

# The Freethinker

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MR. F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT in his recent article "Religion and the School" (Views and Opinions, April 3rd, 1964) raises some interesting points about the working of the provisions on religion of the 1944 Education Act. However he is treading upon very dangerous ground in his comments upon Roman Catholic teachers, where he says that "Roman Catholics are not a suitable group of people to be found teaching in the state schools . . .

The point might well be impressed upon school governors, local authorities and any others who have to do with the appointment of teaching staffs". I consider that any discrimination against teachers on religious grounds would be most improper. The fact that this is illegal is perhaps the best feature of the 1944 Act, and it would be strongly opposed by the National Union of Teachers, which has firmly supported teachers threatened with discrimination on grounds of opinion. Moreover, no group would be likely to lose more than secularists if the principle of non-discrimination were abandoned, for—let's face it—the Roman Catholic Church has far more supporters on local education committees than we have. The only safeguard for non-believers is that professional competence alone should be considered in appointments and promotions.

**Witch-Hunting**  
Mr. Micklewright seems to advocate constant vigilance to lay complaints against teachers for petty breaches of religious neutrality. As a secularist teacher, I firmly believe this attitude to be contrary to the interests both of education and of freethought. A teacher must be free to offer the best he has, as he sees it, to his pupils. If, for example, faced with problems of racial antagonism in his class, he presents his own belief that all alike are children of God, he should not be harassed with accusations of "Christian character-building". Teachers have to assist young people to face the problems of adult life. They cannot do so adequately if they are afraid to reveal anything of their own personal opinions and attitudes because of witch-hunts against Christians or any other group.

Secularists have more to fear than anyone from witch-hunting. Any infringement of the freedom of teachers would inevitably discourage the presentation of views not favoured by the Establishment. Mr. Micklewright's attitude to teachers would place obstacles in the way of any frank discussions on sex education and morality, on political and social issues, and on religion, for on all these subjects it is quite impossible to say anything of any value without offending someone.

This is not, of course, to say that parents should never complain of teachers' religious expressions. We should be pressed in the strongest possible terms if children are distressed by talk of hell or gruesome accounts of the Crucifixion and martyrdoms. Above all we should protest if teachers ridicule or in any way victimise pupils whose views, or whose parents' views, differ from their own.

Religion aside, any discriminatory attitude towards his pupils is atrocious conduct in a teacher.

Our opposition to Catholic influence in education should be directed against the very existence of the denominational schools, mostly Roman Catholic, where the state authorises and finances the indoctrination of children, under the supervision of the Church authorities, with all alternative points of view rigorously excluded. This monstrous evil we should expose and oppose in every possible way.

### Denominational Schools

It is surprising that so many non-believers attack primarily religious observances in ordinary schools rather than the principle of denominational schools. This is probably because it is religion in non-denominational schools that affects us as parents. Perhaps we worry unduly about this. Freethinking parents, unless their relationship with their children is unhappy for some quite different reason, surely have more influence than the wishy-washy platitudes sung at school assemblies. School religion is unlikely to be taken seriously unless it merely reinforces home teaching. Perhaps also some of us keep quiet about denominational schools because these are so strongly entrenched, no political party daring to attack them for fear of the Catholic vote. However, we must campaign constantly against them, as the Roman Catholic Church is constantly pressing for larger grants to enable it to increase the number of its schools.

### Anglicans

There are now signs that Anglicans, worried by the Roman Catholic advance, are trying to build more schools of their own. If they are successful, this could mean the ridiculous situation of three schools for the same district, with children segregated on religious lines. This would be a disaster. Religious differences are always a socially disruptive force, and the more contact is limited between people of different religions the worse for the community. Our schools should be places where children work and play together, and are enabled to overcome the prejudices of their parents—not places where prejudices are imposed. We should lose no opportunity of finding allies in the fight against denominational schools, particularly among Nonconformists, who do not enjoy seeing the spread of Roman Catholic and Church of England schools.

### Catholics

The Catholic Church presents its demand for more schools as democratic, and represents Catholic parents as desperately anxious that their children should have the benefits of a Catholic education. One suspects that parents may be much less eager for this than the Church would like, and that many only send their children to Catholic schools out of fear of the priest. Freedom to the Catholic Church, usually means freedom for it to impose its regulations on at least its own members, rather than for them individually to obey it or not as they wish. (One notes the recent closing by the Governor of the Seychelles

## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### Freedom in the School

By MARGARET McILROY

—a Catholic—of a family planning clinic, on the grounds that 90 per cent of the population are Roman Catholic.) We must insist that a democratic school system does not mean separating children into denominational schools, but having schools in which Catholic teachers and pupils have the same rights as everyone else, and can work without fear of discrimination.

We should not assume that everyone who gives his religion as Roman Catholic is an agent of "clerical fascism",

a supporter of Franco, and a stooge of the priest. Many English Catholics are critical of Vatican policies; many more are ordinary people, no more obsessed with religion than are the majority of nominal Protestants. To introduce discrimination against Catholics in professional employment could only assist the efforts of the denominational schools to make Catholics think of themselves as Catholics first, and as teachers, citizens and human beings only afterwards.

## The Priests Have Been Working Overtime

By TED GOMM

EASTER is over and the priests in Italy must be giving a sigh of relief, for they have been working overtime assisting at the rites of the Catholic Church.

