

The Freethinker

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A CURIOUS by-product has arisen as a result of the recent Vatican Council. The short papacy of John XXIII seemed to many outside the Roman Catholic Church to suggest that a new spirit of peace and unity was abroad. It appeared likely that this would have the effect of freeing devotees of that Church from some shackles which the past had bound upon them. In England, names such as Archbishop Roberts, SJ, or Mr. Paul Johnson of the *New Statesman*, achieved a fresh significance. There was an ecumenical spirit to be found, which suggested that the old Tractarian dream of the re union of Christendom was about to be realised. The past must be forgotten and the violences of the 16th century buried forever. Masses take place now at Romanist parish churches for non-Catholic congregations. Curious incidents occur where Roman Catholic priests occupy Anglican pulpits. So far has this new ecumenism spread that it was possible for leading figures in the British Humanist Association to have a friendly conference in Utrecht with Vatican representatives. If this be a true picture, it might well be said that the secularist should likewise plead his case with a new spirit and that, in so doing, he should seek to bury much of the past. But the only real issue is whether this picture has about it a reality and a truth or whether it is little more than window-dressing designed to further the world-conversion which the Roman Catholic Church sees as its real ends and aims.

Anti-Clericalism Not New

The vista of Roman Catholics presenting their case in a modern-minded manner is not something new or even a phenomenon of the present century. A like claim could have been made for Erasmus and other Renaissance figures who never repudiated Roman Catholicism, just as it could have been made for the Conciliar Movement of over a century earlier. Figures like Lord Acton are reminiscent of the sense of foreboding with which some liberal Catholics regarded the Vatican Council decisions in 1870. It might well be claimed that Newman's famous *Essay on Development* was a textbook for Roman Catholic liberalism. Areas of theological speculation have always been permitted, even though they must be undertaken within the boundaries set up by defined dogmas. It is not a new spirit which permits certain Roman Catholic laity to speculate in discussion over the permissible limits which may be extended to contraception, nor is it a fresh outlook which permits them to be championed by a somewhat freelance ecclesiastic of the type of Archbishop Roberts. It may be said that traces of an impatient anti-clericalism are apparently arising. The person who is somewhat vague on his history may see here signs of a break. But, once again, he is facing something of age-long existence. Educated Roman Catholics may, and frequently do, criticise the hierarchy, as may be seen once again in the story of Lord Acton and the magazine, the *Rambler*. Popular anti-clericalism existed long before the Reformation and brought about such incidents as that of the behaviour of

the parishioners of Hayes in Middlesex in 1517 chronicled by G. R. Elton in his *Star Chamber Studies*.

These things are domestic disputes and the freethinker who imagines that he can make use of them is asking to end up by being belaboured by both sides, the usual fate of the stranger who turns up and intervenes in a family quarrel. At the present moment, certain issues are being canvassed within the Roman Catholic Church. They are being propagandised to suggest that the old English Protestant picture of Rome is false. The vital question is whether they can really be accepted as presenting the true attitude of the Roman Catholic Church seen in its wholeness to the problems of present-day

society. In short, a vital question for John Bull, upon his answer will depend the extent to which the Roman Catholic Church is permitted in the future to capitalise the assets of the contemporary world. Perhaps, however, it would be ungenerous not to give one mite of praise to the spirit of the new liberalism. It has improved the manners of Roman Catholic journalists, and present-day Roman Catholic newspapers are not normally disfigured by the tirades of slanderous abuse with which Dr. Coulton had to suffer from writers of the Chesterton-Belloc school a generation ago.

Catholic Emancipation Act

The real issues, so far as England is concerned, stem from the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829. In that year, Parliament removed a host of restrictions from Roman Catholics and permitted them to sit as members of the House of Commons. It never unsaid any claim to the reality of situations which had evoked the original penalties. So far, this fact might seem to be nothing other than a step forward in religious toleration and one which was to be welcomed. Yet, it must not be forgotten that the step had been opposed for years by eminent constitutionalists and finally only came about as a sequel to the Irish blackmail initiated by Daniel O'Connell. The reasoned opposition which had previously been heard from outstanding lawyers of the school of Lord Eldon or Lord Ellenborough was not a piece of pure religious bigotry. It was that these people had accepted the sovereignty of a foreign power not invariably friendly to the government of this country and therefore constituted a political danger. Contemporary replies are highly significant today. It is only necessary to recall the names of Charles Butler, Keenan or the Irish Bishop Doyle to recall a spate of writing watering down and minimising the Catholic claims with regard to the Pope. It was indeed fashionable to impute that the late medieval idea of papal infallibility was nothing more than a Protestant fiction. Such works as Salmon's *Infallibility of the Church* or Dr. Coulton's *Papal Infallibility* contain a quantity of material in proof of this statement. The Roman Catholic Church in England had, as Philip Sidney pointed out in *Modern Rome in Modern England*, reached a stage of sheer poverty. It was possible for an Englishman of the type of Sydney Smith to dismiss the Papacy

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

The Liberals of Catholicism

By F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT

as "the last relic of the Caesars sitting amidst the ruins thereof". Dangers seemed far away, and toleration an obvious social demand.

Immigration

It is merely a matter of common notoriety that the Roman Church soon found its feet and became a strident claimant for attention and, in 1850, the hierarchy was restored with the use of various self-styled titles. It was helped in no small degree by the Romantic revival and the Oxford Movement with their appeal to a bogus medievalism, real to the poet or dreamer but quite unreal to the historian. Stories were circulated about monasticism which might provide material for the sob-stuff writing of Cardinal Gasquet or Mgr. Benson, but for which there could be little room after Coulton or Baskerville had conducted their researches. The intellectual and aesthetic movement was carried forward by such writers as W. G. Ward into the field of ultramontane Papalism. In England itself, Irish immigration built up a huge working-class and largely illiterate following. At a later date, the suppression of the religious orders in France led to a flood of them arriving in this country and to the spate of convent schools and the like. Later still, other immigrations have forced up numbers of adherents.

