

The Freethinker

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THE 18TH JULY is a date in ecclesiastical annals perhaps not less important and certainly much better authenticated in and by secular history, than are such more celebrated dates as December 25th or the movable annual commemoration of Easter. For these universally-known dates commemorate events for the authenticity of which no evidence at all exists, except for the late and partisan writings of an uncritical religious sect. On July 18th, 1870, however, there was solemnly proclaimed the Dogma of the Infallibility of the Pope. And even assuming that this presumptuous endowment of a human being with divine attributes does not actually correspond with ultimate reality, yet here below, the Papacy still represents a formidable terrestrial power; and the belief in the unerring character of its dogmatic decisions now obligatory upon the faithful, cannot fail to augment considerably the already formidable power of the Head of the most powerful and ambitious of the Christian Churches.

The Vatican Council 1869-70

I am fortunate enough to possess a contemporary secret "History of the Vatican Council" written by an actual participant—a high-rank Italian ecclesiastical dignitary, who wrote from the standpoint of the minority which opposed the recognition of Papal Infallibility upon both theological and political grounds. As a reward for his continued obstinacy in refusing to accept the Dogma, the writer was subsequently excommunicated and when, a few years later, his fascinating first hand and heavily documented account of the Council appeared with its copious appendices and damning disclosures, the Roman censorships immediately placed it upon the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, where, as far as I know, it still remains. This absorbing and authoritative contemporary account of one of the most momentous assemblies in Church history, was presented to me some years ago by a Liverpool member of the National Secular Society, and it has not only afforded me much personal enjoyment, but has added substantially to my knowledge of the modern evolution of the Vatican.

Papal Infallibility—a Protestant Slander!

Prior to July 18th, 1879, the orthodox tradition of the Catholic Church from, at least, the 4th century onward, was that the Church was collectively infallible in matters of faith and morals, and that its infallibility was periodically announced through the media of successive General or Ecumenical Councils at which only bishops were entitled to be present. The collective decisions of these assemblies were supposed to represent the authentic inspiration of the Holy Spirit and to be, as such, infallible. (Ecclesiastical historians have frankly admitted that at time these clerical convocations were often unruly or disfigured by intrigue, but this was not supposed to affect their ultimate infallibility). While the Pope or his representative usually presided over these gatherings, it was a moot point whether his authority was, or was not, superior to that of a General Council. Different opinions were expressed on this abstruse

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

The Vatican Council

—By F. A. RIDLEY—

point by rival theological schools; but everyone agreed that the Pope himself was not infallible and that he had no power to proclaim new dogmas apart from the consent of the Ecumenical Council and that if he did, they would be *ipso facto* null and of no effect. So well was this established that an Irish catechism issued at the beginning of the 19th century, actually stated that Papal Infallibility represented a Protestant slander. Even as late as 1832, one of the most learned Roman Catholic scholars, Adam Möhler of Munich, proved elaborately in a comprehensive theological treatise that the idea that the Pope was, or could be, individually infallible, was essentially a Protestant dogma, since it presupposed the

essential Protestant contention that the private judgment of an individual is superior to the collective judgment of the Church. The logic of which, from the standpoint of Catholic dogma, appears to be quite unanswerable.

The Jesuits and Papal Infallibility

However, ecclesiastical logic did not have the last word in 1870. For ever since the Reformation, there had been a powerful party in the Church which persistently advocated the promulgation of Papal Infallibility as a theological dogma. The rise of this party of "infallibilists" was closely bound up with the powerful Jesuit Order which, while itself very much of a Church within the Church, has always professed an extravagant attachment to the Vatican. As our anonymous historian of the Vatican Council copiously illustrates, the Jesuits were the backbone of the Papal Party at the Vatican Council; and it seems historically rather dubious whether, without their persistent intrigues, the famous Dogma would ever have been carried. As "Pomponio Leto"—our secret historian's pseudonym—also indicates, the Jesuits had powerful allies in the Pope, Pius IX (who had for many years been asserting his own Infallibility) and in the Archbishop of Westminster, Dr. (later Cardinal) Manning, who was the acknowledged leader at Rome of the Pope's Party. At the end of his book, "Pomponio Leto" reproduces the text of a letter from the Jesuits thanking the English Archbishop for his co-operation. Newman, incidentally, disapproved of Papal Infallibility, though he finally accepted it.

