

The Freethinker

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IN A recent issue of the Irish *Sunday Press*, there appeared a lengthy quotation from an American Jesuit which is of quite exceptional interest, particularly so when "the winds of change" are blowing gustily even down the immemorial corridors of the Vatican. The far-sighted prediction made long ago by a former priest, Joseph McCabe, that the Church of Rome would one day awake from her medieval slumbers with the roar of a great battle ringing in her ears is now being abundantly fulfilled! For the papal "revolution" inaugurated by Pope John and continued by his successor, obviously represents the active response of the most powerful religious organisation in human history to the peremptory challenge advanced by the scientific and social revolutions of our iconoclastic epoch. What, in effect Popes John and Paul and their Vatican Council are now doing is to inaugurate a new counter-reformation in historic succession to the one launched by the Jesuits in the 16th century which saved Rome from the Reformation.

An Evolutionary Universe

Our Irish contemporary quotes Father Walter J. Lung, SJ, an author and English professor at St. Louis University, Michigan, as saying that "especially since the discovery of cosmic evolution, this age of ours appears as a pre-Christian rather than a post-Christian age". "Vast developments in Christian thought and action lie ahead", said Fr. Lung, and he added that until recent times, "theology had been severely handicapped because it had set the Incarnation of Christ against a backdrop of a universe inadequately and even falsely conceived". Today however, scientists are providing a picture of an "evolutionary universe". Upon which sapient reflection one may comment that this certainly represents a radically new line for a Church and for a theological system that still officially accepts St. Thomas Aquinas and his completely static universe as construed by Aristotelian metaphysics.

Newman's "Development"

For in Catholic theology today, the Aristotelian definition of God, Christianised by St. Thomas (1226-74) as "pure act"—that is, as an unchangeable, immovable being who has exhausted every conceivable potentiality and is therefore totally incapable of any further change or future development—still holds sway. One might add that whilst it may be an arguable proposition that there is still room for a God in "an evolutionary universe", there is obviously and certainly no room either for the static metaphysical universe of Aristotle or for the equally static deity of Aristotle's greatest Christian disciple St. Thomas Aquinas, saint and doctor of the Universal Church and at least since the counter-Reformation, the standard Catholic authority in theology. Exit St. Thomas Aquinas! It may be recalled that at the ecumenical Council of Trent, which inaugurated the counter-Reformation, the works of St. Thomas were placed on the altar alongside the Gospels.

When viewed from the broad perspectives provided by

the evolution of human thought, present developments in Christian theology strikingly illustrate the theory of "development" as propounded by John Henry Newman in his famous book, *The Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845). For in this book, written when the future cardinal was still a member of the Church of England, Newman propounded what was at that time an entirely new theory of the evolution (though Newman never used this precise

term) of Christianity and in particular, of its traditional theological system. Up to that time, Catholic-Christian dogma was traditionally regarded as something fixed, static, unalterable, the canonical test of any particular dogma being (in

the words of a 4th century author, St. Vincent of Lerins), that it had been accepted "always, everywhere, and by all". Such a conception is obviously entirely static and (at least by implication), excludes altogether any conception of intellectual evolution. The dogmas current say, in the 19th century were exactly the same as those current in the 4th.

New Dogmas

In lieu of this static conception, Newman propounded a much more flexible system to establish the truth of any particular dogma. All that is necessary is to show that it had been known at some early period in the history of the Church, even if not yet universally accepted. The Catholic Church possessed a deposit of revealed truths implicit in Christianity since its origins, but only gradually developed as and when the need for them arose. Obviously this theory, unlike its predecessor, had the decisive advantage that it enabled the Church to "develop" new dogmas in the future when necessary to cope with new needs. Naturally Newman's theological revolution (for such it was in effect), was at first coldly received (as had been Thomas Aquinas's in his day and as has been Teilhard de Chardin's in ours), but its utility to the Church was so obvious that its author eventually became a cardinal and will no doubt end up as a saint. What is more important, the Church has now officially accepted "development". Since Newman's book appeared three new dogmas, all unknown as such in early ages—the Immaculate Conception (1864), papal infallibility (1870—practically the most important of the lot) and the Assumption of the Virgin (1950)—have been "developed". And, as is clear from our Jesuit's comments quoted above, this process is by no means finished. To reconcile Catholic dogma with "an evolutionary universe" as conceived in and by the space-age, is going to take a great deal of "developing".

The Developing Church

Which way will the development of Christian doctrine as envisaged by Newman eventually proceed? At the time when the future cardinal wrote his masterpiece, a percipient Protestant contemporary made this masterly commentary: "The lately divulged doctrine of 'Development' would seem as if it had been now announced as the requisite preliminary to such a relinquishment of ancient

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Exit Thomas Aquinas

By F. A. RIDLEY

practices and principles as we are supposing to be probable . . . If in this Age of Reason certain dogmas or modes of worship may seem to have fulfilled their intention and to have become incumbrances rather than aids, why may not the inherent 'development' power rescind, withdraw, remove such adjuncts? It is not easy to see what difficulty either logical or theoretic, stands in the way, to prevent the Church's faculty of 'development' from now shifting its position and acting as a faculty of abrogation. Once it put its right hand forth to bring from its treasury things new, henceforward it will be putting out its left hand to withdraw these worn and faded articles from their places. In a rude age the Church—always wise in her day—became flagrantly polytheistic, in a philosophic or rather a scientific age, the same Church, equally wise, will become pantheistic". It only remains to add that this was written by Isaac Taylor (*Ignatius Loyola and the Rudiments of*

Jesuitism, pp. 325-6) in 1848, and not by say, the Bishop of Woolwich in 1963!