It may well be that the faith is presented in differing terms depending upon the level of education in the audience. The Roman Catholic doctrine of the economy of truth must have the effect of largely assisting this process. But it remains true that the basic dogmas are of a type which remain unchanged, despite what Archbishop Roberts and his fellow-liberals might say. In biblical studies, the Roman Catholic Church stands for an extreme conservatism underwritten by the Papal Biblical Commission of 1908. The result is that basically it is as fundamentalist as Billy Graham. As Dr. Coulton shows in *Romanism and Truth*, much of its teaching is taken up with sin and damnation, and not a little of this is vitally concerned with the "sin of schism". The Church is the infallible teaching body ruled over by a Pope who is infallible in faith and morals when speaking *ex cathedra*. In 1950, the Pope proclaimed the dogma of the corporeal assumption of the Virgin Mary, an important point when it is recalled that the method used meant that a position had been reached whereby the Pope might proclaim infallible dogmas without the aid of a general council. It should not require much thought or imagination to understand the social implications of these developments.

Dictatorship

In short, the Roman Catholic Church faces modern England as an infallible body with teaching prerogatives and a political organisation of an extremely well-formulated kind. The practical dictatorship of the Papacy suggests an approach not unlike that of the Fascist. Perhaps it was not an accident that the creed of the Nazi took root in the romantic and Catholic south of Germany. As a result, it makes dictatorial claims in antagonism to modern libertarian and democratic ideals. It should not be forgotten that the famous encyclical condemning liberalism, and indeed most modern liberties, promulgated by Pius IX a century ago, has never been withdrawn; nor should it be overlooked that the political alignments of the Papacy in the modern world have definitely leant towards the totalitarian dictatorships. In England, a situation has come about where the overwhelming cost of a Catholic school designed to propagate a sectarian and intolerant creed of this kind has fallen on to the ordinary ratepayers. Every pressure is brought to bear both privately and publicly to push the Catholic claims wherever

they may impinge upon social situations. The ecumenical movement has been used to undermine the non-papal attitude of the Church of England; and the entirely un-historical Anglo-Catholic claim that this church was Protestant before the Reformation and Catholic afterwards has allowed Anglicans to fall for the curious Vatican overtures. In short, the difference between 1829 and today is that the Roman Catholic Church is no more a struggling sect in England living off its romantically-conceived past, but is a definite menace to freedom of thought and to toleration in the country. Perhaps the old-fashioned constitutionalists of the age of Lord Eldon or Lord Ellenborough were not so wrong after all. Perhaps there should have been safeguards in the Catholic Emancipation Act to prevent the Roman Catholic Church, with its foreign leadership, from interfering in English politics.

No Place for Liberality

It was in some ways to be foreseen that some Roman Catholic liberals should raise their voices today. Perhaps it was to be expected that liberal expostulations would be heard in 1965 just as they were previously heard in 1870. But it must not be overlooked that they are but a small handful. It could be that the Vatican Council just concluded could evolve a parallel history to the post-1870 situation. A few liberals left the Church. They dispersed themselves over a field ranging from Old Catholicism to Unitarianism and have come to almost nothing. Great talents of a Dollinger or a Suffield whilst protesting against ultramontanism tended to be wasted in the ecclesiastical sand. The reactions to the 1870 ultramontane spirit threw up the Modernist movement, mainly in France. When the time came, it was crushed out by Pius X, and its subsequent collapse may be read in such autobiographies as those of Loisy, Tyrrell or Houtin. The Roman Catholic Church may have room for discussion, but it has no final place for liberality when the moment is reached at which the liberality touches the nerve-centres of dogma. At the present moment, the situation seems to be exactly the same, whatever Archbishop Roberts and his associates may say about contraception and population explosions. To seek to build up a link between humanist ideals, springing ultimately in spirit from the Renaissance, and a handful of Roman Catholic liberals is building upon quicksand. The modern Englishman would do far better to remember that the Roman Catholic Church, with its falsified history and its autocratic spirit, is still a menace to his social and intellectual liberties.

STEPTOE'S PHILOSOPHY

ASKED FOR his "philosophy about life", Wilfred Brambell (Steptoe of *Steptoe and Son*) replied to the *Scottish Sunday Post* (14/11/65) that "if you can be inwardly honest and outwardly kind, then there is little time or need for any other form of religion or belief". And Mr Brambell added that he had been taught this by life itself. Do you believe in life after death? was another question. "I'll take it as it comes," he said. "I'm resigned to — and prepared for — utter annihilation at death." As for the "picture of people in flowing white togas, strumming harps on a damp cloud", it was "a load of cod's wallop!".

EDITOR'S NOTE

We apologise for certain errors in recent issues, and for the late despatch of some copies last week. Our printers recently moved to Andover, and have experienced some difficulties in the installation of machinery.

Public Detergent No 1

By KIT MOUAT

I WOULD have liked to think that our society had progressed so far that it would be able to laugh off people like Mrs Mary Whitehouse. "Whiter-than-whitehouse" it ought to be, for she is setting herself up as Public Detergent No. 1 with her "Clean-Up TV Campaign". "Clean" is such a curious word. One connects it with floors or windows, ears or air. We don't use it in connection with any of the really valuable aspects of life. We don't talk about "clean" compassion, or "clean" honesty or generosity or love or even passion.

