Latin America, and he perhaps of all the Vietnamese leaders begins to approach the stature of Ho. But the other leaders, particularly Pham Van Dong, are popular and most of them could be confident of much support in South Vietnam as well in the North. As a military man, Giap

will probably not succeed to Ho's position. He is in fact the Vietnamese equivalent—with a significant political shift—of General Dayan of Israel. Both men are national heroes and internationally known; both have been pressed to involve themselves in politics, and both have done so. But neither, it appears, would wish to involve himself in the presidency. The most likely successor to Ho is Le Duan, the communist party leader and number two under President Ho.

But apart from the competence of Ho's successors there is a further reason why American jubilation would be unfounded. And this is simply that Ho has awakened the Vietnamese people to the realities of their political plight. The Vietnamese war is a struggle of Vietnamese against American aggressors. Vietnamese morale is high; American morale is low (in a recent *Guardian* there was a report of an American company that refused to go into action against the enemy). The Vietnamese resistance is not based on the will of the single great leader—but on a deep commitment to rid the country of the foreigner, the foreigner who comes with napalm and poison, the foreigner who destroys homes and institutions, and who burns and tortures people to death. The strength of the under-developed left-wing society is that the people act as one: this cannot be said of any Latin American country except Cuba. In Bolivia or Argentina or Brazil a national war effort may collapse with the death of a president; in such countries there is no national commitment, the people are not *involved*—they are only exploited by their 'leaders' in league with U.S. imperialism. This is why a change of leadership in a right-wing country is so irrelevant to the lives of the people; the only effective change for the mass of the people is when a left-wing revolution moves to success—and this can only happen when the mass of the people are deeply involved in change, when they are given a vested interest in preserving the new *status quo*. This is why the ordinary Cuban is enthusiastic about Cuba in a way that no Bolivian is about Bolivia and no Brazilian is about Brazil. For the first time in history Cuba, North Vietnam, North Korea and China belong to the masses of the people living there. There are no absentee landlords, no colonialists, nor foreign companies shipping out the national wealth as fast as they can.

North Vietnam belongs to the North Vietnamese in fact. In the South the Americans are still looting, stealing, pillaging and killing—but the Vietnamese are making them pay a terrible price and the ordinary American people no longer have any heart for the struggle. Aggression is hard on the American widows, the children who lose their fathers. It no longer sounds convincing when Nixon, from the calm luxury of the White House, urges American men to go and die in the jungles of Vietnam on the other side of the world. The Vietnamese are winning . . .

In the *Guardian* (2/9/69) James Reston, the well-known American columnist, is quoted as saying: "He (Nixon) wants out on the instalment plan. But the weekly instalments are the lives of one or two hundred American soldiers; and he cannot get away from the insistent questions—why? And to what purpose?" Part of the weekly instalment is also a few hundred Vietnamese lives, but of course neither Reston nor Nixon are to be expected to concern themselves with that irrelevancy. The plain truth

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A SPIRITUAL ODYSSEY

JOHN L. BROOM

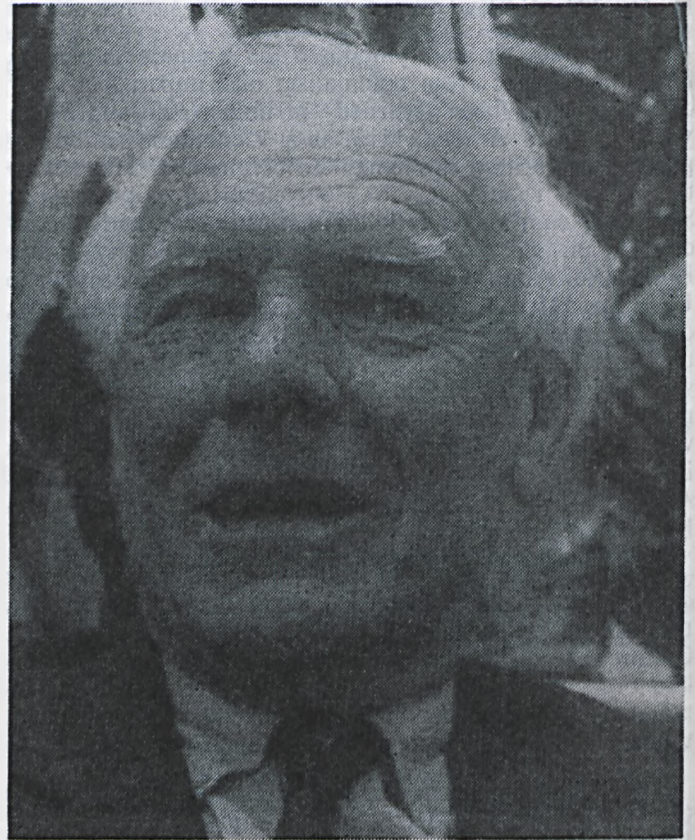
A Review of "Jesus Rediscovered" by Malcolm Muggeridge (Fontana, 6s. 1969).