Not only do they have to perform monotonous and wearisome perambulations of the stations of the cross, each of them also has to listen to hundreds of confessions! Every practising Catholic is expected to go to confession before Good Friday and as there are millions of such in Italy — even the most casual ones seem to perform this duty — the priests have been kept very busy. No doubt they have also, at times, found it very interesting!

The ordinary confessionals in the churches are completely inadequate for this huge task, and I saw in many churches near Rome, before I arrived there the Tuesday before Easter, improvised confessionals near each of the numerous altars. A chair for the priest and a chair reversed in front of him for the confessor was all that was needed, and at every one of these "confessionals" a queue of people awaited their turn.

In Santa Maria Maggiore, that magnificent edifice in Rome, I counted at least a dozen people in each of the twenty queues waiting to make confession! The youths in the queues chatted gaily and smiled at jokes passed by their friends, and the women and girls conversed pleasantly while they waited. When their turn came they knelt before the priest, recited their sins, listened to his harangue, rose, knelt before an altar for a few moments, crossed themselves, curtseyed and then went out into the bustle of the city quite relieved — perhaps pausing for a few moments to chat with an acquaintance who had just arrived and was in the act of taking "holy" water to cross herself.

I have on many occasions — for I visit most churches to see the works of art they contain — seen women break into conversation with their friends while crossing themselves with holy water. Recently I noticed an elderly woman reciting her rosary and glancing round every minute or so at another, kneeling in front of the statue of a saint. As soon as her friend rose she hurried over to exchange some news with her — keeping the Virgin, or God, waiting for the rest of the rosary until she had imparted her earthly message to her terrestrial friend.

I was intrigued on two occasions to see a man, still wearing his mackintosh, assisting the village priest at the evening service and then going round to collect money from the faithful who were using the chairs provided. At one such service I was surprised to hear a "piping" voice accompanying the priest and spotted a very small boy sitting on the altar steps beside the priest. He just repeated any phrases he knew at the top of his voice. A man in the front row leant forward and nudged him every time he had to ring the twin bells as signals to the

congregation to rise or kneel. It's all so delightfully casual!

If you are busy or have been shopping you just drift into the church at any stage of the ceremony, listen for a couple of minutes, and having crossed yourself, pick up your shopping and happily go home to prepare the evening meal.

The lengthy task of performing the stations of the cross is so tiring that laymen — and women — are often recruited to read out the passages, while a group of choir-boys pass from each of the stations carrying a black cross before them. In one church two boys each carrying a pole surmounted with a lantern containing a lit candle, walked beside their comrade with the cross; this made a pleasant scene in the dimly lit church with its eleventh-century mosaics in the apse and its double row of antique columns purloined from a Roman temple dedicated to some pagan god or deified emperor.

The representations of the stations of the cross are infinite in their variety — sometimes a plaque with the number of the station followed by a short sentence describing it, otherwise an amazing variety of every type of material, the most modern being in plastic.

In the full ceremony the procession of priest and choir-boys stops at each station and, after a chant, in which the audience may or may not join, the priest reads of the incident ascribed to the station from a testament; this is followed by prayers, when all kneel and repeat the responses in various tones and at varying speeds. As at least five minutes is spent at each station and there are fourteen, the whole proceedings take well over one hour.

As mentioned above, if you are busy with terrestrial affairs you just drop in for a couple of stations at any stage of the ceremony convenient for you. The priests, however, have to remain throughout and that is why, after hearing all those confessions, I am sure that they are sighing with relief now that Easter is over. As for the choirboys, they just rush straight out of church afterwards to continue the inevitable game of football in the piazza in front of the church. The ceremony has merely been an interruption of their game.

### NSS ANNUAL CONFERENCE

THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE of the National Secular Society will be held on Whit Sunday in the Secular Hall, Leicester, at the invitation of Leicester Secular Society. It will be preceded by a reception in the Hall on the Saturday evening, and will be followed by an open air meeting. The Conference is, of course, for NSS members only. Further details may be obtained from the Secretary, Mr. W. J. McIlroy, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1.

# Saying Your Prayers

By REGINALD UNDERWOOD

"IT'S NEITHER prayer nor providence but a load o' muck as does it," the outspoken old farmer told the reverend gentleman who was officiously handing out pious reasons for a good crop. The farmer evidently set more store on the knowledge of earthly experience than the ignorance of heavenly theorising. But although experience is the best of teachers, experience, like most teachers, often has some uncommonly dull pupils. And there are none so dull as they who won't learn. In spite of the stark staring fact that prayers by the shoal go blatantly unheeded, many people still continue unabashed to say their prayers — though it must be conceded that there are also many people who will say anything rather than their prayers. The commonest explanation for this disconcerting failure of response from the Almighty is, that there is a vital difference between the mere mechanical action of saying your prayers and the profound spiritual concentration which is the open sesame to genuine communication. That may do for those who are able to accept it. But not everybody can accept it, even among those who, in their day and way, have done their share of both saying and praying. For it cannot be denied that saying and praying are equally liable to be dashed by a complete lack of recognition. One delightful reason for this is, that God always does answer prayer, but sometimes the answer is No. Trust a theologian for finding a way out — and then calling it a right of way. She was a knowing old lady who, when she lost her purse, said she hoped it wouldn't be found by a theologian.