What I resent most is that Mrs Whitehouse's attack on what she considers to be obscene ignores all the real obscenity of our time. Four-letter words can throw her into a decline. The iniquitous law of abortion, which is causing so much suffering and death, does not seem to worry her. Does Mrs Whitehouse, in her purple turban and pearls, care about the bereaved families in Vietnam, the homeless in our own country, the Africans who are treated as second-rate citizens in order that the greed, power or just the ability of white people shall be fulfilled? Does she care that homosexual men commit suicide rather than go to court after being blackmailed? If she does, we do not hear about it. What she does care about is the wrapping. She wants it to be glossy, thick and opaque. The facts must be hidden or distorted. Sex must be disguised as romance, or ignored. She wants freedom of speech, of course, but only for Christians. She is clearly a woman who wants to be a dictator, and she has found (so she says) half a million Christians to help her on her way. This is how the Nazis came to power, by talking about "purity" and relying on fear and the support of religious and sexual neurotics. Mrs Whitehouse appeals to the same destructive elements in human beings who are afraid of their own nature. She appeals not to the heart, but to the pulse of mass hysteria. She does not care about honesty on television, only about appearance. If she had anything to do with it, this country would step back into all that was most ugly about the Victorian era, and the civilised world would leave us behind and look back laughing.

I, too, enjoy *Dr Finlay's Casebook*. It isn't totally devoid of purpose, it is well acted and, in my view, fair entertainment. I also agree that many TV programmes are of much too low a standard. Whatever is produced should, ideally, be the best of its kind that the BBC and ITV can afford. This is quite different, however, from trying to reduce the whole radio and TV output to a concoction suitable only for the mentally unbalanced. What is perhaps most distressing about the Whitehouse Campaign is that it may cramp efforts to win a better all-round standard, just because people who care about such things will be afraid of being linked with the fanatical fumings of Moral Re-Armament.

A Birmingham vicar deplors that even our weekends are "smeared with blasphemy, indecency, disloyalty to our crown and country, sadism and cynicism . . .". He wants what he calls "filth" to stay in the backstreets. I enjoy *BBC 3*. Not because every item is good or even worth producing, but because it is a brave attempt in a new medium. It is also an hour when we can hope to hear articulate people expressing their ideas without fear of hurting abnormally frail sensibilities. It is a programme for adults and, as such, must inevitably offend Mrs Whitehouse. She really ought to settle for Noddy and *Listen*

With Mother with Bible readings for kicks.

The item when a clergyman knocked out his pipe and put it into a rack shaped like a crucifix was too much for Mrs Whitehouse. The idea of a "divine Father" sacrificing his "only" son to torture and death in order to "save" his other "children" from the sin that he, himself, had given them, does not repel Christians. What matters to Mrs Whitehouse is that an actor should not put his secular pipe into a cross (lamb, fish, crook?) shaped rack. It doesn't matter to her that clergymen have no answers to all the sexual problems of men and women, and that, when appealed to, they can only say, "Thou shalt not . . .". What matters is that an actor was allowed to make this point, and no real clergyman was there to gloss over the Church's total ineffectiveness in such matters.

My complaint against *BBC 3* (apart from the fact that there are so few women in the discussions) is that it only tackles the "outer covering" of Christianity. One day, perhaps, we shall reach the stage when the immorality of the faith itself can be attacked. But not if Mrs Whitehouse has anything to do with it. She has accused Humanists of having some backroom control in the BBC. I only wish it were true! After some 25 years and the Beveridge and Pilkington Reports, there have been a few Christian-Atheist discussions, and the British Humanist Association has been allowed six 15-minute programmes at a time when most people are working or out shopping. And Christians are shaking in their shoes. Poor, poor Mrs Whitehouse! Poor, poor Christians! For centuries they have managed to exterminate or silence their opponents. For centuries, heretics, atheists and agnostics have helped to preserve their faith by avoiding delicate points of disagreement in order not to "hurt their feelings". We have been "turning the other cheek" more enthusiastically than any Christian. Now, in 1965, Christians are facing the fact that their faith cannot stand up to the freedom of its opponents. It relies on dictatorship, censorship and the good nature of anti-Christians for its survival. And Mrs Whitehouse and her friends are afraid.

The problem of censorship is a difficult one. I am not sure if I would go as far as Dr Comfort and abolish it completely. I hate children to be frightened, or disgusted by what is essentially good. I believe that when violence is depicted through any medium it should always be accompanied by obvious suffering, and that, because the sight of too much suffering can de-sensitise, only a little and relevant violence should be mixed into the diet of viewing and listening. When Picasso painted his *Guernica* there were objections that it was too horrible. We were used to war being glamorised. Such glamorisation is, to my mind, one of the real obscenities we have to worry about. I don't like the idea of the BBC preventing us from seeing a film about the results of nuclear war because it is too realistic. Does the Corporation believe that such films might produce a defeatist attitude towards the battle for peace? I don't know. All I do know is that our present censorship is ludicrous. It is not for this woman or that man to lay down a national standard.

When I read the nasty nonsense about hell and damnation published by our local Baptists, addressed "To the Children" and dropped on our door mat, I feel like suing them for mental cruelty. But then children can pick up such things before the parents reach the door, and unless

(Concluded on page 407)

This Believing World

PREMARITAL SEX is un-Christian, according to the Rev. Stanley Evans (*South London Press*, 12/11/65). It would be interesting to know if he feels the same way about adultery. After all, "our blessed Lord" let off a lady accused of that awful crime with the words: "Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more." We don't know, mind you, what he would have said if she had sinned again.

★

MORMON HOT GOSPELLERS seem to have got into hot water. Some of them have been spreading the word "to lonely wives at Aldershot", reports the *People* (11/11/65), and the Military Police have had to keep watch. The Mormons may have the strictest orders "to live by a rigid code of moral behaviour" but, all the same, they have to be kept away from married quarters.

