

The Freethinker

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WHATEVER VIEW one may take of the social or intellectual value and nature of either science or religion, no one can doubt that both have exercised—and I shall argue in the case of science will continue to exercise—an incalculable influence upon the tangled story of human evolution. Religion is, of course, by far the older of these two major rivals in human evolution. To be sure, it dates back to epochs coeval with the actual origins of human civilisation, and even before then there was magic of both white and black shades. It is, in fact, a task of almost insuperable complexity to define exactly where religion ended and where religion began. Perhaps the earliest gods were the Pharaohs of Egypt and their contemporary rulers in ancient civilisations. But however that may be, the phenomenon of religion as such, permits of a precise classification. All religions, from the most primitive to the most advanced, from the fetish rites of Benin and Dahomey, to the “highest” (chiefly Semitic) religions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam (which is perhaps the best example extant of a “pure” religion, uncorrupted by metaphysical subtleties) present certain uniform characteristics and beliefs. They all involve belief in the supernatural, which they seek to propitiate; and they all involve belief in some future life beyond the grave, the details of which naturally conform to the degree of evolution attained by the particular religion involved, from the Happy Hunting Grounds of the Red Indian to the *summum bonum* of Jewish, Christian and Muslim mystics. These two phenomena, theism and immortality, are the unvarying accompaniments of every religious system historically recorded.

Why Religion?

Why, one must first inquire, did this hitherto permanent and recurring phenomenon first arise, and why has it endured for so long? To the convinced believer, of course, there is a ready and obvious reply to what lawyers would term a leading question. Religion is a special revelation of God, or of the gods, as the case may be. But to those who reject this too facile assumption, some alternative and more rational explanation must be sought. Nor is it in any way difficult to find such a non-supernatural explanation. For all religions ultimately stem from ignorance and fear. These naturally take many forms in accordance with varying degrees of social culture, and in particular ethical evolution, but they are always present in some shape or other. Early pre-scientific man dwelt in a strange and hostile universe which he could not understand, the frequently malignant controlling forces of which he naturally sought to propitiate by magical rites. In final analysis, the various theological systems evolved by successive cults represented more or less sophisticated attempts to comprehend the incomprehensible and to explain the inexplicable universe in which man found himself.

These early theological “explanations” of natural

phenomena were, of course, crude: geocentric and anthropocentric; the very opposite of scientific. Thus, for example, in the creation story best known in this part of the world, the Jewish book of Genesis, the author (or authors), having described in great—if in places conflicting—detail the origin and earthy adventures of the first man Adam—not to mention the serpent—added as a marginal afterthought that the creator “made the stars also.” The universe was much less important than man! It is this three-decker universe, this geocentric anthropocentric conception, that makes religion such an obvious anachronism in the universe being increasingly revealed by modern cosmology. And,

while theologians attempted to guess the origin and nature of the universe, practical religion sought to reconcile the great mass of men to the harsh and unhappy life which has, alas, been theirs in all ages prior to the scientific revolution.

For mankind in the mass has always lived under a scarcity economy in which the umbrella of social and economic security only sheltered successive ruling classes and castes (including the priestly hierarchies who have usually preached poverty vicariously). Throughout all human evolution to within living memory, the life of man has been (in the emphatic phrase of Thomas Hobbes), “nasty, brutish, and short.” And if speculative theology indulged in pre-scientific guesswork regarding the origin and nature of the universe, its corollary, religion, sought to alleviate the harsh lot of humanity by preaching resignation to what were regarded as the necessary evils of man’s mortal lot and (still more) by promising him a post-terrestrial life in compensation for his earthly sufferings and frustrations. One can perhaps state that both religion and theology were necessary and inevitable evils during the long pre-scientific era of social and intellectual immaturity.

The Origin of the Scientific Revolution

The scientific revolution is entirely incompatible with any and every form of religion. It, too, has a history, albeit a much shorter one than religion. As it is commonly understood, science may be said to have begun with the ancient Greeks about the 6th century BC, that “most wonderful of all centuries” as the late H. G. Wells once described it. From then on, the Greeks interpreted and systematically co-ordinated the random discoveries and speculations of earlier peoples, in particular the Egyptian and Chaldeans.

Most of the major modern sciences were founded by the Greeks, who also anticipated many modern discoveries: for example, 1,800 years before Galileo, Aristarchus of Samos advanced the heliocentric theory, whilst even the theory of evolution was anticipated by the Roman Epicurean, Lucretius. Under the combined impetus of Greek speculative genius and of Roman organisation, the classical civilisation by the beginning of our present era had reached the threshold of the Industrial Revolution:

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Religion v The Scientific Revolution

By F. A. RIDLEY

Hero of Alexandria invented a rudimentary steam-engine, whilst the water-mill, invented about 100 BC revolutionised industry. That the ancient world never made the Industrial Age seems to have been principally due to two causes: the inability of the Greeks to evolve a practical technique corresponding with their speculative genius, a deficiency first noted by that "universal man," Leonardo da Vinci (himself one of the pioneers of the modern scientific revolution) and to the prevalence of chattel slavery, an institution too crude to handle advanced tools. As a result the classical industrial revolution failed, and classical science, along with the classical civilisation itself, ultimately perished in a sea of barbaric invasions and of Oriental superstitions.