Rome in 2064

Current developments in Rome indicate strongly that this 19th century critique, was as prophetic as masterly. As Father Lung stated, "vast developments" are imminent in the Roman Catholic Church. Rome in 2064 will be a very different place and will teach a very different sort of theology than she does in 1964. Many old landmarks will have to go before Roman Catholic theology can accommodate itself fully to "an evolutionary universe". Will St. Thomas be amongst them? It would appear to be extremely probable. By say, 2064 who will be the acknowledged master of Catholic theology: Newman or (as appears more probable at present) Teilhard de Chardin, SJ? Be that as it may, Rome, that arch-chameleon of world-history, is changing colour again!

Adoption in Canada

We print below a leader from the *Toronto Daily Star* entitled "Moral Atheist", and a letter from one of its readers published on December 23rd, 1963.

Do WE have religious freedom in Ontario? One is inclined to doubt it on learning a Toronto couple have been refused leave to adopt a child because the husband is an atheist.

The director of the Simcoe County Children's Aid Society, which has custody of the child, admits that the couple are satisfactory in every other way; the husband's lack of religious belief is the sole obstacle. The wife is a Protestant, and the would-be parents undertook to have the youngster attend her church. But this was not enough for the society. It insisted that the couple undertake to exert pressure on the child to remain with the church after it became an adult—an undertaking no parents should be expected to give.

The society's attitude reflects an idea which is still common in the more bigoted sections of Canadian society—that a formal religion is essential to morality. There is no foundation for this view, and it is, in fact, contradicted by everyday experience. Unquestionably there are millions of people whose religious faith has helped them to live better lives; but many others have been able to maintain high standards of conduct without such a faith. An example that comes to mind is Mark Twain, whose anti-religious meditations were published recently.

There is no reason whatever to assume than an atheist or agnostic cannot make a good and loving parent. Nor is there anything in the Child Welfare act imposing a religious test of this sort in connection with adoptions. The action of the Simcoe County Children's Aid Society looks like a gross abuse of authority.

Sir.—I was interested in the recent news item which indicated that a couple who had applied to a Children's Aid Society in the County of Simcoe had been refused the right to adopt a child because the husband was an atheist, although the wife was a Protestant.

I have long been of the opinion that according to the law of Ontario there is no basis for segregating adopting parents by religious denominations . . . I can find no statutory authority whatsoever for the proposition that interfaith adoptions are illegal . . . Nowhere (in the Child Welfare Act) in all the sections dealing with adoption is there any mention of the word "religion". As far as I am aware the main consideration which moves the courts in deciding whether an adoption order should be granted

or not is the welfare of the child . . .

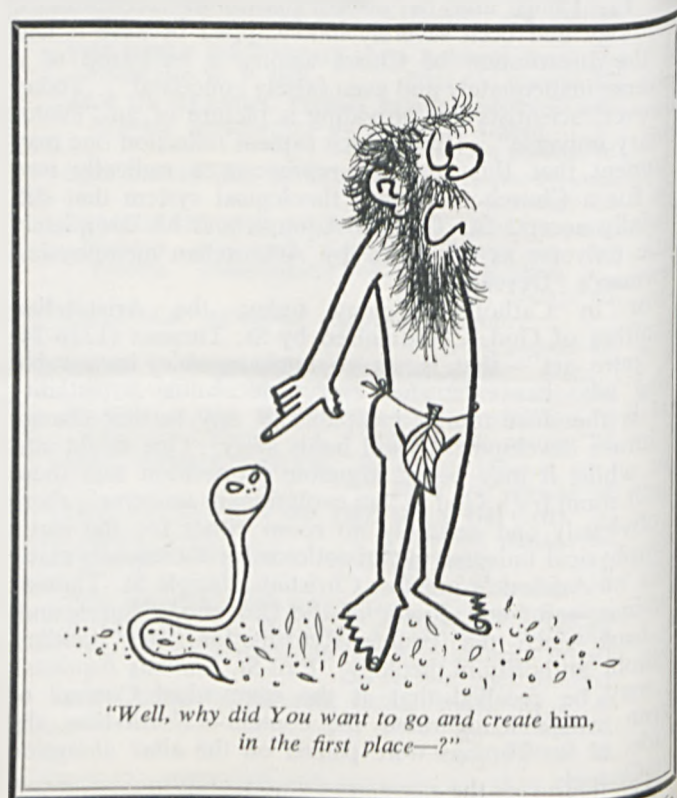
In my opinion, any Children's Aid Society, therefore, which can be shown to be acting contrary to the interests of the child in refusing adoption solely on the basis of religion . . . would be acting contrary to the law.

In my opinion, the Children's Aid Societies . . . have usurped the function of the department of public welfare and substituted the rules governing their internal management for the law of the land.

The minister of the department of public welfare should formally declare:

- (1) That the law of the land permits interfaith adoptions
- (2) That if the denominational Children's Aid Societies wish to receive public assistance they must entertain applications from all citizens.

CHARLES B. COHEN (Toronto, 2).



"Well, why did You want to go and create him, in the first place—?"

From *Adam and Eve* by Hugh Burnett, Merlin Press, London.

"Our Father . . ."

By REGINALD UNDERWOOD

THE TALE used to be told of two very noble lords, that during what they imagined to be a religious argument, the first bet the second a sovereign that he couldn't repeat the Lord's Prayer from memory. After a brief consideration the second noble lord accepted the challenge and with all the confidence of ignorance proceeded to recite: "For what we are about to receive O Lord, make us truly thankful, for Christ's sake amen". Another pause and then the first noble lord disgustedly handed over the sovereign with the flabbergasted comment: "Well I'm damned! Honestly I didn't think you'd be able to say it".