★

OUR NEWSPAPERS have already begun the annual attempt to explain the Star of Bethlehem. Of course it behaved exactly as recorded in holy writ — though otherwise it remained singularly unnoticed. The astronomer-lecturer at the London Planetarium, Alan Pilkington, is really puzzled about it, and the three wise men. Is he similarly puzzled about the three blind mice?

★

IN AN article in the London *Evening Standard* (12/11/65), Mr Pilkington reverently discourses on the star, informing us that Chinese astronomers "did in fact record a great star" which appeared "about" that time and "flared for 70 days or more". Therefore, "it might well have been the Star of Bethlehem". The *Evening Standard* also mentioned the possibility that it might have been a comet. Few seem prepared to admit that it was simply a childish myth.

★

ANOTHER BIBLICAL mystery under discussion (this time in the *Sunday Express*, 14/11/65) is the famous "speaking with other tongues" so graphically described in Acts — which is, after all, the only "history" we have of the early Church! Some enthusiastic parsons have given us specimens of the "other tongues" on radio and TV. And we are always prepared to add our quota — for a suitable fee, of course.

★

AS A RULE, of course, people only speak in strange tongues if properly filled by the Holy Ghost (as the *Sunday Express* duly points out) and this is "evidence of a great gift"; but they "receive no money" (shame!). Their "movement is growing", however. And why not? Mormonism, Christian Science and Spiritualism all claim to be growing, too! Indeed, it looks as though the sillier the religion the more fanatical proselytes it will have. The "cloven tongues as of fire" is no sillier than the "materialisations" of Spiritualism, the Book of Mormon engraved on golden plates, or the idea of curing fatal diseases by reading the balderdash of Mrs Eddy.

NUNS AND HUMANS

JULIE, aged seven, attends a convent school.

Asked by a friend who called at her Plymouth home: "Are all your teachers nuns?" Julie replied: "No, we have some human beings as well."

The Independent, (Plymouth), 5/12/65

Why No Rap For Menzies?

By P. G. ROY

THE death of Dr. H. V. Evatt, the only outstanding figure in the Australian Labour Party, evokes some memories of a land where not only the weather is paradoxical.

When during the war I returned from Australia, I left there a book banned by the Menzies administration, *Landfall in Australia* by Egon Erwin Kisch (The Roving Reporter). It is a biting account of how he as a Jewish pacifist had been refused entry into the country. Eventually he jumped from the ship and landed with a broken ankle. Since there was no denying that he had touched Australian soil he could no longer be sent back, but his legal expulsion had to go through the courts, where Kisch enjoyed addressing the Judge as "Your Warship".

After all these years I cannot claim to give an account of the present state of affairs in Australia, but as the country is still under the reign of Robert Menzies no big changes can be expected. The owners of land and cattle ranches and the fruit farmers are of necessity conservative, and the workers are mostly Roman Catholic immigrants — church-ridden and in many respects backward. So when in 1954 Dr. Evatt accused the Roman Catholic elements in his party of fascist tendencies to assist the Trojan Horse policy of the Church, Catholic action succeeded in eliminating Evatt's influence altogether. The *Times* obituary states that Evatt "cannot be blamed for starting and hammering wider a split that kept Labour out of office much too long for the political health of the country", particularly as in all probability his legal mind was far superior to that of the Prime Minister.

To show that nothing much has changed since, I quote from the Australian press of September 7th, of this year. A comedian, Gordon Chater, said in a show on Channel 7 of the Australian radio, Sydney people did not have to travel 100 miles to get a drink on Sundays. They could just go to church, put sixpence on the plate and get wine and wafers.

Immediately a Labour Senator, Dorothy Tangney, and several members of the House of Representatives complained to the Postmaster-General that Chater's reference to "Holy Communion" was *sacrilegious*, and the producer was rapped by the TV Board.

Intelligent Australians emigrate since the majority of the population has no other interest but getting drunk. This lack of interest explains why the arts do not flourish down-under. However the aborigines — who are being kept in zoo-like reservations, without education and individual freedom — are forbidden to touch spirits. When the renowned aboriginal painter Albert Namatjira was found to have had a drink with a friend, he was jailed.

There exists a *numerus clausus* for Asians — mainly Japanese pearl fishers — but darker hues of the skin are strictly kept out (the Tasmanians had been exterminated and the few aborigines, kept in a stone age state, do not count as human elements). Quite recently a little school-girl whose mother is Australian was chased out of the country because her father hailed from one of the Pacific islands. When the Australian-born writer James Aldridge (author of *The Diplomat*) returned with an Egyptian wife and their two sons, he was refused re-entry into his motherland.

But Menzies, the arch-diehard, is a respected elder statesman of the Commonwealth, and has the nerve to adjutate on other racist governments in South Africa and Rhodesia. And no finger stirs at the United Nations because he is a close friend of the centre of world reaction, the US Pentagon.

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

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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

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, December 19th, 6.30 p.m.: GILLIAN HAWTIN, "The Danger of Catholicism To-day."

Manchester Branch NSS (The Wheatsheaf Hotel, High Street), Sunday, December 19th, 7.30 p.m.: "A Lecture".

Marble Arch Branch NSS (The Carpenters' Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1.), Sunday, December 19th, 7.30 p.m.: MARGARET MCILROY, "Some Problems of Education".

