

The Freethinker

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IT IS TOO OFTEN forgotten that militant Christians of one brand or another are to be found in the teaching profession. These people accept a religion which makes against toleration, simply because it believes that it alone possesses the whole truth concerning man and his gods. It is therefore natural that they are likely to try every kind of trick and device to forward their claims, whatever the law may say. Unfortunately, the issue is further complicated by the existence of a state-established church. This anachronistic political anomaly gives the member of the Church of England an apparent right to claim that he in some esoteric way represents a religious normality by which all dissenters shall be measured. As a result, the state school will tend to have its religion measured by the particular view of God propagated by the Church of England. In itself, this is illegal under the Education Act of 1944, which insists that the worship and teaching must be undenominational. Any non-Anglican teacher would do well to watch this point and to insist, whether or not he goes personally into the school religious assembly, that the type of worship offered shall strictly obey the statute law and shall not reflect the views of any one sect of people. It might well be an open question how far trinitarian dogmas expressed as prayers would fall under this legal rule.

Illegal Behaviour?
Again, the Act demands that there shall only be one act of worship in the school and that it shall not be subdivided. The only exception to this absolute demand is where accommodation enforces a splitting up of the whole assembly. The matter is one of extreme practical importance. Roman Catholic children are normally withdrawn from the religious assembly. In the ordinary way, they are set apart in a room by themselves. It is not unknown for Roman Catholic members of the staff to exceed ordinary supervisory duties and to make the occasion one for prayers and Roman Catholic teaching. This behaviour is probably illegal under the 1944 Act. Long ago, it was laid down in a series of cases before the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council that, so far as statutes are concerned, "that which is omitted is forbidden". Non-inclusion implies at law a positive and purposeful exclusion. The suggestion is worth making that Roman Catholic sub-assemblies in state schools are probably illegal and should not take place at all. At the same time, Roman Catholic members of the staff should clearly, if the Act is to be followed, withdraw with their charges. They should neither be found in the official assembly nor the staff room.

The latter point is worthy of notice, as there may be grounds for thinking that some Roman Catholic clergy permit their votaries to ignore the clear teaching of their own Church against worshipping with heretics and to attend the undenominational assembly. They would then retain their Church allegiance and, at the same time, not

clog the path of promotion for themselves within the profession. To the ordinary Secularist, this type of conduct will appear as less than honest or straightforward. But it is as well to remember that a Christian cleric, the late Dr. Inge, remarked on more than one occasion that Roman Catholics seemed to have other standards of honour and truthfulness than do their non-Catholic fellows. Certainly, where conduct of this type is reflected

in a school, the non-Catholic teacher would do well to raise the question, as it has far-reaching undertones and may well be illustrative of the type of conduct sponsored by the Roman Catholic clergy where non-Catholics are

involved. After all, it is an age-old adage that no faith need be kept with heretics and it is as applicable in a school as it is anywhere else.

Roman Catholic Teachers

One of the major causes for disquiet lies in the number of Papists entering the teaching profession and seeking posts in the ordinary state schools. It is curious that they should wish to be found there after all that their Church has said about the godlessness of these institutions, and its insistent demand for its own separate school system. Perhaps their presence in the state schools is yet another sign of clericalist direction. As Dr. G. G. Coulton long ago pointed out in his pamphlets upon Roman Catholic views of history and upon the activities of the Westminster Catholic Federation with regard to school-books, Papists are less than reliable as teachers so often becoming mere propagandists instead. Again, it is too often overlooked that—as such authors as Paul Blanshard and Avro Manhattan have shown—Catholics are votaries of a Church which sets aside the ordinary conceptions of tolerance as these are understood in a modern democracy. It is a matter of sheer notoriety that they are members of the most reactionary force making against liberty of thought and speech in Europe today, a body which had its concordats with Hitler and Mussolini, which sponsored the Vichy government in France and which championed Franco in Spain. It is, in fact, a particular form of clericalist fascism. The facts of these matters are damning enough to suggest that Roman Catholics are not a suitable group of people to be found teaching in the state schools. In any case, like Anglicans, they have their own schools to go and teach in! The point might well be impressed upon school governors, local education authorities and any others who have to do with the appointment of teaching staffs.

Legal Limitations

The Education Act of 1944 allows for the appointment of a religious-knowledge expert upon the staff who shall teach in accordance with the agreed syllabus. It does not say that he shall function as a sort of lay chaplain, or that his work shall be other than purely academic and didactic. It would be interesting to know to what extent the obvious limitations are disregarded. The member of the staff in

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Religion and the School

By F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT

question frequently concerns himself with character-building and with the assertion that character can only be built up through religious teaching. It is important to remember that the New Testament is steeped in intolerance, that medieval society, as Dr. Coulton and others have shown, was a society of clericalist oppression and of the exploitation of the lower ranks, or that a curiously perverse sort of character was built up by the golden age of Anglicanism immediately after 1660.

Case after case could be put forward from many historical periods illustrative of the deteriorating effects of religion upon character.