One touch of levity makes all philosophers kin, or if it doesn't it ought to. But there are no doubt the inevitable one or two who couldn't tolerate a joke to save their philosophy. So often that touch of levity is the sugar on the pill. So often it is just an artifice for making serious and sometimes perturbing reflections more approachable. For it is as possible to be serious without being solemn as it is to be solemn without being serious. This is borne out by the undeniably solemn reflection that not only noble lords, but often ignoble commoners, if called upon at a moment's notice to repeat the Western World's most hackneyed piece of parrotry, would probably muff it just as badly. Yet nothing, not even a National Anthem, is gabbled so frequently, so pharasaically or so heedlessly, in church and out of church, as this prayer of prayers, revered throughout all Christendom from Romanists to Quakers. And this, notwithstanding, Matthew tells us that Jesus expressly warned against showing off as the hypocrites do and severely enjoined his followers: "When thou prayest enter into thy closet and . . . pray to thy father in secret . . . After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father . . ."

Often unsanctioned and quite as often unwelcome, this prayer is wangled by its busy-body votaries into all manner of public occasions, religious, civic and what by intention should be strictly secular. Judging from its unparalleled prestige one would naturally expect to find it an unparalleled marvel of communication between Creator and creature. But upon looking it through with the most scrupulously impartial attention, one cannot escape the conclusion that the only marvellous thing about it is, that there is nothing to marvel about. What perhaps we might marvel at is, that it evinces little or none of the distinction so piously attributed to it, either in form or content. It isn't a patch on many other passages that could be selected from the Bible. It is indeed amazing that a prayer so undistinguished, so essentially Judaic and unitarian in character, should be elected as the supreme exemplar of prayer in all Christian communities. And to small effect. For practically all subsequent Christian prayers have been emphatically trinitarian, something never conceived by the Jewish Jesus. It was not until much later than his supposed death that this Trinity idea was established by designing theologians. All it amounts to is an incomprehensible fancy worked up into one of those mystifications revelled in by ecclesiastics, and which are so powerfully potent in deluding the credulous and fearful. Clerics have always made full use of such devices. By this means they are able to get masses of susceptible people under the clerical thumb, to the great advantage of clerical interests and the coffers of the Church.

The reason for the otherwise unaccountable pre-eminence of this famous prayer is plainly intimated in its title. Al-

though it does not, it seems, shine forth as the familiar daily prayer of noble lords, it is nevertheless the Lord's Prayer. It is because it is venerated as having been composed and decreed by Jesus himself that it has achieved such unique status. Had its origin been ascribed to a less notable source, it would almost certainly have been relegated to the long lists of formal prayers too commonplace to merit any special notice. That it did originate in this way is of course only a tale that is told and to which authentic history gives no more support than it does to any other of the New Testament fables. Needless to say, the very ordinariness of the prayer is exalted by theological casuistry into unassailable evidence of its divine inspiration. To serve its own ends however, theological casuistry would along the same lines transfigure any similar simplicity. That such ordinariness is evidence of divine inspiration is no more demonstrable than the extraordinariness of reciting the Lord's Prayer backwards is evidence of diabolical incitement.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about the Lord's Prayer is its primitive anthropomorphism. "Our Father which art in heaven" is still unmistakably an address to that mythical monstrosity, the Yahweh of the Old Testament. In so far as Our Father is here conceived as more than a person or a personality, he is obviously conceived as a grossly inflated personage, superhuman no doubt to an unspecified degree, but none the less the God that man has made in his own bloated image. The Jew in Jesus could apparently not get beyond this. In this model prayer, at any rate, Jesus shows no comprehension of St. John's finer conception: "God is a spirit". Jesus naively believes in corporeal angels and demons, in celestial and infernal regions, in posthumous reward and punishment. The heaven to which he refers is crudely cosmological, an apartment in space, a place of many mansions, a dimension where his patriarchal God sits enthroned amid what is nothing but a fantastic, vulgar, supermundane display. It is the same heaven which even today largely falls in with common Christian description. If this heaven is to be regarded as eternal, it is eternal only, so to speak, in a temporal sense. This very materialistic heaven where, Jesus seems to say, God is and where God's will is done, reveals none of the truly profound and profoundly true insight which he showed when he said: "The kingdom of heaven is within you". This is a saying acceptable to both Christian and Atheist. But so, at least to the Atheist is its corollary, the kingdom of hell is within you.

The God to whom Jesus directs his prayer is plainly the same old barbarian often known as the God of Abraham, the God so avid of flattery that he must never be approached without some sop to his vanity. "Hallowed be thy name" is therefore one of those ingratiating tributes which introduce most prayers. Considering the way they are usually rattled off they are little better than so much patter. Pater Noster in fact is thereby literally turned into patter noster. Yet these tributes are posed as expressions of deepest adoration. Now it is understandable that one human being might adore another human being, but it is impossible to believe that any human being could actually adore a being so utterly unseizable by any other faculty than an imagination temperamentally predisposed.

"Hallowed be thy name" like all its equivalents cannot at bottom be more than habituated lip-service, a compli-

(Concluded on page 28)

This Believing World

It was obvious that the Arabs, Jews, and Christians in Jordan and Palestine who saw the Pope, looked upon the show exactly as if it had been Buffalo Bill and his Wild West Circus. The one thing that was absent was any reverence for God's Viceroy on Earth. We doubt whether the average Arab in Jordan, for example, really believes that Allah and Jehovah are the same God. Arabs certainly believe in one God, but is he the God of the Christians?