A man on his knees has been not inaptly likened to a dog on its hind legs. It could be added that the dog seems to show superior sense in sitting up to something that is at least more apprehensible than thin air. John Buchan once described an atheist as somebody who had no invisible means of support. (John Blunt has been known to describe theists — some theists — as doing very well on no visible means of support.) However, Buchan's idea of invisible support bears far too strong a resemblance to Hans Anderson's idea of the Emperor's new clothes to carry much weight. It is true that the invisible is not always the non-existent, but it is well to remember that the non-existent is always the invisible. The begging dog follows a natural canine instinct. He sticks to what is visible — or its equivalent. The kneeling man follows a sub-natural human delusion. He submits himself to the invisible. But for all Francis Thompson's "Invisible view Thee," the invisible in this connection has never been shown to be anything but a wish-begotten self-deception. The dog may cringe before a man, but the man abases himself before a myth. This, of course, will be and often has been hotly, though always undecidedly, disputed. It has never been coldly and conclusively refuted. Once it is, we may all safely promise to go down on our knees with due gratitude — if any is due.

Now if on the one chance in a hundred the desire that engendered the prayer by some coincidence becomes gratified, then that, needless to say, is proof that God has graciously listened and favourably replied. The prayer is answered. If on the remaining ninety-and-nine chances the result is nil, we still have the same sort of proof that God has withholden instead of granted, because God always knows best. Or nearly always. For it is on record that devout worshippers have been heard to hint that there are occasions when they know even better, as

when the old Wee-Free prayed: "Grant O Lord that we may be in the right as Thou knowest we shall never change our minds." Whether or not, the kind of proof here advanced is quite beyond the skill of any Freethinker and is not amenable to Freethought kind of test. Sceptics, therefore, have no option but to take it or leave it on their own responsibility. The method by which such proof is established may be considered by normal logicians as exhibiting a rum sort of logic, but it is a thoroughly typical example of the best theologic. (And if "theologic" is not in the dictionary, so much the worse for the dictionary.)

There are ways in which praying does indeed look very like a game of chance. You plump your request and hope for the best. Praying attracts some minds as gambling attracts others. The extraordinary thing is that, with rare exceptions, no amount of disappointment ever seems to bring disillusionment. Both praying and gambling appear to lead to the sort of unbreakable habit which it is difficult to regard as anything but a vicious appetite. It grows with what it feeds upon. It is a state of mind sadly unable to put up any rational resistance. The gambler will stake his money on a horse. The suppliant stakes his faith on the unseen. If a well-balanced experience condemns gambling as a mug's game, it can hardly be blamed if it repudiates praying as a dupe's pastime. Just as it requires no Socrates to demonstrate that no horse ever runs as fast as the money that is put on it, so it needs no Solomon to show that no power humanly conceivable could ever keep pace with the impossibly conflicting demands laid upon it as prayers. While Catholic Peter is imploring God through Our Lady that so-and-so may speedily come to pass, Protestant Paul is beseeching God through Our Lord that the very same so-and-so may be for ever frustrated. Two adversaries simultaneously apply for a crushing victory over each other. J. C. Squire was thus moved to express an agnostic's ironic sympathy with the divine dilemma :

To God the embattled nations sing and shout,  
God save England and God save the king,  
God this, God that and God the other thing.  
"Good God," said God, "I've got my work cut out."

We have constantly been informed by all sorts of religious instructors that there is no limit to the reach and power of prayer. We are not informed how this is known or what exactly it means. Romish prayers, for instance, are far from being the monopoly of God Almighty. They may be addressed to that rather mixed-up lady elegantly known as the BV, or to any of the large assortment of saints manufactured, hall-marked and guaranteed by the canon. The saints come cheapest if the votive candle usually offered to them is anything to go by. As we may expect, that vested interest of a wily and ambitious priesthood, the Roman Catholic Church, practises the worst extravagances. Romanists do not stop at the living. With equal assurance they offer prayers for the dead, although no more than anybody else can they possibly know anything of the dead beyond that they are dead. Nevertheless, at an early date, some bright intelligence thought up the useful idea of a posthumous region called Purgatory, through which the souls of the departed must pass on an interim purgation. This might be entirely visionary, but there was nothing visionary about the very solid

(Concluded on page 140)

## This Believing World

One of the laymen chosen by ATV to tell us why he believes in Christianity was the distinguished actor, Mr. Andrew Cruickshank, whose performances in *Dr. Finlay's Casebook* have made him popular all over the country. Mr. Cruickshank scorned any presentation of a simple evangelical faith, and chose to give us the "Existential" view of Christianity. So we had plenty of "Existential" terms such as "paradox", "contradiction", and so forth, strung together so that, while Dr. Billy Graham might convert Christians to Christianity, Mr. Cruickshank was much more likely to put them off.

★

He constantly referred to "the man on the Cross" though in almost the same breath he would insist that "Christ was God"—meaning, of course, that he was "the Creator" of the universe. The "paradox" was (we assume) that a "man on the cross" could have created the Universe. We do not guarantee this interpretation, for it would be difficult to conceive anything more confused than Mr. Cruickshank's Christianity.

★

A "merger" has been arranged between the Anglican Parish Church of St. Mary's, Woolwich, and the Presbyterian Church of St. Andrew's—a "go-ahead" towards unity at last. Indeed, so pleased is the Rector of St. Mary's, the Rev. N. Stacey, that he said (*Daily Mail*, April 9th), "Personally I would be delighted if a non-Christian found God through Presbyterianism". We have an idea that he would be happy if a non-Christian found God *anyhow*—but why does he not himself try his hand at converting unbelievers, using both Anglican and Presbyterian arguments—free-will and predestination—altogether.