Certainly, a watch should be kept in schools today upon Christian character-building, if only because the statistics of juvenile delinquency show an overwhelming percentage as emerging from the Roman Catholic schools, whilst the Anglican schools show no particular moral graces when measured by this test. The Secularist teacher though bound by the compromises of the existing law, would do well to watch the in-school activities of the lay chaplains and the character-builders, just as he should insist that they are likewise bound by the law and its clear limitations.

Withdrawal

Of course, the Secularist will desire state education to be secular, and will not agree with the law as it stands. But this is not the point under discussion. The law as it stands imposes religious education and worship within limits. It is the task of the Secularist to see that those limits are observed by the notoriously slippery and wily exponents of religion in the school. At the same time, the law as it stands permits parents to withdraw their children from religious worship and teaching. Nobody has a right to probe the grounds of the withdrawal. It is enough that the child comes from a group to whom such legal concessions are made. Perhaps a doubt may be hazarded as to the extent to which many parents understand this position. Up to a point, by permitting contracting-out, the state accepts a neutral position in religious matters so far as the school is concerned. Parents entering their child for secondary education are frequently instructed in certain matters, homework, school uniform and the like. It is not asking too much that they should likewise be informed of their rights in contracting-out and that no greater pressure should be given on the religious side than on the side of withdrawal. The results might well form a shock for the religionists. In a scientific and secular age, an increasing number of parents are ceasing to take organised religion at its face value and are joining the ranks of its critics.

Virile Secularism

The problems here covered are problems which arise under the existing law. Much talk is heard in Humanist circles of revision of the syllabus and the like that religion in schools might be made more representative. Apart from the specific questions involved, it might well be suggested that the first step is to see that Christians of various types give a loyal observance to the relevant section of the Education Act of 1944 and do not try to grab advantages by means which, even when measured by that act, are flagrantly illegal. Again, the question may well be raised as to the extent to which Secularists, who accept the principles of a democratic tolerance, should extend this attitude to religious groupings making for intolerance, which would, if their particular form of character-building prevailed, destroy most of the modern liberties of thought, speech and action that democracy has developed. Above all, the situation shows the extent to which a virile secularism is necessary to sustain the

victories already won in thought and speech, as well as the compromises of the type which the 1944 Act sets forth. Ethical religionists, reverent agnostics *et hoc genus* are useless in this regard. Their compromising positions will not gain a hearing, whilst their criticisms of their fellows will turn them into a mere fifth column within the ranks of advanced thought. Faced with the many problems of the type engendered by the obtrusion of doctrinal religion into the state schools, it is the spirit of Charles Bradlaugh which needs resurrecting today, in order to battle with the slippery and underhanded methods all too often characteristic of the forces of bigotry and reaction.

Koestler and Galileo

By JOHN H. CHARLES

WITH HIS ARTICLE in *The Observer* on February 2nd, Mr. Arthur Koestler continues to be an apologist for the treatment meted out to Copernicus and Galileo by the Roman Catholic Church.

It is true that on the posthumous publication of *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres*, by Copernicus, the Church Authorities evidently thought it best not to create a stir. For over seventy years they treated it as a "hypothetical" theory. The grovelling preface by Ossiander of Nuremberg, pretending that the book of Copernicus suggested a hypothesis instead of announcing a fact, had served its purpose well. Ossiander declared in the preface that it was lawful for an astronomer to indulge his imagination. Later, when the Copernicus doctrine was upheld by Galileo as a fact and proved to be a fact by his telescope the book was taken in hand by the Roman Curia. Incidentally the "crotchety cleric" was a professor at Rome and returned to the "God-forsaken province of Varnia" because it was no longer safe for him to remain in Rome.

The letters of Galileo to Benedictine Castelli and the Grand Duchess Christina were not published until after his condemnation and although the Archbishop of Pisa had endeavoured to use them against him they were but casually mentioned in 1616 and not referred to in 1633. What was condemned in 1616 by the Sacred Congregation held in the presence of Pope Paul V, as "absurd, false in theology and heretical, because absolutely contrary to Holy Scripture," was the proposition that, "the sun is the centre about which the earth revolves," and what was also condemned, was the proposition that "the earth is not the centre of the universe and immovable, but has a diurnal motion." In 1633, by express order of Pope Urban, under threat of torture, Galileo was made to abjure "the error and heresy of the movement of the earth." Not one of these condemnations was directed against Galileo for reconciling his ideas with Scripture.

Even had Galileo been condemned because he was guilty of polemical excess in the *Dialogue* of 1632 against Pope Urban VIII, a haughty Pontiff and a Prince of the House of Barberini, how diabolical a revenge because Galileo publicly controverted him in argument. The very language of the sentences on Galileo speak always of "heresy" and not of want of respect towards the Pope. The condemnation for contumacy and want of respect towards the Pope appears to have been the invention of one Monsignor Marini, who manipulated the original documents to prove it. A Frenchman, M. L'Epinois, devoted to the Church after investigating the original documents showed Marini's statements untenable. The words of the inflexible sentence designating the condemned books are "*Libri omnes qui affirmant telluris motum.*"

(Concluded on page 108)

Mohammed—A Modern View

By F. A. RIDLEY

I HAVE ALWAYS found the origins of Islam an extremely absorbing study. There is little of the alleged miraculous about it and, unlike Christian origins, its main outlines, at least, are tolerably well known. It is a refreshing change to study origins of a religion which are not either clouded at every step by the miraculous like those of Christianity, or else shrouded in mystery and beset at every turn by mutually contradictory theories.