Notes and News

THE FOURTH session of the Vatican Council has ended. And it is probably true that the Church of Rome has, in the *Observer's* words (5/12/65), "moved much further forward than back". But we question the paper's view that this is "largely thanks to the determination of a few 'progressive' cardinals". Without underestimating the persuasiveness of Cardinals Alfrink, Bea, Lercaro and Suenens, we would argue that it was the force of public opinion — Catholic and non-Catholic — that was primarily responsible for the Church setting its face towards the twentieth century. The tangible achievements of the Council are less than the "progressives" — and probably Pope John — had hoped for. The worker-priest experiment is to be resumed; the Holy Office is to be revised and renamed; and the Curia machine is to be overhauled. Most important, perhaps, a synod of bishops is to meet in 1967.

THERE CAN be little doubt that enlightened Catholics wished for more than this — and especially for a lifting of the ban on birth control. Perhaps the Abbot of Downside, Dom Christopher Butler, explained the reason for the failure (in an interview with Nicholas Tomalin in the *Sunday Times* magazine, 5/12/65). He didn't think there was any other way of describing "the crisis in the Church

and the struggle in the Vatican Council, than in terms of progressives and conservatives". And of the 2,500 bishops in the Council he claimed that 1,300 were progressives and 800 conservatives. "We are thus certain of the Council," he said. "I am not sure that we are certain of the Pope." Pope Paul, though allegedly elected as a liberal or progressive, who would continue the policy of his predecessor, has proved markedly less enthusiastic a reformer than Pope John. Scarcely surprising, when one recalls that the one-time Monsignor Montini was the prodigy of Pius XII.

POPE PAUL notwithstanding, another English progressive, Archbishop Roberts, is convinced that he is on the winning side — and this despite not being allowed to address the Council. He considers he has gained his point on birth control. The Church has debated the question and therefore it can't be a settled matter of divine law, the Archbishop argues (his Jesuit training has not been in vain). "The whole nature of the authority of the Church is changing," he says. And he instances the re-examination of papal infallibility, adding (again in typical Jesuit fashion): "We are defining more exactly just what mandate God gave the Pope to use his infallibility."

THE ANNOUNCEMENT of a new movement — an expansion of the one inaugurated by Mrs Avril Fox of Harlow — to combat Mrs Mary Whitehouse's Clean-Up TV campaign, is welcome. The latter — as we have repeatedly said — has been given far too much publicity and had too much notice taken of it. It is a pity, for instance, that Sydney Newman, the Head of Drama at Shepherd's Bush, should feel impelled to send out a circular to BBC drama producers calling for restraint because "the anti-BBC hounds are baying these days more shrilly than before" (*Sunday Telegraph*, 5/12/65). "Whether all this is reaction to *Up the Junction* or Kenneth Tynan's four-letter word or what," said Mr Newman, "the searchlight is on us." And he listed points to be watched carefully. Among these were references to sexual parts, underclothes, contraceptives, the portrayal of near nudity, the physical handling of someone with sex in mind, couples in bed, offensive words and unnecessarily lengthy violence.

THE IDEA of BBC drama producers blue-pencilling references to knickers or combinations is ludicrous. But where are they expected to draw the line on "the physical handling of someone with sex in mind" or "unnecessarily lengthy violence"? There was lengthy violence in *Culloden*, for instance, but few intelligent people would regard it as unnecessarily prolonged. There is a great deal of violence in the world, and the BBC cannot blind itself to the fact without turning itself into a sort of *TV Woman's Own*. Perhaps this is what "Public Detergent No. 1" — as Kit Mouat has designated Mrs Whitehouse — would like to see. But now the Clean-Up TV campaign will have to contend with a new movement under the aegis of Professor Richard Hoggart, of the Birmingham University Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies.

MRS WHITEHOUSE'S connections with Moral Re-Armament are well known if not openly avowed. But then, MRA can be surprisingly reticent at times. A letter to the *Guardian* (2/12/65) signed by four Liverpool men recounted how their wives had received postal invitations to a "bring and buy" sale in aid of the New Westminster Theatre Arts Centre. "They went to the sale under the illusion that they would be helping a worthwhile cultural cause, only to find that they were unwittingly supporting the Moral Re-Armament campaign."

The Individual in History

By F. A. RIDLEY

I RECENTLY had occasion to reread the essay of the Russian Marxist scholar, G. V. Plekhanov, entitled *The Role of the Individual in History*. George Plekhanov was himself an outstanding personality who played an important part in the evolution of Russian socialism from its early pre-industrial types of anarchism and nihilism, to the Marxist ideology later adopted by the Bolshevik Party under the dynamic leadership of V. I. Lenin. Plekhanov's political relations with Lenin underwent a change after the historic Brussels-London Congress in 1903, which eventually voted to accept the new line recommended by Lenin. Plekhanov and the minority at this meeting (which included Trotsky), were henceforth to be known to world history as the Mensheviks (or minority men) in opposition to the Bolsheviks, or majority men.

Plekhanov himself, however, was always recognised by Lenin as an outstanding Marxist theorist, as in fact, the father of Russian Marxism and after his death in 1918 (soon after the Bolshevik Revolution), the Soviet Government officially published Plekhanov's collected works, which include the remarkable essay the basic theme of which I now propose to consider.

The fundamental problem which Plekhanov set out to consider in his essay (originally published in 1891 under the Tsarist Empire), was the basic one: who makes history, by what principal motivating force or forces are the major lines of universal history determined? Such a technical subject surely often lends itself to a dry-as-dust treatment in the ponderous style of a Teutonic professorial tome. To be sure, many such volumes are actually to be found obscenely (but decently!) interred in the library of the British Museum. But there is nothing in any way dry or obscure in our Russian author's treatment of this recondite theme.