I HAVE LONG CHERISHED considerable affection for Mr Malcolm Muggeridge as a writer and broadcaster. Though I knew he was an *enfant terrible* of the literary scene during the 'thirties and 'forties, I first became really acquainted with his views when he began to make regular appearances on that late-lamented radio programme *The Critics*. He could always be depended upon to introduce an original provocative note into the discussion in that "posh" drawling accent of his whenever it seemed in danger of collapsing into highbrow tedium. The fact that I usually disagreed violently with his opinion of the particular work of art being discussed, seemed somehow not to matter much, as I suspected that some of his most outrageous utterances were made with his tongue planted firmly in his cheek.

Within the past few years, of course, Mr Muggeridge has "got" religion, and his reflections on this subject have recently been published under the somewhat misleading title of *Jesus Rediscovered*. There is in fact very little Christian Doctrine in the book (in the first page the author disarmingly admits that he is a "theological ignoramus") it being mainly a reiteration of Mr Muggeridge's jaundiced view of life in the second part of the twentieth century. It is true that he claims to derive support for this outlook from the New Testament, but, as we shall see, this is achieved only by quoting very selectively from the documents in question.

With Mr Muggeridge's strictures on some contemporary values, I find myself wholly in sympathy. These include his attacks on the pursuit of wealth, power and success, on lying advertisement, on the Yellow Press and on devious politicians whether of left, right or centre. Unfortunately, he spoils a potentially good case by ludicrous exaggeration. Thus he brings under the same blanket condemnation the new liberalising laws governing homosexuality, abortion and divorce, the use of all artificial methods of contraception, heart transplants and majority rule. Such fanaticism effectively removes his arguments from the realm of serious controversy. Even his sincerity is here in question, as I strongly suspect he would not approve of the imprisonment of homosexuals, refuse to allow a dying loved one to receive a new heart, nor deny black Rhodesians the right to govern their own country.

Mr Muggeridge professes to believe that our civilisation is dying because we no longer have respect for Christian values. I have always understood that compassion was one of the most important of the Christian virtues (though of course it is not peculiar to that faith), and yet there is surely little doubt that that quality is more in evidence today than in any previous age. Its manifestations in Britain include the great National Health and Insurance service, a generally more enlightened attitude towards crime and criminals, the abolition of capital punishment, the vastly improved treatment of the mentally ill, the Race Relations Act and the aforementioned law making homosexual behaviour between consenting adults in private no longer a criminal offence. And the whole world-wide "Hippie" movement, whatever one may think of some of its more bizarre concomitants, is dedicated to the replacement of hatred by love. In many respects, Mr Muggeridge is nearly forty years behind the times. There might have been some justification for such



unrelieved pessimism regarding the future of civilisation in the early thirties when the rise of Nazism, Fascism and Stalinism, the concentration camps, the purges, and the probability of another world war, made the future seem bleak indeed. The Jeremiahs of that period were at one in confidently predicting that the approaching holocaust would result in the return of the troglodytes. The war came and went, and today I would contend that the prospect of civilisation's demise seems infinitely more remote to any un-biassed observer, than it did then.