The personality of Mohammed himself, as well as the nature of the religious reforms that he originally set in motion, have only been studied by western scholars with any degree of scientific detachment for a couple of centuries. For prior to Napoleon's Egyptian expedition in 1799—which formed the starting point of modern contacts between Europe and the Muslim world—Mohammed was regarded primarily through the eyes of Christianity, the traditional rival of Islam against which it had launched its medieval crusades. Mohammed was the arch-impostor, the personification of anti-Christ. An entire library could be compiled over the Christian centuries that embodied this confessional point of view. Nor was it confined to Christians, for the early Freethinkers took it over, gave it an anti-religious bias, and embodied it in numerous works. The most famous of all medieval attacks on religion, the perhaps mythical *De Trebus Impostoribus*—dubiously ascribed to that medieval "anti-Christ" the Emperor Frederick Hohenstaufen (1194-1250)—impartially included Mohammed among its titular "three impostors" along with Moses and Jesus Christ.

Even as late as Voltaire, the general critical view of the faith of Islam was that of a false prophet. In which respect a modern and, at least a less biased, view was first propounded by Thomas Carlyle in his essay on Mohammed in *Heroes and Hero Worship* (1840). Carlyle's approach was, it is true, not that of an impartial critic. He was not a specialist in oriental studies; indeed, one such modern specialist has asserted that Carlyle really knew no more about the historical Arabian prophet Mohammed, than he did about the Norse god Odin, who also figures amongst Carlyle's "Heroes"! Nonetheless, the intuitive Scot did at least get away from the sterile thesis, itself ultimately the outcome of Christian religious bigotry, that the founder of one of the two most powerful religions in human annals was an impostor.

To which it can be relevantly objected, that it surely takes more than putting one's tongue in one's cheek to become the creator of a whole historical phase. In this respect so greatly does historical insight (of which Thomas Carlyle possessed a great deal) surpass mere book learning (of which his academic critics no doubt possessed more) that Carlyle's book, if it did not succeed in establishing Mohammed as a "hero", at least killed the impostor theory. Today modern research seeks to study the founder of Islam neither as an impostor nor as a "hero", nor even as a prophet (his own estimation of himself), but as an historical and religious figure, and as a product of his age's peculiar emotional climate.

Mohammed was an authentic historical character, born in Mecca, of uncertain parentage in about 570 AD, the "year of the elephant", when a Christian Abyssinian army unsuccessfully besieged Mecca, a year famous in Arabian annals. Mohammed's social origins are dubious. The official tradition that he was a scion of the religious aristocracy of Mecca, has been challenged by some modern

scholars, who see in him a popular reformer like the Jesus of the Gospels, to whom a royal descent from David was later attached.

The prophet's life can be divided into three sections. From about 570-610, he pursued a number of pedestrian callings—amongst which what would now be called a commercial traveller appears to have predominated. From about 610, aged about forty, he turned prophet and began to dictate the "revelations" subsequently embodied in the Koran. In this pioneer role he seems to have met with much hostility, culminating in actual attempts on his life. For Mecca was a holy city long before Mohammed, the abode of the sacred Black Stone which had fallen from heaven and was already an ancient and famous object of religious veneration. In 622 (Hegira, the year one of current Muslim chronology) the persecuted prophet made his famous flight to Medina, where he founded a religious community and presumably successfully defended it by force of arms.

By the time of his death, in 632, he had recaptured Mecca, as a result of the first Muslim jihad or holy war, and become the dominant figure in contemporary Arabia. Nearly all that is positively known about Mohammed's biography relates to the final phase of his life when he became—perhaps originally against his will, and as a defence against current persecution—a secular ruler as well as the founder of a new religious cult.

The first and most important difference between Islam and, say, Christianity is that Islam does not regard itself as the religion of a man Mohammed, but of a book, the Koran, directly and infallibly dictated by Allah (God) to his prophet. Islam is the creed of the Koran, which is infallible; so much so, in fact, that it is heretical even to translate the original Arabic text into another language. Nor was Mohammed its author, but merely the copyist who took down the divine text unaltered. Naturally any modern critical view of Islam starts with the denial of this theological assumption. Such a critique goes on to ask, assuming Mohammed himself was its author, whence did this semi-literate Arab derive the Koran and its specific doctrines?

It is important to recall that Mohammed was over forty when he started dictating the Koranic revelations. If we knew more about his early life and cultural environment, we should, no doubt, possess a key which would open many doors. But it appears probable that Mohammed had at least some secondhand knowledge of Judaism and unitarian (Nestorian) Christianity, both widely prevalent in the Arabian peninsula.

It is in fact, perhaps still the most plausible interpretation of Islam, that, like Christianity before it, it started as a Jewish heresy. During its early period Mohammed taught his disciples to pray facing Jerusalem. It was only later that he discerned Islam as a separate cult, with Mecca as its holy city and with the Black Stone converted from its original polytheism into the effective symbol (as it still remains) of a monotheistic cult. How far the prophetic revelations were subjectively conscious is also another important point. In any case, while Mohammed was probably subject to epileptic attacks, in the course of which he may have received his "revelations", the general impression that arises from his biography is of a singularly shrewd psychologist and politician who thoroughly understood the conditions of his own epoch.