The Modern Scientific Revolution

The modern, and to all present appearances permanent, scientific revolution began with the Italian Renaissance about 1500 and following Galileo's telescope (1609) eventually acquired the practical techniques, lack of which had frustrated the evolution of classical science. With the originally English Industrial Revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries, the scientific revolution acquired simultaneously a permanent foundation and an irresistible momentum. It is, in fact, only in this present generation that the scientific revolution can really be said to

have "broken through." In which connection we may quote the recent assertion of Sir Bernard Lovell, that out of every ten scientists in the history of human civilisation, nine are actually alive and at work today.

Beyond any room for doubt mankind has progressed in technical knowledge and material welfare farther and faster during our own lifetimes than in the whole of human evolution since the Pharaohs. One can in fact express the difference between our own civilisation and any earlier one, when we note that this is the first really scientific culture in human annals. In all earlier cultures, science had only a marginal place and value.

Science versus Religion

We now come to ask is any form of religion compatible with the contemporary scientific revolution? Obviously it is not. For theology guessed, and science corrected those guesses! Religion exists to console man for his frustration, which science will in time remove from this earth. For the social gospel of science is essentially a secular one. Finally, science demonstrates ethics to be a human product of which the universe and nature at large appear to be utterly and blissfully ignorant. For certainly no ethical deity such as all religions depict, could have made the amoral universe disclosed by modern cosmology.

Why Be Militant

By GILLIAN HAWTIN

A STRANGE notion is abroad that in their dealings with and approaches to, Christians, Freethinkers should moderate their tone and not be militant. Strange, because it does not accord with what any outstanding Freethinkers or Agnostics of the past have advocated or performed, nor has it any relation to the attitudes of the Christian Churches themselves.

The sort of thing I refer to is the remark sometimes heard that lectures, from a secular point of view in professedly secular assemblies, should not say anything to "put off" or offend Christians who may be present in the audience; or that when meeting Catholics one should not make references to the Inquisition, or express an opinion that their religion is dangerous and intolerant. Naturally on a social, a purely social occasion, no person with the modicum of manners would single out those who believe and think differently, and utter abuse of their cherished beliefs. But militancy is not to be confused with being rude, to hurt sincere opponents, or go out of one's way to rub such people up the wrong way. Indeed, the last would be extremely foolish, and Freethinkers too can remember with St. Francis de Sales that a "spoonful of honey catches more flies than a barrel of vinegar!" But bear in mind that I refer specifically to times when controversial views are purposely aired. How can people, fighting their way out from Christian entanglements (a painful process, as many of us have personal memories) know what secularism means if they do not get a clear and unequivocal statement of what it stands for from the few centres in this country that—professedly—deliberately propagate it.

If I go into a Catholic church I hear plain, unadulterated Catholic doctrine. Thunderings on divorce and birth control, views on censorship, the obscurantism of supernaturalism, may all offend me. I cannot complain. I need not have gone in there. Yet many a person who crept into a Catholic church during a thunderstorm, has ended

months later by being received into the Catholic Church. They are impressed, and it is psychologically significant, by the definiteness of the approach. If I move round the churches, of varying denominations of a big city, to sample the pure milk of doctrine in each, I will be let down if I am not dispensed the authentic savour. I do not expect them to merge into a grey nothingness.

He who seeks to please all, often ends by pleasing none. There is a world of difference between tempering the wind to the shorn lamb, and being woolly minded, and the truth is, many people's mincing of their words is only too certain an indication of an inner woolly-mindedness! No preacher, no lecturer, can hold in his mind, or gauge all the possible susceptibilities, all the peculiar prejudices of temperament and upbringing of every member of his audience. But it is perfectly possible to make it clear where one stands and yet observe the rules of dignified controversy. Plain speaking itself assists the formulation of ideas and forthright thinking, and vice-versa. It is a two-way come and go.

Many readers recall, in the late Mgr. Knox's *The Belief of Catholics*, his remark that toleration is only for Protestants, and not for Catholics, because they stand at the centre of God-given truth. The best that can be said of that remark is that it does not actively advocate positive persecution, burning at the stake, muzzlement, imprisonment. It almost certainly would not have done in amiable, witty, donnish Ronnie Knox, in his rusty tweeds, but what of the hard lipped political ecclesiastic with the iron hand of discipline on himself and others? Three centuries of constitutional development, many foreign wars, and blood and toil, have won us our rights to utter all our various views, in a veritable Babel of opinions, and yet we hesitate to speak out our minds! Other generations, who had to flee beyond the seas before they might speak, would rightly upbraid our mealy-mouthed pullers of punchers.

(Concluded on page 400)

Humanist Policy on "RI"

By MARGARET KNIGHT

HUMANIST organisations are of differing kinds. They range from the right-wing Ethical Union to the left-wing National Secular Society, and there are occasions when they seem hardly to be talking the same language. But on one issue at least they are unanimous. They would all like to see the 1944 Education Act repealed, the compulsory Act of Worship in schools abolished, and the present system of Christian indoctrination replaced by objective teaching about Christianity (and in the higher forms about other religions also), and by moral training in so far as this can be given in the classroom.