However, Mr Muggeridge probably would not agree that the reforms I have mentioned were in fact desirable attainments. Indeed he seems to regard with suspicion and even disapproval all attempts to improve conditions on this earth. This attitude seems to derive from his interpretation of Christianity as being an exclusively other-worldly faith. Men should devote themselves to achieving their own eternal salvation not in striving to make this planet a happier place in which to live. Thus, he loses no opportunity to attack such organisations as "Oxfam" or the anti-apartheid movements claiming that:

better-world promotion has the short-term advantage of being a soft sell. How much easier and even pleasurable to march to the American Embassy to protest against the war in Viet-Nam than to march to Gethsemane! Even the saints have found Christian virtue hard to practise, but any tousled student can acquire a glow of righteousness by pouring a bucket of paint over some visiting speaker from the US Embassy or South Africa House . . . how difficult to curb one's so insistent ego, to put aside pride and vanity and follow the way of the cross. How easy, how almost fatuously easy, to support Ho-Chi-minh and be against Enoch Powell!

Apart from the fact that following the way of the cross and being against Enoch Powell are, in the view of many

Christians two aspects of the same activity, Mr Muggeridge does not seem to see that by writing in such sneering terms he himself betrays an overwhelming pride and vanity, since he so obviously regards himself as being immeasurably superior to those poor deluded social reformers and protest marchers. It is also clear that he has had little or no experience of real social work or he would not dismiss it so contemptuously as a "soft sell". Significantly, he rails against Father Anthony Ross, Roman Catholic Chaplain to Edinburgh University, who was one of his chief critics when he resigned as the University's Rector in 1968. Father Ross is also the President of the Edinburgh branch of the Simon Community which ministers to the city's alcoholics, drug addicts and social misfits. One night only working beside Father Ross in his clinic in the centre of Edinburgh's slumland, would disabuse Mr Muggeridge for ever of the notion that social reformers have chosen the easy way out.

In one of the chapters in *Jesus Rediscovered*, Mr Muggeridge asks "Am I a Christian?" and returns an equivocal answer. He would certainly be denied that title by all orthodox believers, since he maintains that it does not matter in the least whether the events recorded in the Gospels actually took place or not: "In the case of the greatest happenings such as Christ's life and death, historicity is completely without importance. . . . If and when we know the final truth about human life, we shall find out that the legends, or what pass for legends, are far nearer the truth than what passes for fact, or science, or history". Apart from the confusion that seems to exist in Mr Muggeridge's mind between myth and legend (he is here obviously talking about the former and not the latter), it is surely nonsense to suggest that the truths which are enshrined in the great myths of mankind are somehow superior to those arrived at as a result of patient scientific or historical enquiry. They are simply different. The trouble

arises when religious people claim that such myths as the Garden of Eden or Jonah's sojourn in the belly of the whale actually happened at some point in time, or when scientists speak as though only that which can be seen, touched, or heard is objectively real.

There have been persistent rumours lately that Mr Muggeridge is contemplating being received into the Roman Catholic Church. In fact Mr Muggeridge, if he can be called a Christian at all, is the most extreme kind of Protestant, since he reserves to himself the right to interpret Scripture according to his own predilections. Thus he ignores all those passages in the Gospels which would seem to advocate social action (the remarks on almsgiving, the advice to the rich young man, the parables of the sheep and the goats and the rich man and Lazarus), concentrating only on those which, as he admits himself, "take my fancy". He gets the moral of the Good Samaritan story correct, but does not seem to realise that all anti-racist speeches and demonstrations which he has previously condemned, follow logically therefrom. Above all, such not untypical outbursts as "Rebellious and randy Fathers come to the microphone to tell us of the doubts which have assailed them, and of the hazards of priestly celibacy" reveal that Mr Muggeridge rejects the Christian belief that the prime virtue is charity.

Although *Jesus Rediscovered* exhibits, as I have tried to show, much confusion and illogicality of thought, it is still well worth reading. Mr Muggeridge is incapable of being dull or obscure, and his witty and elegant style is a continual delight. Moreover, however one may disagree with, or even deplore, his views, one cannot but admire his courage. As his famous onslaught on the Monarchy during the 'fifties showed, he is never afraid to espouse unpopular causes in which he believes. This quality, at least, he shares with freethinkers and humanists.