This Believing World

So Billy Graham is coming to England to do his best to convert Christians to Christianity. They appear to be the only people he ever does convert. Dr. Graham recently confessed that, he was tempted to watch the Beatles on TV—and liked them. Perhaps he envies their popularity and enormous following of “screamagers”, and perhaps would not mind if some of his sacred hymns could be sung by them, so long as they punctuated their rendering with plenty of pious “yeas, yeas, yeas”.

In spite of Dr. Graham's winning hundreds of thousands of converts he seems to feel that his own services should have a little “more feeling” in them. Some of us thought that when he was here last, feeling was the only thing his addresses contained; they had precious little argument. He was most careful never to meet the objections to Christianity. That would have meant arguments with unbelievers, a task the evangelist was and is quite unprepared for.

Our contemporary “Today” delights in finding ghosts and “premonitions” and similar “occult” phenomena. It even told us a true story that of a seaman swallowed by a whale which gulped him out alive, as proof that the Book of Jonah must be true. And it refused to admit that the story was a hoax. *Today* filled three-quarters of a page recently (February 22nd) with “How to Live With a Ghost Called George!” in which we have the assurance of the Rev. H. Cheales that George is a real ghost. In fact, there is, the vicar insisted, “one in my own church”.

George made his appearance with David, the son of the people who live in a house in the Cotswold country, and the boy's headmaster is quite sure that David “carries a poltergeist with him”. But Mr. Cheales prefers to call this “possession” a “strange force”—and scared the boy's parents by offering to “exorcise the spirit”. There is quite a lot more of “psychic” stuff in the article—but we regret to add that its author ruefully concluded that, “I must report that nothing at all unusual happened” while he was there. Obviously the ghost was too shy to come out.

As we have pointed out so often in these columns, the Roman Church, when it is a question of publicity, has the Protestant Churches beaten to a frazzle. For example, here is the *TV Times* for Good Friday week. And its cover illustration? Does it represent anything to do with the Protestants in England who are at least 15 times as numerous as Catholics here? Of course not. It represents a nun praying to a statue of Jesus.

And of course, on the last St. Patrick's Day, TV gave us an account of the Irish saint. But was there ever a Patrick? *Harmsworth's Encyclopaedia* tells us that the *Book of Armagh*, “purporting to be an authentic record of Patrick”, was not published until 807 AD—about 400 years after his death. Perhaps all we know of him is just fiction.

But it would never do bluntly to say so. However, the heroic St. George of England is a myth. The real George was a swindler who, when found out, was hanged. Gibbon's identification of St. George with the swindler is of course opposed by all good Christians, but then Gibbon was an unbeliever not only in the myths of Christianity, but in the myth of St. George and his famous dragon. Do any of our bishops now believe in that dragon, by the way?

John Grigg on Catholic Schools

“IF BRITAIN is to remain an open society, it is essential that all political parties should stand firm against the demand for a subsidised expansion of clerical education.” Not an excerpt from Mr. Micklewright's *Views and Opinions*, this, but from John Grigg's *Guardian* column on March 19th. The temptation to yield will be strong, said Mr. Grigg (former Lord Altrincham), on economic as well as political grounds. “But if the liberal and Protestant traditions of our country mean anything to us, it will be resisted”. “Rather absurdly”, continued Mr. Grigg, “the British State, which represents a predominantly non-Catholic population, is spending more money on Catholic schools than the French and American Governments, which depend upon the votes of huge communities”.

Poor Catholic parents, it will be argued, have a right to send their children to Catholic schools. “Maybe,” said Mr. Grigg, “but that is surely a problem for the Roman Church itself, which is one of the wealthiest organisations in the world”. The duty of the British State, by contrast, is “to provide a fair and free education, without religious or ideological tests. Indoctrination . . . should not be confused with education”. We hope the politicians will heed Mr. Grigg's words. It is time to call the “Catholic vote” bluff.

KOESTLER AND GALILEO

(Concluded from page 106)

The most desperate effort to rehabilitate the medieval Popes is to revive an idea which the Church spurned for centuries, that the Popes as Popes had never condemned the doctrines of Copernicus and Galileo; that they had condemned them simply as men; and that the condemnation was by the Cardinals of the Inquisition and in the *Index*. The fact is, that in the official account of the condemnation by Bellarmine in 1616, he declares that he makes the condemnation in the name of His Holiness the Pope.

The Churches, and the Roman Catholic Church in particular, have only become liberal because they have had to retreat from their former dogmatic positions by the advent of new knowledge. In the time of Galileo the authority of the Church was still considered to be at least as cogent as the evidence of the senses. Even the Universities were dominated by the Church and whether their henchmen were academic backwoodsmen or doctrinaire theologians the outcome was the same, the upholding of the authority of the Church in matters of opinion.

There is nothing new or unique in the apologetics of the medieval Popes given by Mr. Koestler either in his book, *The Sleep-walkers*, or in the article in *The Observer*. They were long ago rebutted, backed by documentary evidence, in that monumental classic, *The Warfare of Science with Theology*, by Professor Andrew D. White.