★

Following many many years behind Freethinkers, a Congregational minister, the Rev. R. Duce, has discovered that "funeral customs are barbaric". Why he asks (*Daily Mail*, April 8th) should there be a "ritual" at the graveside at all? An ornate coffin is quite unnecessary, and "the way we perpetuate and linger over all the various stages of burial ritual is primitive and quite unnecessary". Needless to add that the director of a funeral firm disagrees completely with Mr. Duce—"He has no right to tell people where to get off" is surely a gleam of humour in a gloomy subject.

★

Although the fight to make contraceptive information legal has been won, there are still some people who object to contraceptives being sold, and nothing seems to rouse their wrath more than sales from slot machines in cafes or even in lavatories. But—horror of horrors!—these machines may even be allowed by law—according to Mr. Brooke the Home Secretary—"in areas used by teenagers".

★

Actually, the sale of contraceptives was forbidden by "a model by-law drawn up in 1949" which prohibits their sale in "streets, forecourts, or entrances to buildings". In Parliament, Mr. Ben Parkin seemed to object to the installation of 100 machines for such sales in the aforesaid areas. It was interesting to find Mr. Brooke declaring that there was nothing to prevent these machines being installed. The fight for the right of people to limit their families — a fight which Charles Bradlaugh courageously waged over 80 years ago — may not yet be won, but it is very nearly. And it has been a fight against the fiercest Christian opposition backed by the law.

## SAYING YOUR PRAYERS

(Concluded from page 139)

cash return that soon began to accrue from the sale of special prayers to help afflicted souls get through their purging with a maximum of dispatch and a minimum of discomfort. The living were given every encouragement to buy masses for their dead. For no matter how bad you are the tough old Romish conscience never hesitates to pray for you as long as it can prey on you.

If Protestants are less accommodating, they are on the whole less mercenary. Even that C of E minority who are neither Catholic nor Protestant and whom the *Guardian* delightfully, though misprintedly, recently referred to as Anglicans, do not so openly retail their prayers on a commercial basis. Non-conformists pride themselves on putting praying before saying. Their prayers are mostly extemporary. Apart from the Lord's Prayer they rarely recite set pieces. They pray with all their hearts and — hardly with all their minds. Among them it is a distinction to be what is called "gifted in prayer," which apparently means the ability to provide the richest feast of unreason with the warmest flow of soulfulness. But since prayers have the advantage of being immune from any measurable indication of their success or failure, nobody can prove that the fervour put into them is repaid by the favour got out of them. Informal prayers may avoid liturgical aridity, but they, too, slip very easily into the familiar stereotyped jargon that can be every bit as mechanical without being every bit as professional.

Such criticism would no doubt be enough to provoke one of those tedious reiterations of the wondrous psychological value of prayer. But such value is too remote from any real assessment to enter into considerations of the more literal and practical aspects of prayer. It is a value which probably manifests itself more strongly in that invariably impassioned, often grotesque and, to outsiders, always repellent form of prayer known as praise. For those whose souls do not magnify the Lord and whose spirits are unable to rejoice in God their saviour, it is difficult to understand, let alone sympathise with the fawning, the flattering, the cravenly ingratiating fulsomeness — Godfearing is the word for it — that goes under the guise of glorifying God. No God worth the capital G he is given could ever desire or appreciate such servile tribute. No man without hidebound prepossessions could pay it.

This world, on inescapable evidence, is a cruelly real if pointless purgatory for the bulk of mankind. If, as Christianity testifies, it is to be taken as the crowning work of the Christian creator, then no wonder that sensitive poet A. E. Housman dubbed the Christian creator brute and blackguard. No wonder such a creator's grovelling eulogists suggest the dog on its hind legs. Even if wagging and tail wagging can be callously akin. Even if we knew what we cannot know, that the intended recipient of so much prayerful adulation had indeed an objective personal existence, it would still be impossible for any man in possession of a free intelligence and a clear eye to look upon the world as it is and not think or speak of its author as a this, that and the other old—. However, this is a highly respectable journal. For the time being, it may perhaps at this point be more discreet to let the matter drop.

### WITHOUT COMMENT

The Bishop of Coventry, Dr. Cuthbert Bardsley, led prayers of "humble thanks for the life and work of William Shakespeare" — *The Guardian* (27/4/64).

# THE FREETHINKER

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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, May 3rd, 6.45 p.m.: DR. M. COLE, "Abortion Law Reform".  
Brighton and Hove Humanist Group (Arnold House Hotel, Montpelier Terrace), Sunday, May 3rd, 5.30 p.m.: ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.  
Parish Church, Puttenham (near Guildford), Friday, May 1st, 8 p.m.: DAVID TRIBE, "X-ray Vision or Simply Blind"? (Second of four lectures.)

## Notes and News

"OH, DEAR!" exclaimed Philip Toynbee, in his *Observer* review of *Objections to Humanism* last November. He was referring to the contribution by Kingsley Martin, former editor of the *New Statesman* whom he described as "treading the worn old rationalist path with the familiar rolling gait of a rather worn old rationalist". Mr. Martin's "worn old" rationalism was to point out that Darwin, Marx, Frazer and Freud had "taught us to think in a way that excludes the story that mankind began four thousand and four years ago in the Garden of Eden; that we were created by a God of Wrath and Mercy . . .".