AND FOR HIS SHEEP A STEAK

MAURICE HILL

MR EDWARD SHORT, Secretary of State for Education and Science, made an amazing statement recently when opening a new school where 80 per cent of the children were coloured immigrants: "I believe that it will mould the several races into one unified Christian community", he said, betraying once more the blind prejudice that lies behind his determination not to consider evidence, not to listen to other points of view, but to preserve compulsory Christianity in schools at all costs. Non-Christian immigrants are thus faced with an individual choice: either they join in worship of something they do not believe in, or they segregate themselves from the white pupils. A recent ILEA booklet, *The Use of the Bible*, acknowledges that to many immigrants "their religion is the basis of their social life". However, they should be involved in all school religion, because "immigrant children are particularly anxious not to be treated differently". Anyway, "something similar to the Lord's Prayer is included in their traditions", so they are ripe for enforced conversion. If we tell them enough about the Bible and the life of Jesus, "through hearing and considering them, *faith is born*". How sly and unprincipled these Christians are!

The situation is little better for us natives. The 1944 Act makes the provision of daily worship in schools obligatory. It is technically possible to opt out, but up to the present, for the majority, this is just not on. Most Heads frown upon withdrawal by non-believers; most parents will not withdraw their children even if they are aware of their rights, because they are afraid they will be persecuted;

and the children themselves have—by law—no choice! Many thousands of young people are thus being compelled to go through the motions of worshipping a god they do not believe in. This is immoral.

It is equally unsatisfactory to many Christians. Recent Conferences have shown that it is not easy to find Christians prepared to support the present Act. If they want to worship their god, it is right that they should be able to participate in a genuine service in peace, without the presence of large numbers of disaffected conscripts. If they would just go to church, everybody would be happy. School worship, if it exists at all, should take place outside school time, and *attendance should be voluntary*. There must be no pressures to attend, and no persecution of non-attenders.

In view of the intransigence of the Minister, who continues to call on supporters of compulsion to "man the barricades", it is essential that pupils and teachers make their views known and their presence felt. *All* teachers opposed to compulsion in matters of faith and conscience should exercise their legal right to opt out. While they continue to pretend what they do not believe, they offer to the young an example of hypocrisy or fear, and they help to perpetuate a system in which children and parents are gulled or intimidated into abnegating their rights. But there are schools where no morning worship is held because all members of the staff have withdrawn.

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'OPIUM OF THE PEOPLE'

DENIS COBELL

THE RIOTS in Northern Ireland in recent weeks have marked the culmination of a campaign for Civil Rights, which has gained in intensity over several years. That this campaign, conducted mainly by Roman Catholics, and its counter-campaign by Orange protestants, is primarily a religious dispute and Holy War, has been remarked upon by very few of the pundits who grace the pages of the national papers and the television screen. The analyses they have given have therefore been poor. However, they may perhaps be forgiven, because religious disputes of this nature are, generally speaking, rare in the Western industrialised society of the twentieth century.

There are several superficial factors which distinguish the battles at the barricades in Belfast and Londonderry from similar uprisings in France last year. The clothes worn by the stone and petrol-bomb throwing youths are less stylish than those of their continental counterparts, and their slogans are quotations from religious rather than revolutionary texts. It may be inferred from these simple observations that the social revelations of the permissive society are less important to these Irishmen, than their national and religious identifications. Their classic quarrels are historically dated by at least a century, when compared with the rest of West Europe.

It is therefore important to analyse the struggle of the Irish within the context of those critics of religion who saw its influence as a naive diversion placed before the populace to contain them, to divide them and oppress them.

The socialist writers of last century and early in this century saw very clearly the effect of religion. Lenin wrote in 1905, "Religion is a sort of spiritual booze, in which the slaves of capital drown their human image, their demand for a life more or less worthy of man". And in the same essay he wrote a description of the Russian proletariat which could well be applied to Ulster today: "Everywhere the reactionary bourgeoisie has concerned itself, and is beginning to concern itself in Russia, with the fomenting of religious strife—in order thereby to divert the attention of the masses from the really important and fundamental economic and political problems". The Civil Rights movement in Ulster, the appalling conditions for life and work in Bogside, are excellent examples of this kind of diversion; the protest is directed against religious discrimination rather than against the whole governmental apparatus. Marx's classical epigram depicts only too well the oppression which exists in both Eire and Ulster: "Religion is the heart of a heartless world, the soul of soulless conditions, the opium of the people". The material distinctions between Catholics and Protestants in Ulster will not be corrected until both have recognised the truth Marx wrote about. The point, as Marx said elsewhere, was not only to interpret the world as the philosophers have done, but to change it. Here Marxism-Leninism may not have such a good record in the practical test, but their analysis is valid and holds invaluable parallels from which we may learn.