The Opposition at the Council

As our Italian diarist notes in his day-to-day account of the current activities of the Council, many of which sound more like Tammany Hall than a professedly religious assembly—the Pope and his supporters did not by any means have matters all their own way. While the opposition was heavily outvoted in the actual sessions, it included many of the leading intellectuals in the Church, chiefly French and German, and as Möhler had pointed out long before, it had unanswerable logic on its side, assuming the premises of Catholic dogma. It was only eventually silenced by some very questionable tactics; in all the tricks and twists of political intrigue, Manning and his Jesuit allies showed themselves to be past-masters in the often

stormy debates. Finally, after most of the opposition had left Rome in disgust at the equivocal manœuvres of the Pope and his supporters, the Dogma was carried by public vote with only two dissentients, after seven months' acrimonious debate. By proclaiming the Pope to be Infallible, the Council had also proclaimed itself to be unnecessary—for since that date, it is now the official Doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church that, if the Pope is in a minority of one, he is still right and the Church wrong! All the regiment's out of step except Pacelli!

Ecclesiastical Fascism

If one looks beyond the ecclesiastical technicality involved in the long-winded debates recorded by "Pomponio Leto," and sees the whole question in broader, secular perspectives, it seems to be pretty clear that what actually came into existence on July 18th, 1870, was ecclesiastical Fascism, the prototype of the later secular political Fascism. Rome first proclaimed the *Fuhrer-prinzip*, later announced as an article of Fascist Faith by Hitler, Mussolini, Franco and their imitators: all power to the "Leader," to the man of providential Destiny! Incidentally, it is not an accident that all the Fascist Dictators, whatever their personal

beliefs, later became, were reared in Catholic circles. Pius IX was actually the first "Leader" of the modern type. So far, it is true, the Popes have made a very sparing use of their Infallibility. Actually, only one new Dogma, the Assumption of the Virgin, has been proclaimed by the present Pope, perhaps as a celestial concession to the current interest in space travel! But Rome, the self-styled "Pilgrim of Eternity," is used to taking long views. There may still be plenty of infallible decisions in the future. Even perhaps—since Rome is a worldly-wise institution which knows how to move with the times—some which would have greatly astonished Pius IX and Cardinal Manning, had that redoubtable pair survived to witness them. But whatever may be its outcome, the Vatican Council of 1870 was indisputably one of the most dramatic, as well as important, gatherings in ecclesiastical annals. In the vivid pages of "Pomponio Leto" we can almost see the spectacular drama played out to its finish before our own eyes!

[cf. *Eight Months at Rome during the Vatican Council* by "Pomponio Leto," published in 1873 and translated into English 1876, John Murray. The real name of the author is given in the British Museum Reading Room catalogue as Marquis Francesco Nobili Vitelleschi.]

Islam in Africa

By LEONARD MARTIN

ONE REASON why Islam is making more progress in Africa than Christianity is that it has no colour bar. That is easily understood, seeing that the great majority who already follow the Prophet are not white. So the black man feels more at home among Muslims on that score alone than he does with whites.

The same applies, if not to the same degree, among Asians. Even when Europeans treat Africans or Asians, as they think, or trust, exactly like themselves, there is yet a latent feeling among the coloured races, of being patronised, and no one likes to feel that, however kind or fair the patron may be.

The Christian Churches passionately deny that they have any colour bar, expressed or implied. Doctrinally considered, this is true. But in practice it is not. There are always those subtle distinctions, which the white man may not feel, or even suspect.

Islam may appear extremely simple credally or theologically, compared with Christianity, but it certainly is not in practice, notably in contrast with modern easygoing Protestantism.

The Muslim has to pray five times a day; he may not consume alcohol; he must work ritually for a whole lunar month every year; he has to fast during the daylight hours; he must attend his mosque every Friday; he must at least once in his lifetime visit Mecca, and must save all the money he possibly can for that pilgrimage; he must give part of his income regularly to charity; if a male, he must be circumcised; he may not eat pork and several otherwise tasty but forbidden meats; he must not practise artificial family limitation.

Now what modern Protestant has to observe all these restrictions or rules? He can, in fact, get away with all of them with impunity and yet consider himself a "good" Christian.

The Roman Catholic is a bit further restricted, it is true, mainly as regards family limitation, in theory, at any rate, but not so severely as the true Muslim.