MR. TOYNBEE, we were interested to note, has now followed in Mr. Martin's footsteps and, appropriately enough, in the *New Statesman* (17/4/64). Having recently undergone a prostate operation, Mr. Toynbee wrote courageously about his own condition and sympathetically about the poor old men in the urological ward with him. Citing "a peculiarly blistering passage of *Catch-22*" in which Joseph Heller condemns a creator who decreed, "among other monstrosities, that old people should suffer the miseries and humiliations of incontinence", Mr. Toynbee said that he had been given a full opportunity for judging this particular manifestation of the creator's plans for us. The experience had done nothing to change his opinion that God "must be either an invention or a bungler or a monster". Even at the best of times, Mr. Toynbee added, "the urological ward of a hospital is bound to be

a place which reflects little credit on the hypothetical creator".

FROM "WORN" TO "OLD-FASHIONED". Whenever critics use the latter word, said Kenneth Tynan, "you may begin to suspect that they have been outraged to the core of their being . . .". Mr. Tynan was writing about Nigel Dennis's play, *The Making of Moo* at the Royal Court Theatre, London, in 1957, and his review is reprinted in the recent Pelican, *Tynan on Theatre*. What shocked the other critics was, as Mr. Tynan said, "not the novelty of Mr. Dennis's ideas, but the novelty of hearing them in a theatre". Most of the reviews paid no attention to the truth or falsity of the ideas but "devoted themselves to the totally irrelevant question of whether or not they would 'give offence'." Like THE FREETHINKER, Mr. Tynan welcomed *The Making of Moo* as a pioneer work. And we can't leave his review without quoting Mr Tynan's definition of agnosticism: "that cloak under which atheists gain admission to the Royal Enclosure."

LAY PREACHERS AND PASTORS are now the mainstay of the 3,000 Congregational churches in England and Wales, according to a report issued by the Congregational Union. Ordained ministers number only 1,300, and "there is little likelihood of this number being increased to cover all the churches" (*The Guardian*, 20/4/64). Last year, 260 new registrations were received. The laymen are therefore essential if the churches are to be maintained, and the 3,000 men and women preachers and pastors are tutored by correspondence.

WE HAVEN'T READ Gerald McKnight's *Verdict on Schweitzer*, (Muller, 30s.), but by all accounts it deals the Schweitzer-legend a hefty blow. Mr. McKnight, former assistant editor of the *Sunday Dispatch*, isn't the first to criticise the primitive state of the hospital at Lambaréné, or the Doctor's paternalistic attitude towards the Africans (there was a lively discussion on the subject in these pages a few years ago) but he has already been accused of "bad faith" by Dr. Schweitzer's associate, Mrs. Clara Urquhart. "It is a misnomer to call Lambaréné a hospital" she said, "it is much more a haven with medical facilities" (*The Observer*, 19/4/64). As to the women—many of them rich—who had gone to work there, they "would have been nuns" had they been religious. "They go to dedicate themselves", said Mrs. Urquhart. "Schweitzer is a very alive and attractive person." For Mr. McKnight, "Schweitzer emerges as an autocratic political persuader . . .".

FURTHER PROOF—IF NEEDED—that intelligent Roman Catholic priests, as well as laymen, are worried about their Church's attitude on birth control, came with the report in the newsletter, *Search*, that Archbishop Thomas Roberts, while accepting the authority of the Church, asked if there could not be a change. As a parallel, the Archbishop, who lives at the Jesuit mission in Farm Street in London, cited the dropping of the ban on usury. Mr. Michael de la Bedoyere, editor of *Search*, told the *Daily Express* (20/4/64): "It has been increasingly evident that in modern conditions the present rule of total ban on birth control cannot really work out." And Father Thomas Corbishley, SJ, theological adviser to the newsletter said he thought that the present Vatican Council would consider the matter "with a view to clarifying the attitude of the Church." But, the *Daily Express* added, "Father Corbishley would not state his own view."

## Cardinal Newman and the Development of Catholic Dogma

By F. A. RIDLEY

(The substance of a lecture delivered to the Huxley Society of Imperial College, University of London, on February 27th, 1964.)

SINCE THE accession in October, 1958, of the (self-styled) "revolutionary" Pope John XXIII, abrupt changes have been witnessed within the supposedly rigid Roman Church, particularly in relation to non-Catholic religious denominations, in the administrative sphere, and in relation to present trends in evolutionary human thought. It now also seems clear that the administrative changes represent the necessary preliminary to far-reaching changes in theology and philosophy that will (so to speak) acclimatise the pre-evolutionary Church of St. Thomas Aquinas and of Scholastic philosophy to the growing demands of an epoch of evolutionary change. If the Catholic Church is to prosper or even to survive, spectacular developments of its still largely medieval theology are inevitable in the years which lie immediately ahead.

Were the titular founder of this society, Thomas Henry Huxley, to return to earth once more, he would, no doubt, follow present-day developments with the greatest interest, and rejoice in the striking proofs that they afford of his evolutionary theories. It is surely sufficient to mention the concept of "development" in connection with Christian theology to recall the name of the illustrious Christian thinker who first gave a logical content to this magistral idea, John Henry Newman, Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church and author of what now may probably be regarded as the most influential work of Christian theology to be published in the last century, *The Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845).