For Plekhanov was not only a philosopher, but an artist — a literary stylist, lively, witty and extremely readable. So much so, in fact, that this illuminating essay on the philosophy of history reads like a novel, eloquent, lively and witty, for the author carries his learning easily and lightly. But when we turn from its form to its underlying content, we soon come up against the hard core of the Marxist philosophy. For in his generation, Plekhanov ranked as one of the foremost exponents of the theory of Historical Materialism which this essay sets out to expound. It could, in fact, be summarised as a polemical sermon on the famous text of Karl Marx: "Man makes his own history, but only under given conditions"; that lucid epitome of the Materialist conception of history.

What are these "given conditions" alluded to by Marx? Put briefly, they are the social relationships which exist in any given state and stage of society in which individuals endowed with special talent "live, move and have their being". These "given conditions" are, of course, of various kinds (as Plekhanov, who was no mechanical materialist, was careful to point out); they could be not only economic, but political or technical. But their character is ultimately decided by the nature of their contemporary society, which is itself the complex product of a combination of past social development and of present social relationships.

In all this, where does the individual come in? Not, obviously, in the absolute sense as argued, for example, by Thomas Carlyle (quoted by Plekhanov) in his famous but very misleading book, *Heroes and Hero Worship*,

wherein was eloquently expounded the "great man" theory of history. For the hero, while he certainly influences human history, can yet only do so in any social stage in a way consonant with its current development. Charles Bradlaugh, for example, was beyond doubt a "hero", a "great man" in Carlyle's special sense as a constructive maker of the historic process. He was this by virtue of his successful activity in launching his dynamic secular movement in mid-Victorian England. But Bradlaugh was only able to do this because previous social and intellectual reformers ("Tom" Paine, Richard Carlile, etc.) had won the elementary right of political democracy and free speech, which were in turn only made possible by a long previous evolution.

To take an even more famous (though very different) example, had William Shakespeare not been jilted by his girl friend and subsequently forced into an unhappy marriage, or whatever the real reason may have been for his apparently hurried departure from Stratford to London, he would never have been heard of; since even if he had found time to write all his plays by the banks of the Avon (romantic thought!), he could never have made a living out of them or even probably got them produced, since the Elizabethan drama was (as its name implies) a court drama and had no existence away from London.

But the state of society that produced the Tudor monarchy and totalitarian state over all persons and causes supreme, belongs not to the personal history of the man Will Shakespeare, nor even to the previous literary history of the English drama. For the Tudor regime and its culminating phase in the Elizabethan age had many and diverse causes that stretch from the English Reformation to the Wars of the Roses, which alone made it possible. Not forgetting Caxton's introduction of printing barely a century before Shakespeare's birth. We in no way denigrate the unique genius of the Bard of Avon in alluding to these social causes.

Society, then, must always produce the man. To take an example given by Plekhanov himself. Napoleon Bonaparte indisputably influenced history profoundly as one of the world's greatest military specialists, and perhaps still more as a major innovator in legal and administrative reforms (The Code of Napoleon). But as our Russian author shows, Napoleon could not possibly have got to the top in the exclusively aristocratic army of the Bourbon monarchy prior to the French Revolution. Without the French Revolution, Napoleon could never have become a General let alone Emperor. It was the French Revolution which created "the career open to talent" from which the unknown Corsican subaltern, Lieutenant Napoleon Bonaparte, was to profit so brilliantly. Without that major upheaval, Bonaparte would probably have ended his frustrated life as an old dug-out in a French seaside resort, having spent his life fretting over his missed opportunities and over the incompetence (of which there was plenty) in the French army of the Bourbons. (The American man of letters, Stephen Vincent Benet, has written a diverting story on this theme.) Or perhaps Napoleon would have actually joined the English navy, as he considered doing at one time (his school report said that he would make an excellent sailor).

Accordingly, what was perhaps the most spectacular career in human annals could not have taken place without the French Revolution, itself an event due to many

complex causes. Even Napoleon was only able to make history under given conditions. And one could also cite the example of Oliver Cromwell who, during the years before the English Revolution, was on the point of emigrating to America when the Civil War broke out.

To anyone who has followed the above reasoning, the proverb "Genius will out" is only true very exceptionally. For genius — outstanding ability, usually in a particular field or direction — is ultimately dependent upon current material social and intellectual conditions. As Machiavelli (perhaps with a backward glance at his own frustrated career) aptly commented: the self-same qualities that make a man rich and famous in one era will equally certainly make him poor and a failure in another. Genius will only "out" in appropriate circumstances.

PUBLIC DETERGENT No. 1

(Concluded from page 403)

they have been given a healthy antidote, they could easily be frightened by what they read. But there is a knob on TV and radio sets. Indeed, the more responsibility that is taken away from parents, the worse. National censorship is no answer to the problems created by their neglect or stupidity.

Roman Catholics, we have to assume, would all break their own religious rules about contraceptives and abortion if the rest of us were given the information and medical treatment we would like. Again, it is we non-Christians who are expected to help Christians obey their Father God. Heavenly Grace, baptism, confirmation and divine guidance are just not enough. If Mrs Whitehouse got her way, it is we who would have to put up with a BBC policy in which sexual hypocrisy and religious totalitarianism would be encouraged, in order that the fearful could live in a make-believe world.

DAVID TRIBE CHALLENGES MRS. WHITEHOUSE

DAVID TRIBE, President of the National Secular Society, has challenged Mrs Mary Whitehouse of the "Clean-Up TV" campaign to a public debate. Here is the text of a letter he has sent to Mrs Whitehouse:

Dear Mrs Whitehouse,

For some time now you have been engaged in your campaign to, as you put it, "clean-up TV". You have issued sundry vaguely-worded statements, and devoted, one imagines, considerable time to telephoning and writing to progressive television producers to criticise their programmes. You claim that your activities have not received due consideration from the broadcasting authorities, although 400,000 viewers directly and many millions indirectly are alleged to support you.