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In any case, when it comes to relics there appears little difference between the beliefs of true Christians and true Muslims. Somebody stole a hair from Muhammed's beard (or head?) one of the most sacred relics in Islam, and riots followed in Pakistan with numbers of shrieking believers getting killed. It has since been found; but it all reminds us of the way in the Middle Ages Jews were so often accused of sticking a knife into a Holy Wafer used in Communion, and blood—obviously the blood of Jesus—spurted out. Then as many Jews as could be found were butchered. There's nothing like true religion for this sort of thing.

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You have something like it in a vicar cursing some Black Magic followers for desecrating his church. Some Church papers pretended to be horrified as this surely was not in the spirit of true Christianity. Yet cursing was one of the greatest assets of the teaching of Jesus. He angrily said, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels", "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?", and so on. Nobody in the Gospels believed more in cursing than gentle Jesus meek and mild. The cursing vicar certainly had Jesus on his side.

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The Catholic woman doctor who insists on supplying the necessary information to enable Catholic women to limit their families if they want to do so will probably be "excommunicated" if she persists in disobeying the Church. Excommunication is about as harmful as drinking water, and so far Dr. Biezanek, who is the mother of seven, and knows something of what that means, has only been denied the Sacraments, but she would find far more peace, understanding, and happiness in unbelief than she will ever find in the bosom of her discredited Church.

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There is, we are always solemnly told, no peace for the wicked. Well, whatever they think of themselves, our Moral Rearmers never think they are wicked—and yet the Swiss government is now going to tax the MRA headquarters in Geneva. Up to now they have been granted exemption under laws giving relief to churches and charities, but not so any longer. They will have to pay taxes just like a casino or a pub. So what about a spot of praying to Jesus, to see if he will soften the hearts of the Swiss tax gatherers? How can such a prayer fail?

OUR FATHER

(Concluded from page 27)

ment on the offchance. As for "Thy kingdom come", its meaning in this context is simply a plea for the speedy realisation of the promised transformation of this earth into Paradise at the divine behest. This was the popular expectation of those days and inexplicably still is among a number of cranky religious sects who apparently remain blind and deaf to all the scientific evidence that makes hay of such hopes.

The succeeding section, desiring that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven, is another and somewhat redundant way of putting the kingdom come idea. Then comes the supplication for daily bread and this is so very daily that it could be incorporated into any prayer without making that prayer in the least remarkable. Much the same could be said about the forgiveness of our trespasses, although this has a strong tinge of the eye for an eye mode of justice, so repugnant to modern psychology. This can be read in two different ways: forgiveness because we forgive, or forgiveness in the same degree that we forgive. The difference however is like the difference between a what-d'ye-call-it and a thingumabob, too hair-splitting and hypothetical to be worth discussing. But what follows strikes one not merely as remarkable but as positively startling. For here we have Jesus actually asking God to lead us not into temptation but to deliver us from evil. To ask God to deliver us from evil might be allowed as religiously reasonable. But to ask God to lead us not into temptation—what is one to make of that? Looked at from any angle it could virtually amount to an accusation that God can and does lead us into temptation when it suits his whim. It could indeed be taken to imply that this capricious God, when it seemeth him good, is not above usurping what, his Church has always taught, is the unholy prerogative of the Devil.

Temptation cannot mean other than allurements into sin, which is what religion defines as evil. Does God then deliberately inveigle us into evil in order to have the credit of forgiving us or the pleasure of punishing us? If we seek a professional answer to this, it will almost invariably be that the words involved either were not spoken as they stand, or if they were, then they really mean something quite different from what they appear to convey. The first answer gives rise to such awkward implications that the wiliest way out is not to hear the question. That leaves us like the eunuch of old up against, "understandest thou what thou readeest?" Presumably we do. There are the words, black against white, very plain, very simple in the one language we claim to know. Even so, we are told, the words require to be correctly interpreted. Unfortunately, we discovered long ago that interpretation will always mean twisting words into accordance with the interpreter's prepossessions. And as interpreters more often than not disagree, we get no nearer.

Since this single prayer of Jesus was prechristian, it could not be concluded in the customary way of later Christian prayers. It could hardly be asked in Christ's name and for his sake. Instead, it closes with a panegyric usually known as the doxology. This includes no triune gloria. It is really a rabbinical orthodoxology. Yet for centuries the Christian Churches have not scrupled to use it while maintaining their denunciation of the Jews as the accursed race upon whose guilty heads is the blood of Jesus. In their eagerness to sustain the charge, Christians seem to have forgotten that their own salvation claims to rest upon the necessary shedding of this blood. One thing may be said for the prayer, it does avoid the pretentious cant so common to stock sectarian prayers. Although it is commendably brief, it is wide-embracing and thus is especially handy for those childish ceremonial occasions so beloved by immature man who always mistakes the sanctimonious for the sanctified. It never occurs to him that after all its countless repetitions over many centuries, there is no faintest sign that this Lord's Prayer has ever been divinely acknowledged and that it looks like remaining unacknowledged—as its own words indicate—for ever and ever.

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Lecture Notices, Etc.**OUTDOOR**

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

London Branches--Kingston, Marble Arch, North London: (Marble Arch), Sundays, from 4 p.m.: MESSRS. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER, C. E. WOOD, D. H. TRIBE, J. A. MILLAR.

(Tower Hill). Every Thursday, 12--2 p.m.: MESSRS. J. W. BARKER and L. EBURY.