For in this book Newman, then still an ordained clergyman of the Church of England but already on the verge of going over to Rome (which he did in that self-same year), propounded a novel theory of the nature of Christian doctrine which, whilst at first coolly received by his contemporary ecclesiastical orthodoxy (like most startling intellectual innovations), eventually won general acceptance both in the Church of his birth and in that of his adoption. Actually, like his great predecessors, Thomas Aquinas and Ignatius Loyola, Newman at first narrowly escaped condemnation by ecclesiastical authority for his novel theories.

Certainly Newman has other claims to remembrance, as an acknowledged master of English prose and as a considerable religious poet. But we think it fair to infer that his widest sphere of influence and his most lasting claim to fame lies in his primary role as the master theologian or religious philosopher of his epoch — and indeed of ours. It was, I think, that eminent former editor of *THE FREETHINKER*, the late Chapman Cohen, who remarked that Cardinal Newman was the last major intellectual figure to be produced by modern Christianity, the last "defender of the faith," whom modern critical opinion requires to take seriously: as, to employ current phraseology, a great Christian humanist. It is from precisely such a point of view that the ensuing paragraphs are addressed.

Prior to the publication — or rather, to the later ecclesiastical acceptance (for this did not immediately follow) — of Newman's theory, the official criterion for the official sanction of any *bona fide* Christian dogma was that propounded (in the fifth century) by the ancient Church-Father, St. Vincent of Lerins. This succinct and self-evident formula ran: "Always, everywhere, and by all." Clarity itself: To claim the adherence of Chris-

tians, a dogma had to pass these three simple but severe tests. Its proponents had first to prove that it had always been believed since the earliest Christian times; that, secondly, its diffusion had been universal throughout Christendom, and thirdly, that it had been universally accepted, without any dissenting trends in recognisably orthodox circles.

Obviously, on this view, no *new* dogma could possibly "develop" in the future; it could not be proved to have been accepted, "always, everywhere, and by all." Hence, according to Vincent's formula, and to the traditional view of the Church, the canon of revealed truths of authoritative Christian dogma, binding on all Christians, had been finally and irrevocably closed.

In place of this traditionally static view of Christian doctrine which, once promulgated, remained permanently fixed and unalterable, Newman propounded a more subtle and flexible theory. The Christian Church has, it is true, received from its divine founder from the very beginning, an unalterable *corpus* of revealed truths or dogmas. This view is common to both Newman and the traditionalists. But according to the "development" theory, not all these doctrines have always been explicit. Nor was it necessary that everyone should recognise them as valid. Contrarily, many of them have only been implicit and only recognised in limited circles. For, whilst all dogmas are of divine origin, the Catholic Church has, so to speak, a mandate to recognise and utilise them where and when necessary. In technical theological phraseology, the Church controls a "Deposit of Faith", out of which she can "develop" and publish her selected dogmas as and when occasion demands.

Clearly such a theory implies not only a genuine evolution of doctrine, but actually a theological evolution. For henceforth the canon of Christian dogma is no longer fixed, final, and unalterable as in the traditional theory; the Catholic Church can "develop" new dogmas at any time that it needs them, though only on the assumption that such doctrines have always been implicit in the "Deposit of Faith." Cardinal Newman restored to the Church its primary role as the creator of doctrine, not only in the past, but in present and future ages!

The interim of "development" of the Roman Catholic Church between Newman's day and ours has represented a progressive adoption of his theory. It might even be said that Cardinal Newman has been to modern Catholics what St. Augustine was to the ancient Church and St. Thomas was to medieval Catholicism — its master thinker. For three new dogmas have been proclaimed — none previously accepted under the Vincentian canon — since 1845: Immaculate Conception (1864): Papal Infallibility (1870) and Assumption of the Virgin (1950). and the way is now open for those far-reaching future developments which will be necessary if Catholicism is to survive! It is Newman's theory of development that nowadays makes it possible (as a percipient Protestant critic noted at the time) for the Roman Catholic Church to accept the evolutionary views of nature and of human origins propounded by Darwin and by the "patron saint" of this society, Thomas Henry Huxley.

We conclude by noting with interest that the process for the canonisation of John Henry Newman has already begun at Rome. We hope that it will even-

tually succeed. For not only would the evolution of its greatest thinker to the celestial hierarchy be a graceful act on the part of the Vatican but, surely, the accession of John Henry Newman to the ranks of the saints could not but have a notable effect in improving the intellectual climate of Paradise!

## The Origin of The Passover

By BEN-YEHUDAH

JEWISH PEOPLE everywhere recently celebrated the festival of Passover. It is also called "the season of our freedom," because it is supposed to commemorate the freeing from bondage and subsequent exodus of the Israelites from Ancient Egypt. But, if the bondage and exodus stories have no historical foundation, then what is the real origin of the festival?

Now this festival has two names in the Hebrew language, *Hag-ha Pessach*, i.e. the feast of Passover, and *Hag-ha Matzah*, i.e. the feast of unleavened bread. It is certain that they were originally two separate feasts, and one had nothing to do with the other. The word "pessach" means to leap, to jump, an allusion to the leaping of rams on to the sheep during the mating season. The primitive nomad also performed a ritual leaping dance as a form of this mating act to promote fertility.

The Passover, therefore, is of nomadic origin. But the feast of unleavened bread is an agricultural festival, which would have meant nothing to a nomad. This feast was held to celebrate the harvesting of the new barley which ripened about this time in the Middle East. This new barley flour had to be eaten unleavened because there was no more old dough left to leaven the new. In any case the old dough was considered unclean and could not be allowed to contaminate the new bread. (N.B., the Matzah were of barley flour, not wheat as now.) When the Hebrews invaded Palestine many of them adopted the agricultural form of life of the original inhabitants, taking over their customs and festivals, including the festival of unleavened bread.