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mound).—Sunday afternoon and evening: MESSRS. CRONAN, MCRAE and MURRAY.
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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, April 5th, 6.45 p.m.: DR. A. ROUGHTON, "Abortion Law and Social Responsibility".
Manchester Branch NSS (Wheatsheaf Hotel, High Street), Sunday, April 5th, 7.30 p.m.: ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.
Richmond and Twickenham Humanist Group (Community Centre, Room 5), Wednesday, April 8th, 8 p.m.: OPEN MEETING.
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), April 5th, 11 a.m. H. J. BLACKHAM, "Five Kinds of Religion".

Notes and News

A MONTH AGO (6/3/63) F. H. Amphlett Micklewright made a few comments on the right of teachers to contract out of assembly and religious instruction. Prompted by a particular example, Mr. Micklewright questioned whether the present Education Act was always fairly interpreted as regards religious teaching and worship in the state schools. This week in Views and Opinions he expands and generalises on his previous remarks.

BOTH TELEVISION programmes made sure that, before viewers settled down to their Good Friday's entertainment, they should see and hear a good deal about Jesus. Each opened with an hour-long morning service and gave us an hour of religion in the afternoon. On BBC it was Haydn's passion; on ITV we had "The Image of Majesty", "A Life of Perfection" ("Why does a nun cut herself from the world in the service of God?") and American gospel songs by Mahalia Jackson. A nun praying before the image of Christ provided the cover plate for the TV Times; the Radio Times had a crucifixion on its Good Friday page, which was decorated with thorns. BBC radio added its own 4 hours 25 minutes of Christianity, "almost over-representing the degree of interest felt in the subject by the population as a whole", if we may repeat our last week's quotation from *The Times*.

TELEVISION again. Billy Graham never watches it on Sundays, he told a gathering of evangelical clergymen in London on March 19th, but he made an exception for the Beatles. The temptation was too great, he said, "so I tuned in" (*The Guardian*, 20/3/64). We shall have to wait for a year to see if the preacher picked up any hints from those other showmen. Dr. Billy is due to return to Britain in 1965 or 1966, to lead us in the "spiritual awakening" that he thinks we need. His crusade may cost £200,000.

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WE REFRAINED at the time, for decency's sake, from reference to the "miraculous" ikon taken to the bedside of the late King Paul of the Hellenes. The question needs to be asked though: how many failures is a talisman allowed before it is discarded? The ikon, an image of the Virgin, was collected from its shrine on the Aegean island of Tinos by a Greek naval destroyer, and was "ceremonially received" by the Greek Primate, Archbishop Chrysostomos, the (then) Crown Prince and members of the Holy Synod. It proved completely useless, of course. But the pilgrims, it may safely be predicted, will continue to visit the shrine of the ikon in the hope of miraculous cures.

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ROMAN CATHOLICS continue desperately—and vainly—to absolve Pope Pius XII from the damning indictment of Rolf Hochhuth's *The Representative*. An Italian magazine *Gente* assembled the views of what *The Guardian's* Rome correspondent called "four men who were key figures in the backstage drama at the Vatican during Pius's reign." Father Robert Leiber (77), the German Jesuit who was adviser and confessor to Pius declared that the Pope "made known that religious institutions could and should be opened to refugees", but surrendered the case to Hochhuth when adding: "Regarding the persecution of the Jews and similar cases, Pius followed the principle—first of all, save human lives. He followed the example of Benedict XV during the First World War, which was to protest universally against injustice wherever it is committed. When a Pope is obliged to publicly condemn a specific form of conduct he may find himself obliged to render judgment against subsequent occurrences in order not to appear partisan or partial." This is, of course, an admission that Pius never specifically condemned the Nazi persecution of the Jews and others; precisely the charge that Hochhuth made.

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ONE OF PIUS'S NEPHEWS, Prince Carlo Pacelli, still a leading lay administrator in the Curia seemed to speak for the present Pope. "I have not read the play", he said, "but I understand that my uncle is accused of being ambitious, career-minded, aristocratic, crowd-despising and pro-German." The Prince would be advised to read the play before commenting again. He might also pass it on to Paul VI. Whether the Italian Jesuit, Father Virginio Rotondi—co-founder of "The Institute for a Better World, one of Pius's pet projects—has read the book, we can't say. But it probably wouldn't make any difference, convinced as he is that Pius XII was "a saint" and Mr. Hochhuth "only a vulgar slanderer." "I would ask that he be sent to gaol", Father Rotondi said, "but I must remember that even a prison must maintain its decorum." Finally, Count Giuseppe Dalla Torre, former editor of the Vatican newspaper, *Osservatore Romano*, called the playwright "an impertinent young German" and a "little German poison-spreader". There is no doubt about it, Rolf Hochhuth has touched a tender spot.

Militancy and Tolerance

By KIT MOUAT

I CONFESS THAT THE Freethinker-Secularist image in my mind has been of a militant *anti*-Christian, whereas I have tried to persuade myself that the Humanist is essentially tolerant and *pro*-humanism. Now that our fourteen-year-old son calls himself a "freethinker" (wisely, so as not to copy either parent) I have thought more seriously about my prejudices and the implications involved.