I propose to give you an opportunity of stating your full case and defending yourself publicly against accusations of snooping and gratuitous censorship. In a word, I am challenging you to a public debate with facilities offered for televising at a mutually convenient time and place. The National Secular Society will undertake all organisational responsibility. If you do not regard yourself as an experienced debater you are at liberty to appoint as proxy any crusader of your choice, in public or private life in this country or any other, including any member of the tiny group of politicians who so vociferously support your cause. Have more than one if you like, so long as I have equivalent time.

I should advise you that a copy of this letter is being sent to the press and broadcasting authorities. If you decline to accept this challenge it will be seen that you prefer private vendetta to public discussion, that you hope that by dint of constant minority protest — as has happened in the past — programmes will be quietly axed, promising careers stifled and characters assassinated, with no access to the public for redress.

With all best wishes, Yours sincerely,

David Tribe.

Mr. Tribe's letter was dated December 3rd, 1965, a few days later he received a reply from Mrs. Whitehouse declining.

CORRESPONDENCE

A PART TO PLAY?

I DO NOT know whether, as a contributor to THE FREETHINKER, who spent six years at university, etc., I would qualify to reply, among others, to Kenneth J. Ead? His is a letter which certainly should not go unanswered, because it raises questions vital to the present-day freethought movement.

Take, first of all, his points about literary qualifications and affluence. Speaking for myself, if I can lay claim to some of the former, I certainly cannot lay claim to much of the latter! Still, yes, I do think that literary qualifications are important. Not only literary, but scientific, legal, theological and historical qualifications. In a sense, a fully-fledged secularist propagandist should probably have a science degree, a degree in divinity, be a barrister, and have a competent historical apparatus. This is not snobbery. It is because the case demands it. We are dealing with highly technical subjects and we have highly trained opponents. The clergy, Roman and Anglican, are full-time professionals. If the standard of education of the Church of England cleric has declined, most Roman Catholic priests are graduates, and in the religious orders (of both men and women) exist facilities for continuous education. It takes, for instance, fifteen years to make a Jesuit. One cannot tackle legal reform, questions of evolution, doctrinal debate, or appreciate the (essentially a historic matter) growth and development of the churches, without a thorough grounding in these disciplines. But who can combine them in one person? Most of us can only hope to master one or two at most.

But freethought is not a class movement! The Catholic Church does not send Joe Noggins, who left boarding school at 14, to debate with Bertrand Russell! But she finds a place for him. One of the things which disturbs me, in the contemporary freethought world, is the fact that the 1944 Education Act has had the effect of drawing off the working class intellectual into white collar professions and Redbrick lectureships, so that we increasingly lack the thoughtful working class man who abounded in, e.g., the Mechanics' Institutes of the 19th century. The workers are losing their natural intellectual leaders. Read the propaganda published for the aspiring plebeian secularist in the 1860s. Pretty strong meat, some of it, and tough going. But there was no TV to distract!

But why does Mr. Ead call himself semi-literate?

If he is semi-literate, all I can say is that I'd rather be as half-literate as he is, as this very thoughtful man is, than some of the whole-literate academics I can think of! I cannot say what the deficiencies of his formal education may have been, but how right he is. Sex (normal and perverse) are secondary questions. Do not waste time in abuse. Be positive. Produce our own morality. But can our own morality flourish if the churches and their influence are not first weakened and then finally destroyed? I think not. The tragedy is, in the freethought world today, there seems to be no means and no person, to unite people of differing levels of education, so that each and all can make their contribution inspired by the one essential attribute of an honest atheist, integrity of purpose to stop the spread of superstition and make man happy for ever in this, the world of all of us.

(Miss) GILLIAN HAWTIN

SUNGODS AND MESSIAHS

THE recent articles by George R. Goodman on "Sungods and Messiahs" that have appeared in two issues of THE FREETHINKER, while being of interest, have contained a number of errors which invalidate the claims made by the author.

Mr Goodman takes a great deal of his material from an American writer, Dr A. B. Kuhn, he in his turn draws from the English writer Gerald Massey. Both Goodman and Kuhn seem completely unaware that since Massey wrote his very fine works a great deal has happened in the world of pre-classical studies.

Mr Goodman has much to say about Horus, in common with Kuhn he makes no effort to distinguish which Horus he means, as there are at least fourteen known it is very important to specify which of them one is referring to. Confusion in regard to Horus is even exhibited in Egyptian texts and scholars have found a number of inscriptions that indicate this. Consequently it is meaningless to refer to Horus as the "ever-coming-one", further, the claim that *Iusa* is an earlier name for Horus is just not true.

Iu, we are told, is the verb "to come". This might be so in the case of another language but not in Egyptian, transliteration of the Egyptian verb "to come" gives *iwt* or *it* (sometimes *iii*). Mr Goodman is, of course, following Kuhn who makes the same claims on page 544 of his book *The Lost Light*, when the American author states that *sa* means "son" Mr Goodman repeats it, as Kuhn also claims *sa* stands for "successor, male heir or prince" we also find his English (?) follower claiming it. Unfortunately

(for Mr Goodman) the Egyptian for "son" is *s3*, the nearest equivalent to *sa* or *se* is *s* ("se") but this stands not for "son" but "man". "Prince" is transliterated *rp'ty* not, as Dr Kuhn and Mr Goodman would have *sa*. It should be clear now that *lusa* cannot be advanced as meaning "son of the divine father lu", in fact it is doubtful if the word as presented has anything to do with Egypt.