But though they are agreed about the end, Humanists differ widely about the best means to attain it. The left wing, on the whole, believes in going all out for our ultimate goal. The right wing argues that it is unrealistic to hope that the 1944 Act will be repealed in the foreseeable future, and that we should resign ourselves to a more limited objective: we should make common cause with liberal Christians (most of whom are themselves far from happy about "RI") and work with them towards a compromise which will at least be an improvement on things as they are.

By a coincidence, two pamphlets, each reflecting one of these differing approaches, have appeared within a few weeks of each other. From the right wing *Religious and Moral Education—Some Proposals for County Schools by a group of Christians and Humanists* (Howard Marratt, Borough Road College, Isleworth, Middx., 1s.) from the left wing *Religion and Ethics in Schools—the Case for Secular Education* by David Tribe, with a foreword by Lionel Elvin (National Secular Society, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1, 1s. 6d.).

To deal with the right-wing pamphlet first: *Religious and Moral Education* is much better written than most documents produced by Committees. Its keynotes are "openness" and "the open approach"—terms which occur, on the average, about once per page. Its tone is reasonable and persuasive, and if its proposals were adopted they would certainly be a great improvement on things as they are. Nevertheless, many Humanists, including the present writer, will feel that at some points the Humanist members of the Committee have conceded too much. Those who feel in this way will be particularly uneasy about the proposal for "an integrated course of religious and moral education" (p. 6), especially when it is seen in relation to the statement (p. 2) that "we recognise that if our recommendations were carried out the Christian faith would remain in a privileged position in our County schools, and we think this educationally desirable against the background of opinion in this country."

An eminent right-wing Humanist to whom I expressed my misgivings about the proposed "integrated course" assured me consolingly that "none of the Committee really knew what they meant by it." But the important thing in practice is not what the Committee may have meant by it, but what readers will suppose them to have meant. And the average reader will surely interpret the proposal that religious and moral education should be "integrated" as implying that moral education should be based on religion—and more specifically (in the light of the second quotation above) on the Christian religion.

And this, surely, is something all Humanists must

oppose. Not only for the fundamental reason that we regard Christian beliefs as untrue; not only because of the danger that if the child later rejects Christianity he may throw out the moral baby with the mythological bath-water; but also because the ethic of Christianity is, quite simply, inappropriate to the world of today. Christianity is an ascetic, other-worldly Oriental religion preached to a people living under foreign domination who firmly believed that the end of the world was at hand. Much of Jesus' ethical teaching does not begin to make sense until it is seen in its historical context; and if children today are taught that the essence of moral wisdom is to be found in such pronouncements as "blessed are the poor in spirit" and in such injunctions as "resist not evil" and "take no thought for the morrow," they can hardly be blamed for feeling that morality is just another of those "school" things that have nothing to do with real life.

There may have been sound reasons of practical policy which led the Humanist members of the Committee to make this enormous concession. But if this was so, it would surely have been desirable for them to indicate somewhere in the Report that they were opposed in principle to the proposed "integrated course," but that they were prepared to accept it in practice on the principle that half a loaf is better than no bread. But there is nothing in the Report to suggest that any members of the Committee had qualms about the proposal.

David Tribe's *Religion and Ethics in Schools* belongs to the other end of the Humanist spectrum, and to this reviewer at least his racy, zestful, hard-hitting polemic came as a refreshing change from the Laodicean mildness of *Religious and Moral Education*. Mr. Tribe lays about him with gusto, demolishing the fiction that the Church pioneered in public education, showing how empty is the claim that "RI" is good for morals, derisively quoting fatuous statements from the writings of the faithful, and drawing a satirical picture of the agnostic teacher at prayers. He is admittedly selective, but he never fails to document his facts. The arrangement of the pamphlet is somewhat unsystematic, but this is a minor criticism; taken as a whole *Religion and Ethics in Schools* is a spirited and stimulating performance in the best pamphleteering tradition. It is a tribute to its quality that one of our most eminent educationists, Professor Lionel Elvin, Director of the Institute of Education of the University of London, has contributed a Foreword. This foreword rejoices the heart. It is temperate but completely outspoken, and in the space of two-and-a-half pages it presents a condensed statement of Humanist educational policy that could hardly be bettered.

Some right-wing Humanists will criticise the body of the pamphlet. They will say, in effect, "No doubt this was fun to write, and those who already agree with you will enjoy it immensely. But what do you hope to achieve by it? In the present climate of thought we can't hope to get anywhere except in co-operation with Christians, and this sort of thing will only antagonise them."

This argument is certainly not negligible—I have come near to being convinced by it myself. But on the whole I am not convinced, and I think the reply should run something like this. By all means let Humanism have an "ecumenical" wing whose members co-operate with Christians, so far as they can do so without ditching our
(Concluded on page 398)

This Believing World

THE OTHER day the BBC gave us a "viewpoint," an impression of the life and work of Reinhold Niebuhr, described as "the greatest English-speaking theologian of the twentieth century. As if that was not enough, we were told that Arthur Schlesinger, one of the Kennedy "brains," called Niebuhr "one of the few really great Americans." His parents were German and, no doubt, he fully deserved the enconiums showered upon him; but whether by accident or design, Niebuhr carefully avoided giving his opinion on the subject of Jesus.