The struggle in Londonderry and Belfast has been between rival factions deriving from different interpretations of the Christian creed. On the one hand there is the bigotted rabble-rouser Paisley, and on the other the Roman Church, which holds the longest record of totalitarian suppression in history. Choosing between the Roman Church and the hatred of Protestant Orangemen is like choosing between death from lung cancer or cancer of the bowel—both equally nasty. Those who claim that many

Catholics and Protestants live well enough side by side should remember and be grateful for the enlightening influence of humanist thought, which has rendered these people only nominally religious supporters, and thus tolerant.

Ireland is a land fallen prey to the last vestiges of the religious bogey: in England the new vogue of racialism has replaced it in the minds of the middle-aged, and the illusory freedom of sex and pot, for the young. The movement for 'People's Democracy', the illegal Irish Republican Army, and Miss Bernadette Devlin purport to speak in socialist terms, however they are allied to the Roman Church. According to Hilaire Belloc, "The Catholic Church is, throughout the world, opposed to that modern theory of society which is called Socialist". Since that was written there is no sign of the Vatican's withdrawal from supporting capitalism in the interests of a just distribution of power; socialism and the Roman Church are clearly incompatible. Bernadette Devlin is playing a time old political game of stirring up patriotic fervour in the hearts and pockets of exiled Irishmen across the United States, and she will have the full support of the Roman Church's publicity behind her endeavour!

In viewing religious fanaticism as a neurosis it is interesting to note that doctors in Ulster have reported a rising incidence of mental disease following the latest disturbances. I remember visiting Belfast in relatively quiet times a few years ago, even then the local newspapers contained stories of many vicious daubings—'no Pope here'—on Catholic Churches. But Protestants are not alone in holding such insular views—during the Home Secretary's tour of Falls Road in Belfast, several placards reading 'Catholics only' could be seen.

In Eire, as William McLroy wrote in the *FREETHINKER* recently there was "the enforced resignation of Dr Noel Browne, Minister of Health, because he had sponsored a maternal and child welfare scheme. This affair demonstrated only too clearly that the Church can and does interfere". In Eire, the Roman Church holds a privileged position as outlined in Article 44 of the Constitution: "The state recognises the special position of the Holy Catholic Apostolic and Roman Church as the guardian of the Faith professed by the great majority of the citizens". In Eire, birth control devices are banned owing to the pressure of the Catholic hierarchy, censorship is asphyxiating and humanists have to meet in secret.

It is unfortunate that the people of Eire cannot sympathise with the critics of all religion: to condemn protestant discrimination meets with their approval, but to mention issues arising from the Roman Church's totalitarianism is to ask for an outburst of irrational emotions. Until the people of Ireland become sufficiently aware of the part religion plays in their subjection to temporal authorities, there is little hope for a permanent cure of the recent upheaval. To allow themselves to be subject to imposed laws is not the way to self-determination, and religion is the great smoke-screen that denies a vision of Ireland organised communally in the interests of all the people, and not the few who are priests, ministers or politicians.

VISION AND REALISM

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BOOK REVIEW

JEROME GREENE

THIS TIMELESS MOMENT—A Personal View of Aldous Huxley:

Laura Archera Huxley (Chatto and Windus, 42s).

ALDOUS HUXLEY, like all men worthy of the adjective great, has been viewed with everything from adulation to severe dubiety. His books are used in school-rooms, yet he has been condemned as irresponsible by those concerned about the current youthful trend towards drug-taking. Laura Archera Huxley's account of her late husband not only shows his attitude towards drugs and everything else to have been highly responsible, but also portrays a man whose primary motivating force was his intrinsic concern for his fellows—a quality he shared with only a few men—men of the order of Bertrand Russell and Mahatma Gandhi.