Manchester Branch NSS (Car Park, Victoria Street,) Sunday Evenings

Merseyside Branch NSS (Pierhead).--Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.; Sundays, 7.30 p.m.

North London Branch NSS (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).--Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY.

Nottingham Branch NSS (Old Market Square), every Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch NSS (Midland Institute, Paradise Street), Sunday, January 26th, 6.45 p.m.: F. J. CORINA, "Modern Superstitions".

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Tuesday, January 28th, 7.30 p.m.: R. S. R. FITTER, "Nature Conservation".

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, January 26th, 6.30 p.m.: D. J. PRICE, MA, "Philosophy of the Average".

Lincolnshire Humanist Group (Albion Hotel, Lincoln), Thursday, January 23rd, 7 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY, "Independence of Ethics".

Manchester Branch NSS (Wheatshaf Hotel, High Street), Sunday, January 26th, 7.30 p.m.: D. TOMLEY, BSc, "Mechanisms of Evolution".

Marble Arch Branch NSS (Carpenter's Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1), Sunday, January 26th, 7.30 p.m.: ERIC KINTON, "Freedom for the Press".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, January 26th, 11 a.m.: DR. D. STARK MURRAY, "The Next Ten Years: Changing Ethics in Medicine".

West Ham Branch NSS (Wanstead and Woodford Community Centre), Friday, January 24th, 8 p.m.: D. H. TRIBE, "Honest Without God".

Notes and News

WE HAVEN'T heard yet whether the Netherlands government is to take any action against the Dutch equivalent of TW3, *After All, That's How It Is Really*, which the Minister of Education considers hurt religious feelings on the first Saturday in January. The programme criticised "the new religion of TV", presenting the television set as God and the aerial as the cross, and journalists taking part quoted from the Bible (*Daily Telegraph*, 7/1/64). Many newspapers denounced the programme as blasphemous, and Parliamentary leaders of the Catholic, Protestant and Liberal parties sent written questions to the government "indicating that they disapproved strongly".

THE Russian Orthodox Church celebrated Christmas according to the "Old Calendar", Mark Frankland reported from Moscow (*The Observer*, 12/1/64). But the celebrations took place "amid a crescendo of anti-religious attacks in the Soviet Press". The decision to step up

atheistic propaganda dates from the Central Committee's ideological commission meeting at the end of 1963, said Mr. Frankland, and "Professional atheists have complained . . . about the lack of propaganda literature and posters—and also of the indifference of some local authorities to their work". The Khrushchev era has been characterised by increasing attention to the persistence of religious belief, Mr. Frankland went on, and anti-religious propaganda has "become more personal and violent". It is still, he said, "something of a custom for Russians to have their children baptised in a church, but very few of the baptised will grow up to be married there. Very heavy pressure can be put on young believers by teachers, youth leaders and other activists, although the constitutional right to religious faith is not denied".

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HERE IN England, a schoolteacher has a constitutional right to opt out of religious instruction but for two very good reasons very few do so. It would throw extra work on one's colleagues, and it would almost certainly hinder one's chances of a headship. After hearing John England, former Chairman of the NUT and a primary school headmaster, on ITV on January 12th, we dread to think what would happen to a member of his staff who opted out.

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MR. ENGLAND took part in a discussion on "Religion in Schools" with another Christian, Alexander Howard, headmaster of a London comprehensive school, and A. S. Neill and Brian Jackson, Director of the Advisory Centre for Education, who were opposed to compulsory RE. "Discussion" is hardly the right word to describe the programme, however, for Mr. England's Christian zeal impelled him to dominate the others, vocally if not intellectually. Frankly, it was quite useless arguing with him, and Mr. Jackson, perhaps the most reasoned of the four speakers, seemed to give up trying. No doubt a chairman would have helped, but it was a mistake to have two Christian headmasters from state schools opposing two educationalists outside the state system. Whenever Mr. Jackson indicated a flaw in compulsory religious teaching he was told he was out-of-date. Whenever Mr. Neill said his children could be moral without religion, he was told he was exceptional.

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THE NORMAN tower of St. Mary's Swaffham Prior, Cambridgeshire, is to be restored. It has been a ruin since it was wrecked in the 18th century by "superstitious villagers" who thought "the Devil had got into it" (*Daily Telegraph*, 6/1/64). But were they so superstitious? Chancellor Garth Moore, fellow of Corpus Christi, Cambridge, presumably wouldn't think so. He told the *Daily Herald* (7/1/64) that he'd found a poltergeist in a council house. "Noises, ghosts, door handles turning, don't by any means happen only in old houses. They happen anywhere". And he expressed surprise that there were few stories of such happenings in Oxbridge colleges. I think, Henry Fielding of the *Herald* commented, "that academics are just a bit too sceptical for that sort of thing".

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MARION L. STARKEY's story of the witches of Salem, *The Devil in Massachusetts*, is among the paperbacks published by Trust Books in aid of Oxfam. At 3s. 6d. it is excellent value, and of particular interest to Freethinkers. The series also includes Anthony Nutting's *Lawrence of Arabia*, 3s. 6d., and *A Dustbin of Milligan*, by Spike Milligan 2s. 6d. These and other titles are obtainable from THE FREETHINKER Bookshop.

Historical Inevitability

(Report of a Lecture by ANTONY FLEW, Professor of Philosophy at the University of North Staffordshire, to the New Zealand Rationalist Association)

ON MONDAY, AUGUST 19TH, Professor Antony Flew addressed a meeting held under the auspices of the New Zealand Rationalist Association in the Women's Memorial Hall, Auckland. The following is extracted from the lecture.