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FIRST, THOUGH a great theologian, he never mentioned Jesus once when talking. He never wanted people to put all their trust in gentle Jesus meek and mild, and never stressed that only "our blessed Lord" could save you from eternal perdition. Niebuhr did attack many of the wrongs our modern society suffered from, but it seemed to us that what he said had just as well been said by all kinds of speakers—politicians, sociologists, reformers, and Humanists in general. Was he afraid of calling himself a Christian?

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WHEN WE hear some of the broadcasts on religion in schools, we really feel sorry for the teachers. They must have a hard task inculcating absurd Bible stories into their pupils as Gospel truth. We listened recently to a teacher who first read out how Jesus was tempted by the Devil, and then asked the class what they thought about it all? The children were *nearly* sure that God and Jesus lived up in Heaven, though one of them bravely asserted that she thought God lived sometimes in Jerusalem. As to "temptation" or the Devil, all the children who spoke hadn't the ghost of an idea what the terms meant.

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IN THE same programme were religious teachers who thought it was unfair that children should be asked such questions at all. How much better it was to teach how Jesus loved to have little children come to him, and similar beautiful teachings. To ask them to deal with the Devil and God in Heaven was preposterous. In fact, we know nothing which explodes so thoroughly the assertion that the teachings of Jesus would be understood by the youngest child as a sound religious teacher trying to explain them.

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AND THIS was certainly what Harold Loukes, MA, Reader in Education at Oxford University, must have thought. He gave the schools a lecture on "Getting to know Christianity," and began by throwing over most of it. The idea that we should take the Bible literally shocked him. Of course it does not teach science, he contemptuously claimed. You must remember that the Bible is not just a book but many books, and you have to get behind it, so to speak, to understand it.

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WE KNOW that the first chapter of Genesis is not true—science has demonstrated that. But Genesis has other meanings, apparently, though we must confess we were unable to gather from the plethora of words he poured out what they were. But throwing Genesis overboard as Mr. Loukes did, only increases the difficulty. If there never were any Adam and Eve, there could never have been any original sin to save us from for which Jesus died on the cross. There was no temptation from a Devil, or expulsion from the Garden of Eden. In fact, woman was

not to blame, as dear old Adam unashamedly maintained, and most Christians since have believed. So were are we? We give it up.

NOT WAITING FOR GODOT

By PHYLLIS K. GRAHAM
(Concluded from page 392)

Brief finale in a Balham front parlour.

MRS. ARRIS

Couldn't make 'ead or tail of it.

MRS. AWKINS

Shockin' I calls it. Fust they tells us we're all hapes—now they sez Almighty Gawd's a hape. The BBC oughter to be ashamed of itself, that's wot I sez.

MRS. HATKINS

Corruptin' the kiddies like that. 'Ow can they say their prayers to a bloomin' Chimp?

MR. AWKINS

(from the depths of his armchair) Nice sort o' bloke, though, hall the same. Friendly like. No nonsense abaht 'im.

MRS. AWKINS

Oo? The young feller? Bit of a slob if you arsk me. Hall that fuss, an' then 'e bites into a blinkin' banana. Why din't they get ole Dimbleby on it? 'Ed 'ave 'ad more sense.

MR. AWKINS

(on a half-wistful note) No, not 'im. T'other. Be nice, some'ow, if there was a Gawd like that. Friendly like. No nonsense abaht 'im.

MRS. HATKINS

Law, Mr. Awkins, wot an idea! Yer don't want no Hape to say yer prayers to, do yer?

MR. AWKINS

I don't say no prayers. An' 'e don't want none. Sensible, I calls that.

MRS. AWKINS

Shut up, do, yer mouldy 'eathen! Think I want everyone ter know I got a *hatheist* fer a husband?

MRS. ARRIS

(almost thoughtfully) Ho, was *that* wot it was hall about? Well, there may be somethink in it.

MRS. AWKINS

Now don't go puttin' ideas inter 'is 'ead. 'E ain't got many, an' most of 'ems rotten. Ter think 'e used ter be a choir-boy an' all. 'S'nough ter break yer 'eart.

MRS. HATKINS

It is that an' no mistake. *Hi* dunno wot society's comin' to.

MRS. ARRIS

(dreamily) There's more in hall this than meets the hey. Oo knows . . .

MR. AWKINS

(suddenly rising from his chair with unaccustomed vigour) *Hi* knows somethin'—an' that's wot. *Hi'm* goin' aht fer a pint. Goin' ter drink the 'ealth of ole Godotti an' the hapes. So long, ladies!

MRS. AWKINS

(frantic) 'Eney—!

But Mr. A. eludes her and vanishes. A strange, stunned gloom holds the party for a few moments. Then the torrent of feminine vituperation erupts with violence. Only Mrs. Arris is silent. Slumped in her chair, blinking unseeingly at the Screen, she lets the world go by.

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

Items for insertion in this column must reach THE FREETHINKER office at least ten days before the date of publication.