Huxley's mind was both supremely inquiring and seemingly infinitely open. "Aldous was exceptional in that although he had an enormous capital of knowledge he was not attached to it emotionally and was ready at any time to relinquish any part of it which seemed wrong—ready to explore not only new but also potential knowledge, even if it was in opposition to previous data." This approach led Huxley to experiment with psychedelic, "meaning mind-revealing or mind-opening", drugs. It also brought him to a highly individual conception of an after life. Both these facets of Huxley's thinking, particularly the latter, may be thought to place him at odds with humanism. But is not the fundamental quality which any man aspiring to be a humanist or freethinker must endeavour to acquire, the quality of an open mind. Perhaps Huxley inherited his from the man who coined the word 'agnostic', his grandfather, Thomas Huxley. Preconceived ideas about religion or anything else were alien to Aldous Huxley. Atheism, the mental state which denies freethought as much as belief in a religion, would have had no appeal to Huxley either, since it closes the mind. Humanists may be almost certain that there is no being superior to man, but since no one has proved that there is no god in a way any more convincing than those who set out to prove that there is, they must remain in the agnostic position. This is not to say that humanists are wrong to treat man as omnipotent, for what else can logic dictate when there is no proof of anything superior to man.

Aldous Huxley's attitude to the world and himself was intensely humanistic. His books are all the products of a scientific approach to man's problems. As his widow says: "Aldous, although not a scientist, had, according to scientists, an amazing scientific knowledge".

Laura Archera became Aldous Huxley's second wife in 1956. Her book, sub-headed 'A Personal View of Aldous Huxley', makes fascinating reading as a study of the man during the last eight or so years of his life. During this time, like another great humanist, J. B. S. Haldane before him, Huxley was experimenting on himself. The results of his experiments with psychedelics are set out in *The Doors of Perception, Heaven and Hell* and his last book, *Island*. The potential benefit of these experiments has been obscured by the current trend among the young to use psychedelics wholesale. This Mrs Huxley firmly asserts, her late husband would have deplored. "In the years between 1953 and 1963, Aldous had about ten or twelve chemically induced psychedelic experiences: the total amount of chemical taken during those ten years was not as much as many people take today in a single week, sometimes in a single dose." (Laura Huxley's italics.)

One gets the impression that it was largely due to his psychedelic experiences that Huxley came to believe in an after life. He seemed to have glimpsed something greater than the mundane. We cannot contradict him without psychedelic experience.

Nevertheless, these experiences did not alter his essentially humanist approach to life. Science after all, had provided the wherewithal. He neither began to worship a deity, nor ceased to write for mankind.

Besides giving the reader a new insight into Huxley on the personal level *This Timeless Moment*, about a man who repeatedly complained both publicly and privately, "One never loves enough", is a delight on account of the love with which it is so obviously written.

On top of this it contains a number of bonuses—Aldous' own account of the death of his first wife, Maria; the transcription of tapes recorded when Aldous was using psychedelics, and explained by Laura; Laura's account of Aldous' death; the first chapter of a book which got no further due to Aldous' death; and countless letters written by Aldous.

As a final example of what was perhaps Aldous Huxley's greatest asset, his ability to look at everything with a mind amazingly free of any preconception, there is the occasion, minutes prior to his wedding with Laura, at a drive-in wedding chapel in Yuma, Arizona (he was not devoid of humour either), when Laura, who had for many years remained unmarried—jealous of her freedom, said: "'You know, darling, I love others too'".

"Instantaneous, crystal-clear, and tranquil was Aldous' answer: 'It would be awful if you didn't'."

It may be worth reminding my readers of the words with which Sir Julian Huxley dedicated his book, *The Essays of a Humanist*: "To Aldous brother and fellow humanists".

(Continued from page 299)

is that the Vietnamese people are proving one of Mao's most important dicta—that a united country, even though under-developed, can resist the world's most powerful military machine. America is learning the lesson the hard way—and when she is forced to retire, as eventually she will, her humiliation will be complete. Perhaps when American politicians are unable to explain why forty thousand American lives were lost, the enthusiasm for future aggression will ebb. We must hope so.