That makes it all the more surprising when an African, if he decides to forswear paganism or heathenism, should

prefer to become a Muslim rather than a Christian. Better even, a Secularist, of course, but that at present is not "practical politics." His education or way of thought is not, as things are, sufficiently evolved for that step yet. The typical African is still extremely superstitious and in the stage of mental development that Europeans were countless years ago, when they still believed in spells, witchcraft and the like.

Another weighty reason why Islam may attract the African—if you know how extremely virile sexually the average African is—is that it does not adopt what may be termed the puritanical attitude towards sex that most Christian religions do.

These accept sex as a kind of necessary evil, an attitude going back to the Dark Ages, when the one and only Church looked upon sex as a downright vice, and some saintly ones even went so far as to be castrated. Modern Europeans, even when they will have nothing any longer to do with the Church and its demands, have not yet entirely freed themselves from one or other of the sex taboos.

Now, Islam seems to be rather innocent of all this. It has certain prohibitions, of course; those with regard to homosexual practices, for instance, carry very severe penalties, but the necessary evidence is so completely hedged round that the rule in practice might just as well not exist.

It is worth speculating whether Africans, if they knew all they had to perform and do when they became Muslims, would be so ready to turn to Mecca as they are; but that is from the standpoint of reason; something you can't expect from the average African, of course, and probably not from the majority of present-day Europeans either.

—NEXT WEEK—

CHRISTIANITY VERSUS ART

By REV. J. L. BROOM, M.A.

Miracles Galore

By H. CUTNER

ONE OF THE BOOKS which has been widely circulated in France by two eminent Roman Catholics, Drs. Leuret and Bon, dealing with miraculous cures in Lourdes and elsewhere, has now been translated into English under the title *Modern Miraculous Cures, A Documented Account of Miracles and Medicine in the Twentieth Century*. The translators are J. C. Barry, D.C.L., and A. T. Macqueen, M.B., and it was published by Peter Davies at 16s. net in 1957.

Both the original authors and the translators are fully believing Catholics, and the book has the usual "imprimatur" and "nihil obstat" which guarantee it "free from doctrinal or moral error." But, of course, this does not mean that all Catholics have to believe everything in the book—and, indeed, the translators repeat more than once, no Catholic is bound to believe any of the recorded "miracles" in the book. To give their own words—"It should be made clear to non-Catholic readers that a Catholic is not bound to accept as miraculous any event other than those in the Bible which the Universal Church has declared are miracles. It should be noted, too, that the Church's notion and definition of 'miracle' is very pertinent to this question."

There should be no difficulty in understanding the Church's position. A "miracle" depends on something supernatural on God or Jesus or Mary—that is the essence of the matter. The word has no meaning apart from them, for no miracle can be performed which is not the direct result of the intervention of one or more of these "divine" persons—if they are persons and not spooks or ghosts.

Chapter I of this book is, in fact, a long dissertation on miracles, and full of such phrases as "out of nothingness emerged matter," "before Time began, He who is, IS," man's "spiritual self is in contact with the Supreme Spirit," and so on; and it would certainly be a miracle if some of the similar statements which crowd the first chapter could be understood.

But many of the miracles described could well have sprung from the *Arabian Nights*, and one can only marvel at the credulity of the two doctors and the two translators in this year of grace 1958. Still, if there was no credulity and superstition in the world, religions could not thrive.

As readers know, the Spiritualistic press (though other "manifestations" may be referred to here and there) devotes nearly all its pages to "spiritual" healing, and this is the case also with the Roman Church which has publicised its "miracles" of healing quite as brazenly, and with even more success. The Church of England will have nothing to do with "miracles" of healing performed by "healers" who perform through "spirit" doctors or guides, and it ridicules Christian Science. But I cannot remember any definite pronouncement on the "miracles," so wonderfully authenticated, coming from Lourdes or Loreto or Knock, from the Church of England.

If anybody refuses to believe that no miracle happened at Fatima, for example, he should read the account given in this book of the miraculous cure of Margarida Rebelo in 1944. The young lady was suffering from "paraplegia due to compression of the spinal cord; purulent cystitis, fistula formation." Fatima is the famous little hamlet in Portugal "where the Blessed Virgin appeared to three little shepherd children" in 1917, and where the sun performed some celestial fireworks in the sky. After a detailed enquiry, the Church admitted that the "visions" of the

three children "are deserving of credit," and that "the cult of Our Lady of Fatima is officially permitted." Naturally, the sick flocked there in pilgrimages, and the official organ of the sanctuary "recorded 800 cases presumed to be miraculous." And among them was the cure of Margarida. She went to Fatima very ill after suffering for a number of years and ready "to die at Our Lady's feet." But, "as the Sacred Host was being carried out," all the pain left her and she was miraculously cured. If the reader wants to know the details, they are all given from the eminent doctors, all strict Roman Catholics, who attended her.