If we accept that "aggression" means *unprovoked* attack, the "militancy" I am thinking of is not aggressive; but I wonder just how many people really attack without being provoked? Few, I would say, although undoubtedly some people need less provocation than others. At any rate, militancy ("striving against" or "engaging in contest") and the attitude that most of us would call "aggressiveness" have their uses. If a friend has been unjustly treated, I do not, for instance, welcome a tolerant and impersonal detachment that leaves him to fight his own battles. I want everyone to come to his aid and, if there is no other way of undoing the injustice, to be aggressive. Militancy and sometimes aggression, then, may be vital in an emergency or as a short-term policy. Not being a naturally submissive person I know, however, that self-defence is always degrading and should not be necessary when we accept responsibility for other people's well-being.

There is militancy in argument and discussion that I think ruins its case from the beginning. The sort of "Rationalist" (that includes us all) who strides straight in and attacks a Christian for believing the Old Testament word for word, when it is obvious that he does nothing of the sort. I have more than once found myself siding with the Christian when a colleague has been waving a fundamentalist blunderbuss against the foil of an Honest-to-Godder. Of course both fundamentalists and Honest-to-Goddess need challenging, but the weapons used against them must be different. It is just no good going on and on about the mass slaughter of Jehovah when your opponent is getting down to "the ground of our being" or an "ultimate reality". The Rationalist, then, (unlike the Christian) has to wait and see who is fighting the duel before he can choose his weapons; and that means having a lot of different weapons at his disposal, not only the Bible, Old and New, but also modern theology and its criticism. It also means that the Rationalist needs a lively awareness of the individuals involved in the discussion so as to be able to recognise when emotion has taken over from sense and the argument has become personal.

Although it is not easy to discuss religion and humanism with Christians, I am sure that it is worth the effort, if only for the sake of increasing understanding in the society to which our children are tethered for better or for worse. But I am always shocked to discover that their honesty is suspect and that it is freedom and not indoctrination that is considered to be a corrupting influence. Perhaps it is just because we must so often steel ourselves against the accusation of corruption and control our militant defence reactions, that some Rationalists give the impression of being able to tolerate not only their own discomfort but also other people's. There is a vicious circle involved. Misunderstanding all too often creates hopelessness from which springs tolerance, endurance, or just apathy, and apathy itself can be the prime cause of aggression in others. Some people may be content to try and push a lorry up a long, steep hill so long as the driver steers and pays attention. But if the driver goes to sleep

or (out of cussedness) puts on the brake, he can't blame the pushers for getting angry and kicking the bumper from exhaustion and frustration. Certainly, one incident of aggression will often wipe out years of tolerance. Too much enthusiasm (be it for a particular cause or justice in general) may be called "fanaticism" by those whose own enthusiasm has died or been killed.

But if we have problems that the average conformist knows nothing of, we ought thereby to be all the more sympathetic towards other minorities, from the African in a white district to a woman trying to succeed in engineering, from a Tory on Clydeside to a Socialist in Canterbury. Humanists and Freethinkers ought to be among the most understanding of men and women, quick to protect and sympathise, slow to accuse or run away; but what goes wrong? Are we perhaps too often rebels just for the sake of it, or the incurable die-hards of heresy? Have we bent so far to avoid coercion that we have become stiff and inflexible from the effort?

We certainly have to develop one sort of flexibility if we mix a lot with Christians, and whether we call ourselves "Atheist" or "Agnostic" or "Humanist" is often a matter of climate. If we are facing a downpour of strict Baptism or a hailstorm of rigid Roman Catholicism or even the damp drizzle of the sort of Anglicanism that wants to persuade us that we really do believe in God without knowing it, then we may do best by drawing attention to the fact that we are living a "godless" life. We believe that there is no evidence that any supernatural power has any influence over us, and are thereby "Atheists". But if we are with Quakers or Unitarians, it may be wiser to emphasise our "agnosticism" in the face of the lack of evidence for or against a historical Jesus.

Many of us still find it necessary to explain what a Humanist is, I rarely meet anyone who has ever heard of the EU or RPA, the NSS or the BHA, and if they have heard the word "humanism" at all it means for them a mixture of humanitarianism and a classical education. Ignorance of anti-Christian argument flourishes and must continue to do so, so long as we are kept off the air.

We have then, not only to put forward humanism as a positive and constructive alternative to Christianity, but we have to explain why it is still necessary to be militant in opposition to the dogmas ranged against us as well as to injustice, suffering and the unnecessary unhappiness of mankind. Most difficult of all, I suppose, is to recognise the aggression within ourselves and use it as wisely and as creatively as possible, and at the same time refuse to pretend that our timidity, apathy and defeatism is modesty, tolerance and wisdom. And, having failed ourselves in this marathon of human endeavour, do our best to encourage those enviable sparks of courage and gentleness, loyalty and humility in our children. And if we don't succeed any better than the Christians, then at least we can be grateful for getting more practice.