In the academic year 1960-61, said the lecturer, Professor E. H. Carr gave the Trevelyan lectures in Cambridge, England. These were historical lectures established and named in honour of G. M. Trevelyan. E. H. Carr was a leading British historian who had worked mainly on a vast study of the history of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and after. The essence of these Carr Trevelyan lectures was later distilled and given over the BBC Third Programme as Six Talks. It was especially a humanist event, for Carr's outlook was worldly through and through, and his approach was straightforwardly rational.

In the second of the talks, with an ostentatious cultural detachment, Carr commented upon the Robinson Crusoe myth: "Robinson is not an abstract individual, but an Englishman from York; he carries his Bible with him and prays to his tribal God". In the sixth, after criticising one of Popper's theses, Carr pays him a compliment as proper as it is characteristic: "On one point, indeed, I should pay tribute . . . He remains a stout defender of reason, and will have no truck with past or present excursions into irrationalism".

Much more important than any such asides was the fact that the whole of Carr's final talk was concerned with "the Widening Horizon", which was provided by the extension of the possibilities of reason in the modern period. He saw the works of Hegel and Marx, of Malthus and Freud, as a succession of landmarks in the always uneven progress of our attempts to understand men and societies; a progress which constantly opened up new possibilities for the planned and conscious change of both ourselves and our social institutions.

Carr insisted that this widening horizon was one of the most important and most exciting features of the contemporary world. The point which he was making was, of course, independent of demurring questions about the exact scientific status of the particular theories of some of these intellectual heroes. It was made, perhaps, most forcibly where Carr dismissed the "popular charge against Freud, that he had extended the role of the irrational in human affairs". This, he argued, "is totally false, and rests on a crude confusion between recognition of the irrational element in human behaviour and a cult of the irrational".

It was, he might have added, Jung not Freud, who appeared willing to become high priest to such a cult. Also, he might have added, at a more sophisticated level still, Freud did not even show that men are more irrational than had previously been recognised by carping judges: for either he showed real reasons behind rationalisations, where the rationalisations were already recognisable as such; or else he showed the unknown sources of desires which must in order to be thus or in any way explicable remain as they were. But what Carr said in fact, and all he himself said was that: "What Freud did was to extend the range of our knowledge and understanding by opening up the unconscious roots of human behaviour to consciousness and to rational enquiry. This was an extension of the domain of reason, an increase in man's power to

understand and control himself, and therefore his environment; and it represents a revolutionary and progressive achievement."

"But this vision, which we share," commented Professor Flew, "would surely be no more than a grotesque delusion if it really were the case that whatever happens in history happens inevitably". In his fourth talk, "Causation in History", Carr considered the question of how the possibility of historical explanation, which seemed to presuppose some sort of determinism, was to leave any room for human responsibility, which required that at least some of our actions could have been other than they were. This was a problem which in this particular form seemed to have been raised and treated first by Hume. Appropriately enough, since this philosopher early formed and later fulfilled the ambition to become also an historian. Though Carr made no mention of Hume his attempt to resolve the dilemma proceeded on Humean lines; and it was inadequate in at least the same ways.

Carr directed his remarks in the first instance against Sir Isaiah Berlin's well-known harangue on *Historical Inevitability*. This was a diatribe against historical determinism, which Berlin found objectionable because, as Carr rather mischievously puts it, "by explaining human actions in causal terms, it implies a denial of human free will, and encourages historians to evade their supposed obligation to pronounce moral condemnation on the Charlemagnes, Napoleons, and Stalins of history". Carr defined determinism as "the belief that everything that happens has a cause or causes, and could not have happened differently unless something in the cause or causes had also been different". He then began, like Hume, by urging that: "Determinism is a problem not of history, but a problem—if it is a problem—of all human behaviour . . . Everyday life would be impossible unless we assumed that human behaviour has causes which are in principle ascertainable".

Carr proceeded to consider the historian. "Like the ordinary man, he believes that human actions have causes which are in principle ascertainable. History, like everyday life, would be impossible if this assumption were not made". As for the idea of historical inevitability, this was apparently all a mistake, the product of occasional careless talk. "Historians, like other people, sometimes fall into rhetorical language and speak of an occurrence as 'inevitable' when they mean that the conjunction of factors leading one to expect it was overwhelmingly strong". But really the term inevitability is entirely redundant. "Nothing in history is inevitable except in the formal sense that, for it to have happened otherwise, the antecedent causes would have had to be different. As a historian, I am perfectly prepared to do without 'inevitable', 'unavoidable', 'inescapable', and even 'ineluctable'."

This was in substance the Humean answer, but transposed from psychological into epistemological terms. Hume urged that our idea—or pseudo idea—of some necessity in things was really only the misplaced offspring of our felt impressions of necessity; impressions which were in turn the product of the strong habits of association which, as a plain matter of psychological fact, led us to expect like causes to be followed by like effects. Carr suggested that all talk of inevitability was merely an empty piece of rhetoric which, however misleading, was

none the less extremely tempting in cases where we had, or could have had, the very best of grounds for anticipating the occurrence of the event so characterised.

This sort of answer, in the epistemological version favoured by Carr, did contain at least part of the heart of the matter. Where Carr went wrong—in this, again, like Hume—was in suggesting that it did, or should, represent also the end of the affair. The first essential and correct point is that to be in a position to say with assurance that something will surely happen is not necessarily to be in a position to say that it is under constraint that it will happen. In the Presidential election of 1956 the conjunction of factors leading anyone who knew his America to expect the return of Mr. Eisenhower was indeed overwhelmingly strong. But this particular conjunction of factors provided no ground for suggesting that the polling was going to be conducted fraudulently, or under duress. The plain, perhaps regrettable, fact was that the great majority of the American people still actually preferred Eisenhower to Stevenson.