Ho is dead but he leaves behind him a united Vietnamese people. Their unity exists in history, in law and in spirit. There is one Vietnamese people, and the same people have successively and successfully resisted the encroachments of Chinese, French, Japanese and American aggressors. The American attempt to divide their country will not succeed and now the Americans, through the clouds of their brutal arrogance, are beginning to perceive a truth which clear-headed observers tried to tell them a decade ago. *Vietnam is one and will remain one*. This is the message of Ho. This is what he fought for: his one dream was an independent and united Vietnam. His successors will carry his dream to realisation. Ho is dead but there is a clear sense in which he is immortal. Richard Gott has already written, following Ho's death, that "someone, must inevitably be manufacturing the button with the legend 'Ho lives'".

(Continued from page 301)

Students in colleges of education are in a particularly responsible position. It seems that nearly every college has a Divinity course which is compulsory. Objectors are sometimes threatened with expulsion and the wreck of their career. Thus religious intimidation stretches from the age of 5 to the time a teacher qualifies and enters the classroom himself, possibly, with the hope of helping the children to think clearly and with open minds. Colleges should not be allowed to get away with this imposition; students should take steps to ensure that religion is genuinely voluntary and that no one is penalised for conscientious objections to it.

Senior pupils who are non-believers will find that in many schools they form a majority. Yet in a House of Lords debate at the end of 1967, Lord Sandford was able to quote a survey showing that out of 46,000 children, only 12 were withdrawn on grounds of non-belief. From this he concluded that there was no demand for alteration to the present system. He is enabled to produce such argument by the fear and/or apathy of pupils and parents. It is therefore essential that all non-Christian pupils withdraw from school worship. The law says that parents need only state their decision to the Head, and "the pupil shall be excused". It is difficult to see how any parents could refuse religious freedom to their own children.

Where the children are too young to make up their own minds, parents are sometimes reluctant to impose their own views on them by withdrawing them. The alternative, however, is to allow the daily imposition of someone else's views, and these often of the most absurd and damaging kind. Will parents think again about this? If we are to attain religious freedom in this country, we must act now. We have all been taken for sheep long enough.

LETTERS

Free Speech

FIRSTLY, I must thank Mr Page for the remarkable compliment he paid me in his last letter. He clearly believes I possess sufficient intellectual and verbal mastery to define Maoism (a complex historical, social and political phenomenon), to define the working-class (a complex cultural and socio-economic grouping), to discuss the 'coercion' of Chinese intellectuals, to analyse the legal and moral aspects of the Chinese dominion over Tibet, to discuss the provision of left-wing literature in Britain, etc., etc.—all in half a FREETHINKER letter (the other half being devoted to Mr Cook).

Really Mr Page you must try to keep your hero-worship in check: I have no such wizardry, and so I must again confine myself to a few points:

(1) I am fascinated to learn that when I point out an error in Mr Page's writing I am 'quibbling'. It was you, Mr Page, who spoke of 'scupulous accuracy'. Dare I ask you to define the phrase?

(2) The fact that there are refugees from a country does not prove all that Mr Page would wish. It does not prove, for instance, that the beliefs of illiterate Tibetan peasants indoctrinated by a feudal priesthood are rational. It only proves that the beliefs are firmly held. Thousands fled from North Vietnam because they "knew" that the communists were going to close all the Catholic churches—a "fact" later shown to be quite groundless. I must say it is intriguing to read Mr Page supporting, in the FREETHINKER of all places, a feudal tyranny maintained by, among other things, tearing out tongues, blinding and severing hands, and relying upon the most bizarre superstitious nonsense, against a secular government which has made secular schooling and hospital treatment (both free) virtually universal in the country. Are Mr Page's bourgeois commitments so well entrenched that he can find himself in the unhappy position of supporting Tibetan priests against Chinese secularists?

(3) Mr Page's quote of the Russell dictum on passion only underlines further Mr Page's remarkably superficial understanding. Russell personally approved the title of the best Russell biography (by Alan Wood)—*The Passionate Sceptic*. And does Russell's passion on Vietnam prove that "no good grounds" exist for Russell's Vietnam views. And are you passionate on nothing, Mr Page? Not even on the befuddled ignorance of Pope Simons I? FREETHINKER readers will be surprised to hear that: G. L. SIMONS.

Forsaken Men

MR CHARLES HENNIS rightly calls for consideration of the plight of separated and divorced women in his article of August 30. Solicitors are well aware of the plight of these women.

But divorce lawyers are also aware that British chivalry is such that the Courts are disposed to sympathise with the woman rather than the man in the divorce farce as practised in this country.