Then there are the marvellous miracles which regularly occur at Knock in Ireland, where fifteen people all witnessed "a rather complex apparition of Our Lady." This was eventually admitted as "satisfactory and reliable." And no wonder, for "miraculous" cures immediately began to multiply and the books gives details of two. The mother of a little boy who had rachitic deformity of the legs appealed to Our Lady of Knock for a cure, and after the boy who was in great pain had his lips touched by a crucifix, he immediately began to smile and was completely cured. This cure, however, is vouched for not by Catholic doctors but by a Mr. W. D. Coyne in his book *Cnoc Mhuire*; and of course he ought to know. The other cure was of a boy of five, first examined in 1929 and he is vouched for by Dr. Kirby in 1953 as being quite cured. As far as I could make out, the only reason that he believed in the miracle was because the boy's mother said he couldn't walk until "she walked to Knock alone" on a special visit of thanksgiving.

Another shrine giving miraculous results is in the village of Valle di Pompeii where "the devotion to Our Lady spread far and wide." And of course there is the shrine of "Our Lady of Loreto" which has *always* cured people. The reason is very simple. The house in "which Our Lady" lived in Nazareth—there was *not* any place called Nazareth in her day—was "miraculously transported in 1291 to Tersato in Illyria and then in 1294 to a spot near Ancona." You could not fail to be cured there after such miracles. And when four children saw the "Blessed Virgin" in 1932 in Beauraing in Belgium, it also became famous for its many miracles of healing, some duly attested by Belgian Roman Catholic doctors who in general could not explain the cures on "natural" grounds. In fact, they were all considered "miracles," but they were not "articles of faith" for those Catholics who presumably have still a modicum of reasoning in their make-up.

Miracles were also associated with "holy" persons, and a number of these and their miracles are recorded for us as well as miracles called "private cures"; though the translators are not always quite as sure as the authors about these cures really being miracles. It is put in this way—"a miraculous intervention *may* have occurred at one point." (*Italics mine.*)

Naturally, all the "canonisation" cures are miracles, otherwise the healers would not be made saints. The experts who decide these things always remind me of the claims made by Spiritualists about their miracles—they were always performed under the strictest test conditions.

Finally, the book deals with the Lourdes Medical Bureau and its hundreds of thousands of miraculous cures,

(Concluded on page 252)

This Believing World

We always like to give publicity to the lady or gentleman who insists that in his (or her) younger days, he was an Agnostic. Only 34 years ago, Mr. G. Rogers, M.P., was an Agnostic but the other day, speaking on a Spiritualist platform on which were from 300 to 350 "healers," he called his Agnosticism "the ignorance of adolescence." We are sorry to have to disagree with a Member of Parliament, but it would be a pretty safe bet to make that he knew nothing whatever of Agnosticism except the word. We would like Mr. Rogers to tell us all about it from *authorities* and then proceed to answer them. In general, the replies made by Agnostics and Atheists *after* conversion are ludicrous.

★

Mr. Rogers gave accounts of some remarkable "spiritualist" cures, "absent healing" and so on—though *Psychic News* does not give us the names of the hospitals or doctors, all of whom we are told miserably failed. But Mr. Rogers could confound them all quite easily. There are thousands of polio victims and spastic children all over the country, and there are pathetic appeals to the public to help poor blind little mites. Where are the "healers" for all these? Have any been cured? If so, where?

★

We don't wish to labour the point but it is now Mr. Rogers's *duty* to help all these children, and with 300 to 350 healers behind him, why does he not proceed to do so? The Salk vaccine could be a thing of the past, and polio exterminated if the "healers" could do it. But, above all, are there not many Members of Parliament who are often sick men? Why do they not have his "healers." And finally, what about the Queen and her sinus trouble? If "absent healing" can cure, why was she not thus cured?

★

Of the many problems which the State of Israel has to face is "intermarriage." It is almost impossible for Jews who have married Gentiles to mix with those orthodox Jews who still think that their religion was given for all time to Moses by God Almighty. To put it another way, religion is again playing the very devil with those Israelis who appear to want to live as they did in the (supposed) time of Ezra.