Again from the proposition "He knows that Isaac will marry Sheila" it follows necessarily that "Isaac will marry Sheila". But from "He knows that Isaac will marry Sheila" it does not necessarily follow that "Isaac will, necessarily, inevitably, and unavoidably marry Sheila". You might very well be in a position to know that Isaac will marry Sheila without its being the case that poor Isaac cannot help himself. Sheila, after all, may be a very attractive proposition and Isaac a very lucky man. In which case, though there may be no reason to doubt that Isaac if he so wished could renounce the world and the flesh and Sheila, you may be perfectly entitled to say that you know that in fact he will do no such silly thing; and that the marriage which has been arranged will duly take place.

These examples, of Eisenhower's re-election and Isaac's romance, show how the possibility of knowledge of some future human behaviour does not necessarily preclude the possibility that this same behaviour may be the uncoerced manifestation of free choices. The example of Isaac and Sheila can be employed to bring to light in its most simple form a considerably more sophisticated source of the same error. The temptation is illegitimately to transpose the adverb "necessarily", and to insert it without any warrant into the conclusion. Properly this adverb should qualify the "follows", which links one proposition to another logically derivable from it. In the false conclusion it will qualify whatever verb that proposition may happen to contain. We are thus led to misconstrue a sort of necessity which can only apply to the logical relations between propositions as if we had here a case of some more solid and practical inevitability. The fallacy involved is the same as that in the fatalist argument embodied in the song which begins: "Che sara sara, whatever will be, will be". From "This will happen" it follows necessarily, although unexcitingly, that "This will happen". But it certainly does not follow that "This will happen necessarily, inevitably, and unavoidably".

Berlin's main purpose, said Professor Flew, in writing *Historical Inevitability* was, as Carr mischievously acknowledged, to defend the idea of human responsibility against all and any attacks, whether open or implicit, launched in the name of historical determinism. He was nevertheless prepared to dismiss in a long footnote the saving contention that determinism in general was not necessarily incompatible with the fact of choice, while yet making no serious attempt to come to grips with the one considerable argument which is peculiar to the historical species of the genus. That was the argument, urged by Carr and by

Hume, that historical determinism was both a presupposition and, to some extent, a finding of historical enquiry. It was an argument which certainly could be strongly challenged. For instance, there seemed to be at least one very common and generally acceptable type of historical explanation which told us not why what happened was at least "formally" inevitable but only how it became possible. In so far as explanations of this type could be satisfactory it seemed that there might still be room for some measure of indeterminism. Being committed to the opposite, the determinist, view Carr, again in his own way following Hume, argued instead that though historical determinism was in fact true, the only sort of necessity involved was entirely innocuous.

[Reprinted from *The New Zealand Rationalist*, November/December, 1963.]

A PROTESTANT PROTEST

A STRONG complaint has been made by the Protestant Alliance about "the extremely tendentious presentation and reporting by the BBC of the recent visit of the Pope to the Holy Land" (*The Guardian*, 11/1/64). A letter from Mr. O. T. Taylor, secretary of the Alliance, took particular exception to the 6 p.m. Television News on January 6th. He pointed out that: "A picture was shown of the Pope and the comment made by the announcer that this was the spot on which Christ appointed Peter to be head of the Church and this was his twentieth-century successor. The truth of this is emphatically denied".

Some years ago, Mr. Taylor said, the BBC was guilty of similar inaccuracy, admitting so when he protested, and giving "assurances that every necessary step would be taken to prevent a repetition of such unfortunate misrepresentation". However, in the light of the past few days' experience, said Mr. Taylor, it would seem that BBC promises are "entirely meaningless". Of course, as we noted last week, Father Agnellus Andrew took over from the usual announcer on most BBC news bulletins featuring the Pope. Perhaps that explains the "tendentious" reporting on January 6th.

NSS ANNUAL DINNER

THE General Secretary of the National Secular Society asks us to remind readers that the Society's Annual Dinner is to be held this year on Saturday, March 14th at 7 p.m., in the Pavilions Arms, Page Street, London, S.W.1. Further details will be announced soon.

CORRESPONDENCE

BIRTH CONTROL

"Vigilant" accuses me of displaying "a lamentable ignorance" in my comments on *The Time Has Come*. That is a matter of opinion, but personally I consider his view that the Roman Catholic Church bans contraception because it wants people to be as miserable as possible is a gross distortion, even though some priests do regard an increased proportion of Catholics in the population as a reward for their superior virtue.

One must remember that until recently all "respectable" opinion shared the outlook of the Roman Catholic Church, although that Church, as usual, expressed itself more dogmatically than the rest. The impact of events has caused almost everyone else to change, leaving the Roman Catholic Church isolated. In Britain and the United States at least this is a serious embarrassment to the Church, making it appear ridiculous, putting off possible converts, and causing many Catholics to lapse, or at least ignore or resent their Church's teaching. When the Church finds a constitutional procedure for changing its mind, "Vigilant" will see how it rushes to take it.

As for R. Smith, I cannot quite see what he is advocating. He seems to argue that people would do better not to have children at all and then, with perfect inconsistency, concludes that they might as well have more than they want.

Humanism surely attaches the greatest importance to man and his needs, and must recognise that most human beings have a

deep desire for children. Humanism does not have to recommend the human race to let itself die out by refusing on principle to reproduce.