OUTDOOR

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

London Branches—Marble Arch and North London: (Marble Arch). Sundays, from 4 p.m.: MESSRS. L. EBURY and C. E. WOOD.

(Tower Hill). Every Thursday, 12-2 p.m.: L. EBURY.

Manchester Branch NSS (Platt Fields), Sunday, 3 p.m.: MESSRS. CLARE, MILLS and WOOD. (Car Park, Victoria Street), 8 p.m.:

MESSRS. COLLINS, WOODCOCK, and others.

Merseyside Branch NSS (Pierhead)—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.: Sundays, 3 p.m. and 7.30 p.m.

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

INDOOR

Bristol Humanist Group (51 Alma Road, Bristol 8), Tuesday, December 14th, 7.30 p.m.: Informal gathering.

Glasgow Secular Society (Central Halls, 25 Bath Street), Sunday, December 12th, 2.45 p.m.: HUGH MCDAIRMID, "The Changing Position of Religion Today."

Humanist Teachers' Association (13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London, W.8), Sunday, December 12th, 3 p.m.: DAVID TRIBE, "Religion and Ethics in School."

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, December 12th, 6.30 p.m.: Alderman E. MARSTON, Councillor E. M. HARDY, Councillor J. ALSTER, Councillor R. TREWICK, "Any Questions."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall Humanist Centre, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.2), Sunday, December 12th, 11 a.m.: LORD SORENSEN, "Human Rights in 1965." Tuesday, December 14th, 7.30 p.m.: W. THOMPSON, "Our Daily Bread."

Notes and News

WESTMINSTER ABBEY is, as Geoffrey Moorhouse remarked in the *Guardian* (27/11/65), possibly the most famous church in Christendom after St. Peter's in Rome. Few people consider it primarily as a church, however, but rather as a national mausoleum and place of royal and parliamentary pageantry. Probably the two main recollections of the Abbey in most visitors' minds will be Poets' Corner and the tomb of the Unknown Warrior. It has, as Mr. Moorhouse said, "strayed a long way from its origins" 900 years ago. When Edward the Confessor built the first church on the site it was "for the benefit of an austere monasticism," and when, in 1245, Henry III sponsored the beginnings of the present building it was "to shelter the remains of saintly Edward." The Abbey was intended to be a place of pilgrimage, but many of the modern "pilgrims" never pay the 2s. required to visit Edward's tomb.

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MR. MOORHOUSE believes that a gradual change has taken place in "the Abbey's conscience" in the last few years. He dates it from "the time they took a Warden of Keble from Oxford and made him Dean, brought a bishop home from South Africa to a billet in Little Cloisters, offered a canonry to the Church's missionary

expert, and so strengthened the scholarly nucleus already in residence." The Dean and Chapter of Westminster is now "more nearly an activist" team: it writes joint letters to the *Times* and offers "tough-minded preaching at Westminster" for the first time in many generations." And it is intended that in its nine-hundredth anniversary year commencing on December 28th, "the Abbey's purpose as a church shall be reasserted." But, Mr. Moorhouse concluded, the millions who make a beeline for Poets' Corner every year will take some convincing . . ."

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IN FACT, the Dean and Chapter of Westminster faces a hopeless task. The Abbey "lives" as the resting-place of the nation's honoured dead: as a church it itself is dead.

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"WE MAY have to shut and demolish a considerable number of churches and to unite parishes which once were flourishing." Another sign of the times from the Bishop of Manchester, Dr. William Greer, at his diocesan conference on November 27th. Dr. Greer announced that machinery had been set up and officers appointed to deal with pastoral reorganisation in the Manchester diocese (*The Observer*, 28/11/65), and a master plan, co-ordinated with the plans of local authorities, would be ready within 18 months. It is not, we imagine, planned to shut or demolish Manchester Cathedral though, from our recollection of many years spent in the city, congregations were pitifully small.

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IT WAS under the heading "Formidable Humanist" that John Raymond reviewed Alberto Moravia's *Man as an End* (Secker and Warburg, 35s.) in the *Sunday Times* (28/11/65). The book, which we have not yet read, takes its title from an essay written nearly twenty years ago, calling for the world "to be brought back to man's measure." Moravia is a humanist—Mr. Raymond wrote—"in the sense that he would agree with Auden's recent statement that the only unacknowledged legislators of the world are the secret police." Isabel Quigly, in her review of the book in the *Guardian* (26/11/65), compared Moravia's thesis to a sixth-form essay. He has an agreeable "Utopian dream" of the destruction and disappearance of states and nations, and he theorises and word-spins "to no great effect." Still, we intend to get *Man as an End*. From our experience, Moravia is never dull, and it cannot be too often insisted that the world needs "to be brought back to man's measure."

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FEW relatively easy names can be more often misspelt than that of Richard Carlile. In another *Guardian* book review—of Peter Fryer's *The Birth Controllers* (Secker and Warburg, 42s.)—by Alex Comfort, the name was printed like that of Thomas—as Carlyle. It even appeared wrongly once in *The Bradlaugh Case* by Walter Arnstein (Oxford University Press, 50s.); this time spelt like the town. Now we can't think that Dr. Comfort or Professor Arnstein would make such mistakes (more likely someone slipped up in the reading), but we look forward to the day when Carlile's true worth is recognised. Perhaps then we shall see his name printed correctly.