TEN NON-COMMANDMENTS

(A Humanist's Decalogue)

by RONALD FLETCHER

(recently appointed Professor of Sociology in the University of York)

"... deserves great praise"—*Tribune*

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The US Presidential Succession

Fervent Catholic next in Line

THE INADEQUACY of legal arrangements for succession to the presidency of the United States in case of the death or incapacity of the incumbent was pointed up by the fact that the next in line to succeed President Lyndon B. Johnson is the 72-year-old Rep. John W. McCormack of Massachusetts, Speaker of the House of Representatives. Rep. McCormack is a Roman Catholic layman who has repeatedly and shamelessly used his great power on Capitol Hill to confer special privilege upon his church.

It has been said by one Hill observer that Rep. McCormack has had a hand in every Catholic benefit bill that Congress has passed in the past two decades. So assiduously has he served his denomination in Congress that his own colleagues have nicknamed him "the Archbishop."

A pet project of Rep. McCormack was the special war claims bill of nearly \$1 million for the refurbishing of the Pope's summer palace, Castel Gandolfo, which was allegedly damaged by allied bombs in World War II. Rep. McCormack put the bill through Congress on a high level nonpartisan basis with a voice vote.

But it was for the Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines that Rep. McCormack went all-out. He was personally responsible for legislation under which US funds were provided for the building of extensive Catholic churches and other institutions there. The Roman Catholic cathedral of Manila, for example, was rebuilt with US funds. Although the claims had been assessed by the War Claims Commission and rejected as not qualifying under law, and although even the formidable Bishop Fulton Sheen had been unable to reverse this verdict, Rep. McCormack put through a series of bills which authorised the money to be paid anyway. *Church and State* showed (December, 1961) that Rep. McCormack had obtained nearly \$30 million in US funds (actually frozen Japanese assets) using his influence to push the legislation through.

Stung by charges that he was trying to enrich his church from public funds, Rep. McCormack replied that he had obtained funds for other churches, too. One of his Philippines bills provided \$8 million for Catholic institutions and \$30,000 for Protestant institutions. Over-all, some \$4 million eventually went to Protestant institutions in the Philippines as Rep. McCormack sought to square himself. Around the capital Rep. McCormack has always been known as the action man for the Catholic Church. He has always been ready to drop everything at a moment's notice in order to take care of a church interest. His church has bestowed almost every known honour upon him in appreciation for values received. An award for "civil and military" service to Vatican State required a special act of Congress to enable him to receive this decoration from a "foreign power".

Perhaps the major service rendered by Rep. McCormack to the National Catholic Welfare Conference was his unbending support of that organisation's viewpoint on Federal aid to education. Speaker McCormack fought hard to include grants for Catholic schools in the Federal aid bill. When President Kennedy could not be budged on this issue, Rep. McCormack used his vast influence to scuttle the entire school aid programme. McCormack's comment: "I have always advocated school legislation and strengthening the whole elementary and secondary system. This includes both public and private schools."

Writing in the *New York Post*, December 8th, 1963, Milton Viorst described Rep. McCormack as "a clerical Catholic in the sense that he believes one of his responsibilities is to look out for the interests of the Catholic Church. He expends a great deal of energy in behalf of Catholic causes and is considered the chief of the Catholic lobby in the House."

"It would be unfair to say, as some have," Mr. Viorst writes, "that McCormack is unintelligent. But he does lack the quality of imagination, the ability to foresee difficulties, the capacity to react correctly to the unexpected that the nation must expect of its Chief Executives."

This is the man who is but one heart beat away from the White House.

[The above article is reprinted from the February 1964 issue of *Church and State*, organ of Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State. We reprint below a telegram sent by POAU to President Lyndon B. Johnson.]

We respectfully urge you to deny the press reports that you intend asking Congress for federal aid to parochial schools. The American people will not permit this country's long-standing tradition of church-state separation to be scuttled. They understand that subsidies to parochial schools under any pretext are subsidies to the churches which own and control them. Such a proposal would demolish religious amity in this country, pitting church against church, and brother against brother.

In 1960 the late President John F. Kennedy pledged his unalterable opposition to federal aid to parochial schools. We cannot believe that this pledge would be so quickly forgotten by his party and his successor.

We would not have troubled you with this communication except we understand you have been bombarded with letters from the Roman Catholic Church and we felt the Protestant position needed expression.

GLENN L. ARCHER.

Executive Director, Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

Scientific Existence?

By DENIS COBELL

WITH THE inconspicuous advent of certain scientific theories that are pessimistic concerning the probability of continued human existence, I find it necessary to denounce the attitude of some progressives who view the adoption of their pet utopias as penultimate to the world of Dr. Pangloss. Laying the bogey of a freethinking ideal that perfection is attainable must perforce be an unpleasant task, but I will refer to two recent articles in THE FREETHINKER of February 28th, 1964.

Firstly, Mr. G. L. Simons, in "Religion versus Secularism," regards a "Secularist" approach to life as the prime requisite for human happiness. He believes that there is no limit to the heights man may climb once he has positively rejected the primitive religions and established society on a rational basis. I support him in realising that religion has been a drawback to scientific progress, but I am sceptical of the hopes he entertains for the future. Secondly, Mr. Peter Crommelin, although he states in his letter, "The main obstacle to the Humanist revolution is

human nature itself," closes, "everything points to the conclusion that man can and eventually will become a rational animal." This latter remark I repudiate entirely on the grounds of the thesis outlined below.