Earlier in his article (THE FREETHINKER, November 26th) Mr Goodman tells us that *Christos* is derived from the Egyptian *KaRaST* (Karest, Kerast), "the name of the mummy prepared for burial". In this we again find Mr Goodman following Dr Kuhn, though the American author does not go quite that far, opting instead for there only being a "suggested closeness". However, the case advanced by Dr Kuhn and Mr Goodman at this point hinges on *KaRaST*, or as Kuhn puts it, *KRST*, being the Egyptian word to designate the mummy, unfortunately as with all too many of the claims it turns out that Kuhn, and following him, Mr Goodman, are in error. The Egyptian designation for a mummy prepared for burial is *wi*. The conclusion that must be drawn from this is clear and requires no further comment from me.

Mr Goodman's article, which amounts almost to a stringing together in another form of much that Kuhn writes and certainly does not represent any *original* research on Goodman's part, stresses the importance of checking sources. Some writers would do well at times to bear in mind the importance of research rather than repeating what others write, this might mean we hear less from them but when we do we could be sure that it contained something worthwhile.

R. W. MORRELL

ABORTION FOR MORE THAN BILLS

It is encouraging that the House of Lords has given a second reading to Lord Silkin's Abortion Bill, albeit with reservations. Many of the criticisms seem, however, less valid than the original proposals, whatever formal rewriting may be needed.

Too many controls may frustrate the whole purpose of the measure, which has perhaps occurred to some of their Lordships. Consulting the father, as the Bishop of Southwark suggests, might lead to difficulties if he were not to be found and to injustice if he unreasonably refused to give consent. A reasonable suspicion of rape should be enough justification for abortion without waiting for a jury to decide. While it is desirable that every effort be made to see if the mother might want to keep her baby if domestic circumstances were changed, National Assistance got, or anxiety state treated, it would be unfortunate if too large a committee had to give unanimous approval. This would involve the probability of including a Roman Catholic to make a dogmatic rather than therapeutic decision, and delay in the operation, which would increase the risk to the mother.

An abortion may not be exactly like any other operation. The mother may suffer regrets afterwards in a way unlikely to accompany appendectomy. But then she may after cosmetic surgery. Some doctors may have a real conscientious objection to performing an abortion and should be excused. An abortion may not be as directly related to health as some other operations, where the patient already finds it difficult to obtain a hospital bed. But most, perhaps all, of these considerations result from the adverse climate of opinion surrounding the subject and the inadequacy of hospital services. They are not the fault of the unfortunate women wanting abortion and now threatened with the law or the castigation of bigoted doctors and nurses.

It may be argued that applicants are thoughtless or careless. This may be said of many accident victims, but they are not on that account refused treatment. It may be said that it is a costly and onerous duty providing so many "unnecessary" operations. It is more costly and onerous, and involves more human misery, trying to patch up the results of back-street abortions. For a determined woman will get her abortion whether with the aid of drugs, Lord Vaux's "knitting needle", falling downstairs, Sairey Gamp or Sir Ralph Bloomfield Bonington. It is argued by some, usually Catholics, that the act is murder. In the light of the religious wars and capital punishment of history it may be questioned whether this is even good theology. It is certainly curious physiology and psychology. No doubt some clerical casuist would have found a way out if cardinals had ever needed to avail themselves of the facility.

Clearly no one wishes to encourage abortions. Better for better contraception to have been available. Better for the community to be more sympathetic to unmarried mothers, which might encourage more girls to have their babies. Better for more and better hospitals and doctors to be available. But in the last analysis this is, or should be, a matter for the personal conscience of the woman involved. It is the duty of the Government to recognise that right and sponsor something like Lord Silkin's Bill.

DAVID TRIBE
President, National Secular Society

SAVING CLAUSE

I MEAN no offence to anyone; but may I instance the old lady churchgoer who always bowed at the name of Satan: "Just in case"?

Your present policy of "scholarly", reverent references to a pure myth and a Christian commercial, impels me, although taught "manners" in my infancy, to ask whether the logical end of manners isn't nullity?

ARTHUR E. CARPENTER

PRO-FEMALE

THIS is in answer to the letter by Mr. R. Smith published by THE FREETHINKER, October 29th. This is a typical egotistical "superior male" position. Mr. Smith's attack on Mrs. Kit Mouat as anti-male is beneath contempt. Mrs. Mouat is not anti-male, she is pro-female and it is about time someone was. If Kit Mouat is anti-male, her "complex" did not prevent her from getting married and raising a child.

As to the snobbish remark by Mr. Smith, "Where are all the women philosophers?"; let me ask Mr. Smith if he ever read a history book? Women were held in contempt and literal slavery for centuries, sold, abused, used for pleasure and discarded. Where would man be, Mr. Smith, if he suffered as badly as women? They were not allowed to read or write, attend school or compete in business. Even so, a few women crossed the line to mental freedom. (1) Aspasia (470-410 BC) while not, I admit, a philosopher, was known for her genius and political know-how. (2) Hypatia (370-415 AD), Greek philosopher, daughter of the mathematician Theon. She was a lecturer on mathematics and her judgment was so respected that students from foreign lands learned under her. City magistrates of Alexandria consulted her on important cases. She was the undisputed leader of the Neoplatonic school of philosophy. She was the author of commentaries on ancient astronomical and mathematical works. She was murdered by a mob of Christians led by Bishop Cyril. Your own Bertrand Russell has praised her highly. Do you wish to debate him on women philosophers, Mr. Smith?

The last one I will mention is Ayn Rand of the USA, author of *Atlas Shrugged*, *The Fountainhead*, *We the Living*, etc. Her ideas have inspired profound admiration. She is the originator of a daring philosophy, Objectivism, which challenges fundamental beliefs. She is also a lecturer and is happily married. As for Kit Mouat, I only wish there were more women like her. So grow up, Mr. Smith, male superiority is as dead as the dodo bird.

MACE MCCARTHY
(New York City)

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