But a great many, notably the late-comers, were forced to settle in the south, where the soil was more suitable for pasturage than tillage, and there they continued their nomadic culture and customs, including the Passover with its ritual described above. Then how is it that these two festivals have become combined into one? I think there is a clue to this in II Kings 23, 22, where we read that King Josiah celebrated the Passover and that no such Passover had been celebrated since the days of the Judges. If no Passover was ever celebrated by any of his predecessors, including such supposedly pious kings as David and Hezekiah, then what did they celebrate? I suggest that the ruling class, including the "court," had adopted the Canaanite fertility cults and feasts, including the unleavened bread, looking down and despising the pastoral elements as primitive and uncivilised, thereby fostering hostility between these two sections of the population.

Josiah, coming under the influence of the prophets, tried to unite these hostile elements by celebrating these two feasts at the same time, thus symbolising the unity of the nation.

How this festival took on its present form is a long and interesting story for which there is no space in one issue. However, we must give the writers and editors of the literature known as the Bible their due, they knew how to sublimate and conceal undesirable origins.

## On Militancy and Tolerance

By H. CUTNER

KIT MOUAT'S article in THE FREETHINKER (April 3rd) interested me because I have always as far as possible insisted on both militancy and toleration. I have no right whatever to object to anybody declaring his belief, let us say, in agnosticism or Buddhism or spiritualism or whatever belief he thinks right; what I do claim is the right to criticise any belief I disagree with and, if I can, hit it for six every time. Unfortunately, in the course of a long life, I have found that in nearly every case, my forthright criticism has been regarded as intolerance.

I never, if I can help it, use the word "Humanism" or even "scientific Humanism" to describe my views. I like the word "Freethinker" perhaps best because it implies in its meaning "toleration". At least it has always done so for me. But I am against *all* religions, including Christianity. I am—and have been since I was fifteen—"anti-Christian" as Mrs. Mouat would say. And for me the word "Humanist" can denote any Christian or Communist—or for that matter even a vegetarian.

I do not—except on some few points—attack the "social" aspects of Christianity or other religions. I attack their theology, their belief in a god, or a Jesus, or in Miracles, hell, an after-life, and so on. But I am not surprised when people like Mrs. Mouat, feeling perhaps that our criticisms are too harsh, prefer "siding with the Christian". Although Christians call the Bible the "Holy Bible"—and this indicates that they believe the Bible is a "revelation" from Almighty God—it is very wrong (she thinks) to imagine that this means they all believe in the Old Testament.

As a matter of fact, some of the Old Testament's ethics are part and parcel of Christianity, and in some ways better than those in the New. After all, nowhere (as far as I know) are "sinners" condemned in Judaism to a burning Hell for "eternity" merely because they do not believe in Jesus. The Old Testament teaches people to honour their parents; Christianity declares you must *hate* them—and there are other points on which the two religions differ and in which Judaism is superior. But of course both religions are, *theologically* speaking, based on ignorance, credulity and superstition. And if I say so, this does not mean that I lack tolerance. People must believe what they think right, and this goes for Mrs. Mouat too. She has every right to criticise any attitude she does not like, even that of the "Freethinker-Secularist", and I claim the same right to criticise her.

My own experience of Humanists is that it is *they* who are inclined to be intolerant. When I read in their books and articles — "We Humanists must do or say" something or other, I can see the spectre of intolerance pushing them on. The mere fact that they do not like the militancy of "Freethinker-Secularists", especially when we attack their own Humanism as being vague and futile, does not mean we are intolerant. It means that they must make their conceptions on ethics and theology alike, clear, and unequivocal, which they rarely do.

As most readers know I have sided with the views of Dupuis, Robert Taylor, John M. Robertson, and W. Benjamin Smith, among others, on the problem of Jesus, which I think absolutely fundamental against Christianity; and Humanists in general have shirked the issue. I do *not* believe with Mrs. Mouat that "it may be wiser to emphasise our 'agnosticism'" about the problem when we meet with Quakers or Unitarians. And why not people like Dr. Heenan, Dr. Ramsey, and Dr. Soper? What have

we to be afraid of?

I leave it of course to Mrs. Mouat to use her "aggressiveness" if she can in a purely "creative" manner; but I prefer being "free" in these things; in other words, being a Freethinker.

But of one thing I am certain. Christianity is far too strongly entrenched for us to use only kid gloves in our encounter with its devotees.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### THE OLDEST FREETHOUGHT PAPER

According to an article by the editorial staff of the *American Humanist* (January/February, 1964), *The Truth Seeker*, founded in 1873 calls itself, "The oldest freethought paper in the world", but "THE FREETHINKER of London also claims this distinction, although its founding date is 1881". Is this true and, if so, how do you explain it?

K. P. STONE.

[It is a long story. We ourselves have never claimed to be the oldest freethought paper in the world, only the oldest weekly one. But a representative, on our behalf, put an advert in *The American Rationalist*, in which he described THE FREETHINKER as the oldest freethought paper. When we referred him to *The Truth Seeker* he argued that, by its fanatical racialism, that paper had forfeited its right to be called freethinking.—ED.]