Professor Raymond Dart, the South African anthropologist, has traced the predatory transition from ape to man; the evolution of man was the selective answer to the killing imperative. Man developed from a tribe of carnivorous killer apes and aggression is an ineradicable part of his nature. Preconceived notions of original goodness possessed by mankind are fallacious, man is not a fallen angel, but a risen ape. *Australopithecus*, discovered by Professor Dart near Lake Victoria, gives evidence of knowing how to use weapons and stand erect — his perpetuity depended on this dual ability. *Man the Tool-Maker* was published by the British Museum in 1952, and most of the illustrations in this work are of weapons. Man evolved into the being he now is through the successful use of weapons in combating alien creatures of his own and other species. The investigations by Dart and his colleagues also reveal the presence of "territorial" and "tribal" traits.

Dart's theory is not new (the discovery of a fractured baboon skull at Taungs in 1934 led him to believe that weapons were in use long before man emerged from the Pleistocene era) but was not conceded by many workers until the late 1940s. It has been supported by the rationalist anthropologist Sir Arthur Keith, who asserted: "We have to recognise that the conditions that give rise to war — the separation of animals into social groups, the 'right' of each group to its own area, and the evolution of an enmity complex to defend such areas — were on earth long before man made his appearance" (*Essays on Human Evolution*, Watts, 1946). Freud admitted, in *Civilisation and Its Discontents*, that aggression was instinctual and characteristic of human behaviour. Dart believes that his theory explains man's bloody history and the inevitability that he can and will make himself extinct.

Freethinkers are much farther along the road in accepting scientific theories about the evolution of man's body and soul than many other thinkers. Though few would now dispute that man is an insignificant figment in the universe, it may come as a bitter pill to swallow that the power by which man has risen may soon become the power by which he will fall. Mr. D. H. Tribe, in *THE FREETHINKER* March 8th, 1963, stated, "With the spread of modern communications, different cultural traditions have suddenly found themselves on one another's doorsteps, and 'live and let live' has become a cardinal slogan for both ethics and evolution." Unfortunately the testimony of recent history does not bear up to the truth of this statement. Evolution has decreed that man's self-preservative predetermination ends in "territorial" and "tribal" (or social community) defence. The extent to which international communications have increased during the past century is evidence that the evolutionary "territorial" drive has broadened to embrace the whole world. However, this process is far from reaching pacific resolutions at all times, and the invention of weapons capable of destroying civilisation indicates that there may not be enough time left before we see a repeat of the Cuba crisis situation. Who doubts that on a similar occasion in the future we may not be so lucky? Furthermore, in this century the improved communications have dilated quarrels: we have witnessed two world wars, apart from the murder of thousands in recent conflicts — Korea, the Hungarian uprising, Algeria and Cyprus. The idealism contained in the ethics of Christian and Humanist philo-

sophies is at war with human nature; this is borne out by history.

Since the urge for survival is very strong, a hint that we may not exist much longer is extremely unpopular. Many outstanding optimistic thinkers have eventually recognised this — nuclear weapons are here, like it or not. I realise that this essay poses more problems than it solves, but I hope my denial of man's altruism will not leave readers completely forlorn. The ethics of Humanism, or any other ideology, will not alter human nature, but the limited enthusiasm they may rouse renders their propagation vital, insofar as they encourage a cosmopolitanism that diminishes localised nationalism. This is our only hope.

GOVERNOR CLOSES BIRTH-CONTROL CLINIC

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC governor of the Seychelles islands has, the *Daily Mirror* reported (23/3/64), closed a birth-control clinic, and Mr. Leo Abse, Labour MP for Pontypool wants the British government to order its re-opening.

The clinic, which was started in 1960, had been running for eighteen months when the Earl of Oxford and Asquith was made Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the ninety-two islands. He ordered that it should close.

Mr. Abse, visited the Seychelles with a Parliamentary group last September and inquired about the clinic at a meeting of the Legislative Council. "The Governor presided at that meeting", Mr. Abse said. "It was clear that he had no sympathy with the point of view I was expressing. He is a Roman Catholic. He said that under no circumstances would he allow a family-planning clinic in the Seychelles". The official argument, Mr. Abse went on, is that ninety per cent of the population is Roman Catholic and therefore against the clinic. But "there is a population explosion in the Seychelles . . . a great deal of poverty . . . and a great need for family planning".

CORRESPONDENCE

ESP

G. L. Simons says rather carefully that his quotation from Professor C. D. Broad "may be relevant to some freethinkers who criticise psychical research". He should have been a little more careful in his wording, however. It isn't psychical research that we criticise, but (a) the deplorably lax way in which it is carried out, (b) the frequent disregard for scientific procedure — as, for example, in stopping if the guessing begins to fail, on the assumption that para-normal powers have temporarily departed, (c) the jumping to ESP conclusions and violent defence of them against reasonable criticism. Professor Broad's remarks are therefore irrelevant. We are "acquainted with the main methods and results" but we find them less careful than they should be, and we are less easily convinced than the Professor that ESP exists.

S. N. FOREMAN.

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