★

In this connection, Jews from Poland who married Polish girls now find their wives, according to many reports, flaunting the symbols of their Christian Faith by creating their own Christian groups, parading to church on Sundays and refusing to allow their children to become Jewish. In fact, the poor children are sent to missionary schools! All this leads to violent quarrels and streets fights. In fact, the beautiful "love thy neighbour as thyself" teaching looks superb in the Bible, but has it ever come to pass between fully believing Jews and Christians?

★

We were delighted to see another proof of "Creation" in a Jehovah's Witnesses publication. This was our *teeth*. Only God Almighty could have created teeth so admirably adapted for their particular work. And it is true that without teeth coconut or a tough steak would have been rather difficult to masticate. Besides, what a boon teeth have been to modern dentists. Some are making £30 or £40 a week regularly from the failure of our teeth to come up to Divine Intention. The article in question, however, says nothing about the wonderful way in which lions and similar animals can tear to pieces any other animal in their way for food. Here God has shown his marvellous creative artistry far better than puny man.

A Problem Solved

Said the Vicar to the Curate,
Evincing much dismay,
"I've fifteen babes to baptise
Upon this Sabbath Day."

Said the Curate to the Vicar,
"No need to fret, old friend;
We have two fonts within the church;
There's one at either end.

"You will," said he, "I'm sure, agree
There's not the slightest doubt
That I am capable, dear sir,
To come and help you out."

"I'm getting old," the Vicar said,
And quite forgot, my friend,
We had two fonts, for our dear church
Has one at either end.

"And thus, perhaps, these mothers too
May have forgotten, so
We'll place a notice warning them,
And this is how 'twill go:

"Will mothers please this kindly note,
And interested friends,
That we this Sunday shall baptise
Your babies at both ends."

J. W. KEEVAN.

MIRACLES GALORE

(Concluded from page 251)

though a "miraculous" cure doesn't always mean a heaven-sent "miracle." The authors trot out the same dreary pack of lying stories about Bouriette (cured in 1858) and Peter de Rudder, and others, in the early days of Lourdes; but as the book deals with "modern" miraculous cures, we get a number of these duly furnished with all kinds of certificates from Catholic doctors. Let me take the case of Gabrielle Clauzel as an example. It is one dealt with by Dr. Thérèse Valot in *Lourdes et l'illusion*, because Dr. Leuret in his book gave it a study of 26 pages. It was considered a miracle by the ecclesiastical authorities in 1948. But what does the *medical* translator think of Mlle. Clauzel's case? After giving us all the very precise details of the miraculous cure, he tells us "that, had he sat on the medical bodies concerned with judging the medical documents, while he would have admitted the above [the diagnosis] he would have abstained from voting for or against the 'supernatural intervention' in this case. His reason for so doing would rest on the fact that the diagnosis was not quite clear cut, at least as far as the documents here given are concerned." And it is on this question of diagnosis that Dr. Thérèse Valot contemptuously dismisses the possibility of any miracle here.

With this frank admission by a doctor on one of the miracles of healing, we can see what little chance the lay public has in getting at the truth. In fact, only the rank credulity of Roman Catholics and Spiritualists prevent them from seeing how thoroughly they are hoaxed.

Just as they are hoaxed by religions.

THE FREETHINKER

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TELEPHONE: HOLBORN 2601.

Hon. Managing Editor: W. GRIFFITHS.

Hon. Editorial Committee:

F. A. HORNIBROOK, COLIN MCCALL and G. H. TAYLOR.

All articles and correspondence should be addressed to THE EDITOR at the above address and not to individuals.

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

A. J. CULLINANE.—We answer criticism. Abuse bores us.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Every Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: Messrs. DAY and CORINA.

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (The Mound).—Every Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN, MURRAY and SLEMEN.

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Every Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. F. HAMILTON, E. MILLS and J. W. BARKER.

London, March Arch.—Meetings every Sunday from 5 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.

London (Tower Hill).—Thursday, 12-2 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER and L. EBURY.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: G. WOODCOCK. Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, MILLS and WOOD.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Every Wednesday, 1 p.m.; every Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: Various speakers.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: Messrs. L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY. Sunday, 11.30 a.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

Orpington Humanist Group (Sherry's Restaurant).—Sunday, August 10th, 7 p.m.: "Reason in Action." Follow-up Discussion.