MARGARET MCILROY.

The writers of Notes and News say they regret that they cannot take the pessimism contained in my letter regarding family planning (10/1/64) seriously, but it seems very obvious to me that these writers could hardly take any form of pessimism seriously.

Unlike them I think that it is quite rational to go on living with the views that I expressed in my letter, and I practise what I preach in that regard.

I am also of the opinion that what they call my private despair is quite rational and understandable considering the nature of the world we live in, and also far more honest and justifiable than hiding behind the curtain of the sort of "cheerful realism" that Mr. Priestley believes in.

I therefore challenge the writers of Notes and News to prove to me that the views I expressed in my letter regarding family planning are unjustifiable because they think that those holding them should cease to go on living.

R. SMITH.

[Our main point is that, for those who consider life intolerable there is a way out. If someone preaches the intolerability of life but chooses to go on living, we conclude (a) that he can't really believe what he says or (b) he hopes things may improve. Whether "cheerful realism" is a correct description of J. B. Priestley's views, we don't know. Assuming that it is, what justification has Mr. Smith for calling it less honest than his own pessimism? Why is it a curtain that Mr. Priestley hides behind? Mr. Smith may regard his own position as rational, but he is irrational in his assertions about others.—ED.]

"Notes and News" commented well on R. Smith's deplorable letter (10/1/64). People like Mr. Smith moan about "a world which is making giant strides towards annihilation", when they would be better employed joining the peace movement and doing something to avoid the horrors of nuclear war. It is not inevitable that our planet should be destroyed by an atomic war and one can feel nothing but contempt for those who seek to convince people that it is so.

KENNETH WHITE.

The penultimate paragraph of Mary C. Blakiston's letter (3/1/64) raises some interesting points. "The act of copulation," she says, "is only allowed by the Church authorities if it is undertaken in view of its bringing about the birth of children. Done for mere pleasure it is very sinful".

If this is so, then how does the Roman Catholic Church square this attitude with the rhythm cycle in matters of birth control? If, as I understand, they say that sexual continence should, or may be, exercised until the neutral period is in the ascendent, then surely copulation during this period is unlikely to give rise to conception; or, at any rate, the probability is assumed to be reduced to a minimum.

We then have the situation that not only is one rule contradicting another, but that all copulation during known rhythmic cycles (that is, for Catholics) is, because it is done for pleasure, "very sinful". No doubt, the Roman Catholic Church will get over the difficulty by granting suitable indulgences. What a game!

S. FREELAND.

"SPAIN FIGHTS FOR FREEDOM"

A number of people, who have proposed land reform, have brought upon themselves the wrath of the privileged classes. Thomas Paine's *Agrarian Justice*, provoked much criticism, though it was welcomed by such radicals as the Chartists. This century the Spanish Republican government, which tried to carry into effect land reform as well as vast plans for education, had to face the bayonets and the bombs of the Fascist dictators.

The revolt in July 1936 of General Franco and his group of Fascist generals against the democratic, moderate government is one of the things recalled in a fine exhibition, to be launched for a few days at the Hampstead Town Hall from Thursday 16th, January, 1964.

Twenty-seven years after this rebellion, the people of Spain are still struggling in the cause of freedom, with courage that, as the trial and execution of Julian Grimau showed, arouses the sympathy and admiration of all, who believe in freedom. Yet, still not enough is known about the real Spain. The exhibition, "Spain Fights for Freedom", is an ever-fresh reminder of a battle that still has to be won.

(MRS.) NAN GREEN, Secretary,

20 Shipley House, Albion Avenue, London, S.W.8.

[We regret that the above arrived too late for inclusion in our last issue.—ED.]

"CASSANDRA" AND PETER

In the *Daily Mirror*, Monday, January 6th, 1964, "Cassandra" made this statement: Nearly 2,000 years ago Peter, the humble and perhaps the most emotional of all the Apostles, left the

Holy Land and ended his life in Rome under the torment of crucifixion. I have written to the *Daily Mirror* asking if "Cassandra" can give me proof that Peter ever came to Rome, so far as I know there is no proof. When I get a reply from "Cassandra" I will let you know about it.

THOMAS BODENHAM.

OBITUARY

The death of Kathleen B. Keough at the age of 94, severs one more link with the past. For, as older readers will know, Miss Keough was the close companion of former National Secular Society secretary, Edith Vance. Miss Keough, remained a member of the Society and a regular reader of THE FREETHINKER. She died peacefully on January 7th, and was cremated at Bath on January 9th, with no ceremony.

It is with great regret that we record the death in tragic circumstances on January 2nd, of Mr. William Baldie, of Baildon, near Bradford. Mr. Baldie had been visiting his daughter and son-in-law, and grandchild, at Harden, a village a few miles from his home, and was returning in the evening on his motor cycle when he was involved in a collision with a lorry, dying, before he reached hospital, from severe head injuries. Aged 72, Mr. Baldie had been prominent in West Riding Freethought circles for over thirty years. For many years he was Secretary of the Bradford branch of the National Secular Society and had also served as chairman. He was a familiar figure at NSS annual conferences, and was also connected with the West Riding Humanist Society. He had been a widower since 1947, but is survived by seven married children. At the funeral on January 8th, at Nab Wood Crematorium, where a secular service was conducted by Mr. F. J. Corina, Chairman of the Bradford Branch NSS, there was a representative gathering from the various movements with which he had been associated. We extend our sympathy to his relatives, and regret that his death should come while he was still physically and mentally active.

F.J.C.

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