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WE ARE often asked for the works of Joseph McCabe which, alas, are now virtually out of print in this country. THE FREETHINKER Bookshop has, however, been able to obtain copies of his *History of the Popes* from New Zealand. It is offered in two paperback volumes at 6s., plus 6d. postage.

Humanist Policy on "RI"

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principles. But we must be realistic (the right wing has no monopoly of this word!) and face the fact that we cannot hope to get far by this means alone. Fundamentally, Christians approve of indoctrination though they do not call it by that name, and they can always appeal to the "state of public opinion" as an argument for resisting reform. It is not a conclusive argument—public opinion was, and still is, strongly opposed to the abolition of hanging, but hanging has been abolished none the less. But the Humanist movement has not yet found its Sidney Silverman, and while we await his appearance, the most effective way of promoting our aims is by a campaign to change public opinion about the issues with which we are concerned. For this we must address ourselves, not to the minority of committed Christians who are beyond the reach of argument, but to the great mass of the population whose Christianity is merely nominal.

These are the people who have no religious convictions—apart, perhaps, from a vague feeling that "there must be something"—and who never go near a church except for a social occasion like a wedding or a christening; but who nevertheless, when they are interrogated by Gallup pollsters, reply unhesitatingly that they are Christians and that they want their children to have religious instruction in school. So long as opinion polls give the results they do, no Government is going to show any interest in repealing the 1944 Education Act—this is the hard fact round which our policy must be built. But need we be too pessimistic about changing the poll results? We can take heart from the achievement of the Homosexual Law Reform Association, which in seven years has seen a complete change of opinion in its own field. The proportion of the population in favour of changing the law on homosexuality was, in 1958, 25 per cent.; in 1965 63 per cent. (National Opinion Poll, October 1965). The "climate of thought," after all, is not like the literal climate—something we must adapt to with resignation but that we cannot hope to change. I think I changed it quite appreciably myself ten years ago, in the course of two short broadcasts; and the openings for this kind of thing are much greater now than they were. But before pursuing this topic we may do well to take a closer look at the results of recent opinion polls, since these are not nearly so unfavourable to our cause as is sometimes supposed.

The most recent survey, carried out by Gallup Poll Ltd. on behalf of ABC television (*Television and Religion*, University of London Press, 4s. 6d.) contained the question "What do you think the schools should do about religion?", the interviewee being required to choose between five answers. The answers were as follows (the percentage choosing each of them is shown in brackets):—

Just have scripture lessons	(27%)
Give regular religious instruction	(37%)
Teach them about other religions as well as Christianity	(30%)
Cut out all religion and scripture	(4%)
Don't know	(8%)

The wording of the answers is open to criticism—the distinction between "scripture lessons" and "religious instruction" is not entirely clear, and answers (ii) and

(iii) are not mutually exclusive. But the important point in the present context is that the result certainly does not show, as some press reports have suggested, that only four per cent. of the population are dissatisfied with the present system of religious instruction. It would be nearer the truth to say that only 64 per cent. are satisfied; most of those who chose answer (iii)—as I should have done myself if I had been interviewed—must presumably have been critical, to say the least, of the present system.

The figure of 64 per cent., incidentally, corresponds closely with the result of an earlier survey carried out by the Audience Research Department of the BBC (*Religious Broadcasts and the Public*, private circulation). The question there put was "Do you think it is a good thing for children to have religious instruction in day school?" and the possible answers (better formulated than in the Gallup survey) were:—

Yes, a good thing	(67%)
Depends on the instruction	(19%)
No, not a good thing	(7%)
Don't know	(7%)

It is surely not unrealistic to hope that that by a well-organised campaign we could change these proportions substantially. It is not as though we should be trying to change deeply-held convictions; all we should be up against, in most cases, is convention and mental inertia. What is needed is a steady stream of counter-propaganda (we must not be afraid of this word) against the pervasive propaganda of the Churches and the Establishment. The people we must approach are not much interested in philosophical arguments against theism. But they are intensely interested in the well-being of their children, and at present they vaguely suppose that this is in some way promoted by "RI." We must convince them that moral training (which, one suspects, is all most of them are really concerned about) can be given much more effectively if it is not tied up with improbable beliefs about the supernatural government of the universe. We must suggest that it is not really good policy to try to promote truthfulness and other virtues among children by teaching them things that are not true. We must argue that school chapels and Acts of Worship are a waste of time, and an inducement to cynicism, among children who do not take them seriously, and a potent source of intellectual confusion and emotional disturbance among those who do. We must point out that the hypocrisy imposed on teachers is bad both for their morale and their morals—and so one could go on.

The best media for such arguments are undoubtedly broadcasting and the press. Meetings are well worth while, partly because they lead to press reports which are often followed by correspondence: but obviously even the best-attended meeting cannot compare in effectiveness with a TV programme which is watched by millions of viewers. We have some of the most eminent educationists and some of the best-known broadcasters in the country on our side. And we now have a Humanist Broadcasting Council to whose suggestions the BBC and Independent Television authorities are prepared to listen. In the words of a recent article in the *Humanist*—what are we waiting for?