### THE QUATERCENTENARY

I wish to thank you for Colin McCall's article on "Shakespeare and Religion" of April 10th. Without Shakespeare no Goethe and no Schiller, no classic period in literature and life in Germany. In this country as in yours they read T. S. Eliot now at schools and universities. Where is "progress"?

GERDA GUTTENBERG (Nürnberg).

It looks as though we are all going to be Shakespeared to death, if you will forgive the forlorn pun.

REGINALD UNDERWOOD.

### A DISAPPOINTED MARXIST?

Marxists are always telling us that history is a science, but now F. A. Ridley, who is a great believer in Marxism, is rather doubtful whether history is a science; in fact, he seems to think it desirable that it never shall be. His article "Civilisation and Decay" (17/4/64), wherein he expresses these views on history, earns him the title, I think, of a disappointed Marxist.

Gone is the optimism of former days with its predictions about the coming social revolution, establishing the ideals of William Morris, Kropotkin and Engels. As Mr. Ridley grows older he becomes more cautious, and the little pessimism he expresses seems to be wiser and more fruitful than his former optimism.

R. SMITH.

### PRAYER FOR MORE PRIESTS

I note, from an AP report in the *Montreal Gazette* (13/4/64), that Pope Paul had prayed on the previous Saturday to provide more priests for the Roman Catholic Church. In a speech for Vatican Radio to mark world prayer day for vocations, the report went, "the Pontiff voiced anew the Church's growing concern at a shortage of priests".

LANJE GARDYEN (Montreal).

### SPECIAL PENGUINS FOR THE SHAKESPEARE QUATERCENTENARY

Shakespeare: A Celebration, Edited by T. J. B. Spencer, 6s.

Shakespeare: A Survey, by E. K. Chambers, 5s.

A Shakespeare Companion (1564-1964), by F. E. Halliday, 10s. 6d.

from THE FREETHINKER Bookshop

## OBITUARY

It is with deepest regret that we announce the death of our oldest member and friend, Leon Smith, who died at the Lawn Nursing Home, Leicester, at the age of 89 years.

He came to this country at the beginning of the century and I remember him saying that he was born in a peasant hut, with an earthen floor. Nevertheless, by sheer hard work he founded two shoe companies, one in Leicester and one in Ireland. He also pioneered a new method of pattern cutting in the shoe industry.

Leon had been a member of the Leicester Secular Society for many years, after being a Unitarian and a Positivist (a member of F. J. Gould's Positivist Church in Highercross Street, Leicester, about 50 years ago).

He was an active member of the committee of the Society and attended lectures and discussions regularly up to only a few weeks ago. The Secular Hall will not be the same place without him, but he will always be there in our memories.

The funeral service took place at the Unitarian Chapel on April 20th.

C. H. HAMMERSLEY, Secretary  
Leicester Secular Society.

## ZOLA IN PAPERBACK

*Germinal* (Penguin) 5/-  
*The Sinful Priest* (Bestseller) 3/6d.  
*Zest for Life* (Bestseller) 3/6d.  
*The Drunkard* (B'seller) 3/6d.

*Thérèse Raquin* (Penguin) 4/6d.  
*Nana* (Bestseller) 3/6d.  
*Earth* (Bestseller) 4/6d.  
*A Priest in the House* (B'seller) 3/6d.

## NEW PAPERBACKS

### PELICANS

*Idea of Prehistory*, by Glyn Daniel, 4s.  
*Sexual Deviation*, by Anthony Storr, 3s. 6d.  
*Tynan on the Theatre*, by Kenneth Tynan, 6s.

### CLASSICS

*Beaumarchais: The Barber of Seville and The Marriage of Figaro*, Translated by John Wood, 4s.  
*Benjamin Constant: Adolphe and Other Plays*, Translated by L. N. Tancock, 3s. 6d.  
*Ibsen: Ghosts and Other Plays*, Translated by Peter Waits, 5s.

### SPECIALS

*What's Wrong with British Industry?* by Rex Malik, 3s. 6d.  
*What's Wrong with Parliament*, by Andrew Hill and Anthony Whichelow, 3s. 6d.

from THE FREETHINKER Bookshop

## NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY ANNUAL CONFERENCE

to be held in the Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate, Leicester (by kind permission of the Leicester Secular Society)

The NSS Executive Committee invites delegates and friends to

### RECEPTION AND SOCIAL

in the Secular Hall on Saturday,

May 16th, at 7 p.m.

### THE CONFERENCE

(for Members only)

will be held on Sunday, May 17th

at 10 a.m.—12.30 p.m. and 2 p.m.—4.30 p.m.

to be followed by an OPEN AIR MEETING

## TWO DATES FOR FREETHINKERS

Tuesday, May 19th, 7.45 p.m.  
FREETHOUGHT AND HUMANISM IN  
SHAKESPEARE

Lecture: DAVID TRIBE : : Readings: JOAN MILLER

Songs: KATHLEEN EWART

Accompanist: ANNA SLOAN

Introduced by RICHARD AINLEY

ALLIANCE HALL, PALMER STREET, S.W.1  
(next to Caxton Hall, two minutes St. James's Park  
underground station.)

Tickets 2s. 6d.

Sunday, June 7th, 2.30 p.m.

UNVEILING OF THOMAS PAINE STATUE  
AT THETFORD

Coach leaves Central London 9.45 a.m.

Return Fare and Tea, £1 1s.

Book immediately for both events through—

THE SECRETARY,

National Secular Society, 103 Borough High Street,  
London, S.E.1, or telephone HOP 2717