Is Mr Hennis aware that some women deliberately batten on men, practising a form of moral blackmail? The procedure is quite simple.

A wife who for some reason or other tires of living with her husband, wishes a divorce. The husband, a professional man, may not have the means, nor indeed the wish, to be involved in a prolonged, messy divorce contest, the cost of which cannot possibly be estimated. Moreover, the publicity attendant on such a defended suit may mean for him professional suicide. Thus, he has no alternative but to let the matter rest and refuse to contest.

But how can the designing woman attain her ends? She may well have no case worth talking about, but she wants a quick divorce. Can she have one? Of course she can.

She merely approaches her lawyer and pours forth a long rigmorole of "cruelty" charges. Lawyers call this "scraping the barrel". Since the husband is in a most vulnerable position, she can go ahead with confidence, pursuing her nefarious ends with all the ingenuity an unscrupulous woman is capable of.

Why choose "cruelty"? For the simple reason that if the partners have been married more than three years, a "cruelty" divorce can be through relatively quick, perhaps a matter of a year. The case is heard, witnesses for the wife are called, and since the case is undefended, the matter of the husband's domestic and professional life is disposed of in a matter of minutes.

You may well say that a man is well rid of such a wife. Fair enough. But the man may well believe in marriage as a life-long partnership. That scarcely matters. And is he rid of his unscrupulous partner? Not a bit of it. Years of financial milching ensue. A fine for a comparatively serious criminal offence may be a matter of fifty or a hundred pounds. But this unoffending husband is called on not only to bear the costs of the hearing as well as his own lawyer's costs; he suffers a perpetual fine by way of

maintenance, which may be about one third of his income, for the rest of his life. If he refuses to pay he is breaking the law, and is subject to more obloquy than would have attended the divorce case had he defended his position. And he may also be deprived of his child or children, the farce of "access" to be judicially determined.

But the matter doesn't end there. Should the wife remarry, the husband has the wry alternative, of fighting for a Court Order to be modified or rescinded on the one hand, or to go on paying on the other. Under Scots Law, alimony ceases on the wife's marriage, but not in England. Should the wife marry a poor man she can still be assured of an income from her first unfortunate husband.

One has only to look to America where "extreme mental cruelty" is the constant cry of spoiled and designing wives who live most comfortably on alimony; indeed, they may be said to make a career of it. And in a modified form, the same practice is followed in this country.

It is no exaggeration to talk of professional suicide. A former colleague of mine was called on to resign when two or three lines appeared in a local paper to the effect that his wife had obtained a decree on the grounds of "constructive desertion". This sounds better than cruelty. Recently, when Mr Malcolm Muggeridge questioned Sir John Reith on TV, the latter stated unequivocally that he would in no circumstances employ a man involved in divorce, or, indeed, in any marital complication.

Mr Hennis should be encouraged to fight for the rights of the thousands of forsaken women as he calls them, but what about the forsaken men?

WILLIAM WELSH.

Wanted a publisher . . .

. . . for a full length MS entitled *Inheritance: Christian and Humanist*. This is a historical survey in two parts: the first covers Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism, Methodism and Christian Dissent, and the second, Freethought and Secular Humanism since Confucius. There is a long bibliography of books referred to, and the purpose of the book is to present a comparative Christianity alongside the all too little known development and achievements of Freethought.

It is an almost incredible fact of life in 1969 that in the Writers and Artists Year Book no publisher mentions 'Rationalism' as an acceptable subject. Although as a bookseller of out-of-print books I can look to my shelves for good atheistic material, it is very hard to find anything published today that is not 'religiously neutral', and David Tribe's second book is eagerly awaited. My own MS has taken more than five years to write, but, recently, more than a year has been virtually completely wasted in what I can only call a traumatic experience! If the book is not good enough to be published, well and good; what is hard to accept is that it is automatically not good enough to be read, or (having been read, approved, and partly rewritten to a publisher's own suggestions) must be rejected without being re-read! There must be a pro-Rationalist, ordinarily considerate publisher somewhere in Britain; if anyone can tell me where, do, please let me know. Mrs KIT MOUAT, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex. I shall be very grateful indeed.

A DAY IN SUSSEX

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 21st, 1969

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