Points From New Books

OSWELL BLAKESTON

It is summer in Switzerland, and the boys who live as unofficial ski-instructors have to find other ways to survive without work permits. In Romain Gary's *The Ski Bum* (Michael Joseph, 21s.) Lenny leaves the mountains and appears in Geneva to chat up some sort of a summer job. He gets mixed up with a fringe society who test about the obscenity of modern politics. When Mao Tse-tung tells Nehru he can afford to lose three hundred million people in a nuclear war because there will still be enough Chinese left to savour the fruits of victory over capitalism, these intelligent youngsters see it as "filthy ideological pornography and perversity." So, to give the politicians a clear idea of their own moral abasement, it is suggested that sons and daughters should pose for pornographic pictures and show them at press conferences to make it clear what they think about their fathers' standards. "If all the kids from here to Peking started copulating in the streets, perhaps our so-called leaders would have a better, clearer image of what they are doing." Politicians breed monsters with all their filth—well, let them see monsters!

But that is only one of the brilliant ideas the young people throw out. They talk sensitively about painting and jazz, and they are always vastly entertaining. Moreover, there is a modern love story and a sub-plot about gold smuggling to make this book deliciously worth reading. Here's just one short extract to give a quality of the wit:

... That's what mass media do to you. It's all gone subliminal. You go to God or Jesus Christ all the time without even realising it, even though you had never looked for help from someone who wasn't there in the first place. (You get thirsty, you ask for a Coke, without ever thinking.)

Pietro Aretino, the subject of James Cleugh's biography, *The Divine Aretino* (Blond, 45s.), was the son of a Tuscan shoemaker who became the most expert blackmailer in Renaissance Italy. He blackmailed Popes, threatening to expose their vices unless they sent him lordly gifts. Mr. Cleugh quotes the story of a preacher who, "wishing to describe the papal court and not wanting to get clergyman's throat over it, simply showed his congregation a painting of hell." There was plenty of scope, then, for an enterprising and "divine" blackmailer. The one miracle was that Aretino survived the hired assassins; but he was made of sterner stuff and had worked, in his impoverished youth, as a servant in a monastery.

His experiences in the monastery led him to propose a sound reason for the holy executives insisting on Lenten fasts. "They go on like that not for the good of our souls but simply to save money on our keep. For when Lent comes round, lo and behold, the first course consists of a couple of anchovies followed by a few Sardinian weeds, burnt rather than cooked. With them comes a bean soup, innocent of salt or oil. It's enough to make you curse heaven. Then in the evening for supper we enjoy ten nettle leaves and a musty roll at their bidding. "One may be sure that a very different fare was served at the abbot's table."

Finally, Pietro said, he was kicked out of the monastery for joining in the sexual antics of the monks. Such merriment, like good viands, was the privilege of the masters and simply an abomination in an attendant layman. Then, when on his death bed, they forced on him the rites of extreme unction, he said: "I'm all greased up now, so keep the rats away."

Moment of Truth

By HARRY MORRIS

THE Red Bishop stared moodily across the board. A young Pawn looked at him, a puzzled expression on his chubby little face. After a few moments the Pawn plucked up enough courage to approach the Bishop. "What's the matter, your Grace," asked the little chap nervously.

"Matter, matter," grumbled the Bishop, "I'll tell you what's the matter. They trying to reform us, that's what!"

The Pawn's mouth dropped open. "What, trying to reform . . . us?"

The Bishop nodded sadly. "I'm afraid so." He thought for a moment, then continued. "They say if we don't reform soon we'll all be gonnors."

At that moment a Red Knight skipped up to them, and sat down on a vacant square next to the Bishop. "What's wrong, old boy?" he shouted cheerfully to the Bishop.

The Bishop stared down his nose at the Red Knight, who was still recovering from the exertions of his odd little move. "You will kindly address me by my title, or I will have you excommunicated," he snarled.

The Red Knight snorted. "All right, all right, old boy, keep your vestments on!"

The Bishop turned puce, and started to mutter something about Deadly Sins and Purgatory, and would have exploded on the spot had he not received an urgent summons to support his Brother Bishop, who was in a tight corner.

As he disappeared diagonally across the board, the Knight turned to address the Red Pawn, who obviously had not realised that Bishops were just as easily upset as anyone else. "What bee has he got buzzing around his mitre this time?" the Knight asked, nodding after the Bishop.

The Pawn tried to pull himself together. "He said something about . . . reformation?"

"Ah, yes." The Red Knight nodded wisely.

"It's not true, is it?" inquired the Pawn, nervously licking his lips.

"'Fraid so, old boy," called the Red Knight as he hopped away, "must leave you now."

The Pawn slumped down, stunned. "They can't change us," he muttered unhappily, "we're perfect." He furrowed his brow, as a terrible doubt struck him. "At least," he murmured, "that's what they've always told us."

His thoughts were rudely interrupted by a piercing scream, and he looked up in time to see a Red Knight being captured by a White Rook. "Goodness," he thought, "they're getting close."

