CONTINUING CHRISTMAS. According to recent developments, the New Testament Committee on Religious Rights, Christmas is a year-round obligation and duty. For Christmas day, the committee released an appeal to the churches that are designated to be the first of monthly appeals. On the 20th, on behalf of individuals and groups around the world whose freedom of faith is denied. The Christmas list of urgent cases include Jehovah’s Witnesses in Argentina, an Adventist leader and an Orthodox community in the Soviet Union, Protestant clergy in South Korea, and Roman Catholic media in the Philippines. Local churches and individuals are asked for their “intercessions and action” to remember individual victims by name. In Sunday services, to write to the governments involved, and to publicize the alarming increase of religious persecution in many countries. Working closely with Amnesty International and other human rights organizations, Freedom of Faith hopes to build a network of local churches in America bound by a sustained commitment to religious rights, which, the organization believes, are the most basic of all human rights. The three presidents of FOF are William Slocane Coffin, Presbyteral and pastor of Riverside Church, New York City; Joseph O’Hara, Roman Catholic, and editor of the Jesuit weekly America; and Alexander Schmemann, Orthodox Church of America and Dean of St. Vladimir’s Seminary, Crestwood, New York. Other founders are Howard Schomer, United Church of Christ, and Richard John Neuhaus, Lutheran. The committee is still in process of formation. (For further information about FOF, write FOF, 170 East 84th Street, New York, N.Y. 10021.)

THE RISE OF TRIVIALIZATION. Last May, James Reston of the Times addressed himself to the monumental problems of disarmament. In a column entitled “The Decline of Eloquence” he quoted favorably John Kennst Mathew Gallbraith to the effect that disarmament never gets very far because the Pentagon has on its side the more effective and eloquent rhetoric of fear. If only the eloquence quotient could be raised, we would presumably have a world at peace at last. Last November, in the aftermath of the suicides and killings connected with Jim Jones’s “socialist experiment” in Guyana, Mr. Reston again essayed to explain the nature of monumental evil. The point of the column was captured in its title, “The Decline of Manners.” It seems likely that talk about the arms race is rhetorically deficient and that the nine hundred deaths in Jonestown reflected bad manners on somebody’s part, but we have the uneasy feeling that Mr. Reston’s observations do not drive to the heart of the darkness he ponders.

ANOTHER QUOTATION. In a recent article, President Ford expressed his concern that many of the people who have moved to the United States from Latin America have a sense of entitlement that is out of line with American values. In his ability to communicate with these people, President Ford has a responsibility to help them understand not only the American democracy, but also that they can do a lot to make it work. In his recent speech to Congress, President Ford said, “Our country cannot afford to lose the moral and financial aid of those who come here seeking a better life.” The President’s words come at a time when many Americans are concerned about the high cost of living and the social problems that accompany immigration.

WAR INSTIGATORS INTERNATIONAL. The War Resisters’ International (not to be confused with World Without War Council, above) describes itself as “a pacifist organization with affiliates in twenty countries.” A recent mailing from WRI, given a new meaning to pacifism, on “A Call to My Palestinian-Arab Brothers.” He declares, “It is not the danger of war, but the war itself which I wish to warn. Given the political realities, continued U.S. policies in the Middle East, another Israeli-Arab war is plainly unavoidable. The Nazi Jews of Palestine are motivated by the same social justice as their German counterparts. Nothing will save them other than local resistance. Do not fall as the Jews under the Nazi Reich failed. Prepare and organize now. May the victory be ours. Facilitate the world arise, you have nothing to lose but your souls!” On some questions, however, WRI is more pacific. For instance, Carii Bragg reports in a recent newsletter on “My Trip to Vietnam.” There is no mention of the many thousands held in concentration—sorry, “reeducation”—camps, and we are assured that “the new economic areas are populated on a volunteer basis and those who don’t like it are free to leave.” The people are working together “in a spirit of unity and hope for the future” but have a hard time of it “without the massive reconstruction aid which the U.S. government has a moral obligation to provide.” Ms. Bragg fails to appreciate the new budgetary austerity in Washington. What with helping the thousands of escaped prisoners from Vietnam, there’s hardly anything left over for their jailing.

THE SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY. Next July, the World Council of Churches (WCC) is holding a big conference at the Massachusetts Institute of Tech.