A few seconds later a Red Rook rushed up to him, and sat down heavily on the next square. "Ah!" "Oh!" "Ooooooh!" he exclaimed, "that was too close for comfort." He started to lick his wounds, with much grunting and groaning, whilst the Pawn looked on sympathetically.

At length the Pawn spoke. "Tough, is it?" he asked.

The Red Rook looked at the Pawn, and sighed wearily. "Son, we're on the run. Ever since they realised we're not perfect after all they've started to think for themselves." His lips curled in a sneer. "If I'd had

my way we would have persuaded them we were right, all right, always right!"

The Pawn was visibly shattered. "So that's it," he moaned, "we aren't perfect after all!" He stared sullenly at the Red Rook. "And you knew that we weren't perfect and you let us go on believing . . ." His voice trailed off into nothing, and he started to sob bitterly.

The Red Rook had by this time fully recovered, and the old light was back in his eyes. "Oh, yes, we would have convinced them," he rasped savagely. "If only they'd let me have my Inquisition."

Suddenly they heard a noise, and they both looked up to see the Red King himself approaching, loaded with as much money and jewellery as he could carry. He pulled up in front of the Red Rook. "Right, you two," he snapped, "lock the road behind me, and stay until your supplies run out, or you are captured. You must give me time to escape." With that the Red King continued his retreat, all the time muttering to himself, "I must escape, I must escape."

For a few seconds the Red Rook and the little Red Pawn stared after him, and then they turned and prepared to defend themselves.

When the Whites captured the little Pawn a short time afterwards, all he would say was, "But he was supposed to die for us."

WHY BE MILITANT

(Concluded from page 394)

I do not believe that I wish to offend any of my personal opponents, or deal with them with anything but firm persuasiveness. Christians sometimes plead they "love the sinner and hate the sin," and they are inspired to preach salvation for fear of the wrath to come. For my part, I may love Christians, but detest their Christianity, and wish to give them reason, happiness, and enlightenment in the only world I know, before the flame of life is extinguished for aye! No one who has indulged in the slightest degree of freethought propaganda against the Churches does not soon know he has enemies at work against him, using methods which would probably horrify everyday Christians.

How soon one discovers—one does not have to be a Charles Bradlaugh to learn it—how very useful, and indeed vital, is some acquaintance with the law. Is not that in itself suggestive? What indictment, too, can be made against the Churches, the Catholic in particular, as a tremendous force against human happiness? Why are abortions forced into the septic basements of struck-off doctors? Because of a medieval and superstitious view of the soul which is as dead as Egyptian ideas on reincarnation. How many men and women are yoked together in a union which is a mockery of all that the Christian Churches paint idealistically as "Christian marriage!" Is it not due to the fact that the divorce laws of this country are still based on views, formulated millenia ago, postulating the existence of a world of which we have no knowledge? Everywhere reforms are blocked by the opposition of the Christian Churches, where, that is, the clock is not actually *put back* by them.

When people say to me, "Why be militant?" my reply runs, "Why not?" The enemy is basically uncompromising. Behind this demand is the assertion of divine right. We can dictate, but you are in error, and error has no rights. Then I answer them with the words of Oliver Cromwell: "Are you sure, in your bowels, you are right?" Moreover, this sweet reasonableness, on the lips of churchmen, is

not the doctrine they follow in practice, even on the surface, and certainly behind the scenes. It is logical enough. Their opposition is believed to be the devil and all his works. The fight is unceasing, the battle is real, and it is for men's souls. How does one break in a horse? Force a saddle and bridle on him. If you wish to be blinkered and to feel the bit between your teeth, do not refuse the first lump of sugar, the first overtures. Listen to the liars who tell you it is unbecoming and unkind to keep a free mind and a free tongue in a (relatively) free country. Subject to the law of defamation, and to good taste, there should be no bar.

CORRESPONDENCE

A mother of two mourns the death of her husband and father of her children; the wife of another man has to wait for at least ten years before he will be back with her. The reason for this twin tragedy is that one man murdered another. Mr. James Corrigan, of Port Dundas, Glasgow, was stabbed to death by Mr. James Murray, of Blackhill, Glasgow. And the latter was sentenced to life imprisonment, which averages out at ten years. Why? At the trial which recently took place the court was told of a sudden lunge, a fight in a lane, and a stabbing.

Why? The two men had an argument. This argument developed into a quarrel, then a fight.

Why? It is tragically simple. They were arguing about religion! (See Daily Express, 3/11/65).

PETER KEARNEY.

FAMILY LIMITATION

I should like to point out to the Vatican that "Almighty God" was himself an advocate of birth control as his son Jesus is constantly referred to as "his only begotten son." Surely his faithful believers should follow his example and restrict their families likewise.

(Mrs.) M. A. WATSON

A PART TO PLAY ?

I have been reading THE FREETHINKER for sixty years, my family having been readers since its beginning. Chapman Cohen was my mentor for some twenty years and I have Mr. Cutner's very nice copper engraving of Cohen looking at me at this moment. THE FREETHINKER and Cohen in particular never made tacitly or otherwise any social or class distinctions. Snobbery never

ROBERT F. TURNERY

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