Notes and News

LEICESTER Secular Society announces the formation of a Youth Fellowship at its hall, 75 Humberstone Gate. Starting on Wednesday, August 20th, the Club will meet every Wednesday and Thursday evening from 7 to 9.30 p.m. At first for boys only, it is hoped to make the club mixed at a later date. Details of the many outdoor and indoor activities (the "Science Fiction Section" sounds particularly intriguing) may be obtained from the Secretary of the Leicester Society, Mr. C. H. Hammersley, at the above address. We know that all readers will join us in wishing every success to this new venture.

★

A NAME that has been regrettably missing from our Lecture Notices these last few years is that of J. Clayton. Before the war and for some years after it, the name appeared with regularity three or four times a week during the summer months, and it was always to be found among the list of speakers at Conference demonstrations. Jack Clayton was, indeed, one of our keenest and most effective propagandists, particularly in Lancashire, where he has always lived. His old friends—and they are many—will be glad to hear that Jack is well, and as keen as ever in his Freethought. Unfortunately, his wife has been an

invalid for over a decade and, as her condition has worsened, Jack has, of necessity, had to curtail his Freethought activities in order to look after her. A neighbour in Burnley tells us that both Mr. and Mrs. Clayton remain cheerful despite their difficulties. Jack likes nothing better than to reminisce, and his neighbour goes on to say: "He is the most sincere chap I have ever met; he is really wrapped up in the cause and enjoys every minute of it." Those who knew Jack Clayton will wholeheartedly agree with this tribute.

★

WE confess surprise at reading a recent advertisement in the *Daily Telegraph*. Messrs. C. Shippam Ltd., of Chichester, stated specifically, "CHRISTIAN MANAGERESS required for a new factory canteen..." Whether the lucky lady will be expected to say Grace was not indicated.

A Catholic Mother's Protest

Time magazine (July 21st, 1958) summarised the main points in a long letter from a Roman Catholic mother, which had appeared the previous week in the Jesuit paper *America*. Mrs. James R. Cronin is the 31-year-old wife of a Chicago roofing contractor and has four children attending the St. Philip Neri (R.C.) school on the city's South Side. She has a number of serious complaints against the school, "many of which"—says *Time*—"would probably be recognised by other Catholic mothers."

She objects to a questionnaire asking the child if she thinks her parents are too strict or too lenient, and to the cost of the school play. "Was it really good," she asks, "to have the schoolchildren in their uniforms, seek patrons from among the neighbouring store owners, mostly men of other faiths?" But two of her other objections seem more important.

"Speaking of matters monetary," she says, "what's wrong with the missions? They must be perking if all the lower grades are as busy in their behalf as ours. There are penny parades, raffles, candy and cooky sales, statues and Holy cards and rosaries to buy. You name it, Sister thought of it last week. (As I understand the parade, the children march around the room, dropping pennies in the mission bank until they run out of funds, the object being, of course, to stay on their feet.) For the upper grades, the approach is subtler. You forgot your tie? Put a quarter in the bank or stay after school. And this is really ingenious: Sister 'sells' the desks to the class by way of an auction. You want a certain seat, you bid dimes and quarters against your classmates. Winner gets the desired seat, missions get the money, parents end up screaming."

Then she suggests a look into the children's text books. "You would be amazed at the influence of Catholicism on American history," she says. "Jamestown and the Puritans are strictly underplayed; what counts is the early missionary activity. Even geography takes on Catholic overtones..."

Sister Mary Ransom, Dean of Nazareth College, Louisville, contributed—again the words of *Time*—"a not entirely convincing reply." "Bless you, Mrs. Cronin," she said—a little too sweetly, it would seem—"you have compiled the best list of contributory causes to teachers' headaches that I have seen in a long time." To the two main objections, she replied that mission collections teach children to make sacrifices and that Mrs. Cronin could help improve her children's text books by working with Parent-Teacher Associations.

Bless you, Sister, you have made it all clear.

C.M.C.C.

Ask at your Library

By G. H. TAYLOR

THE LATE DR. DAVID FORSYTH'S *Psychology and Religion* is a book that could be better known and used. When it first appeared some twenty years ago it caused an outcry among Christians who could not bear to hear outspoken atheism come from Harley Street.

"When we compare the histories of Christianity and Science," writes Forsyth, "we are struck by an apparent relationship between them. As the influence of the one rises that of the other falls. Also, the period of the full development of the one coincides with the period of the practical extinction of the other." The reason for this, he finds, is that under the complete domination of religion no energy is left for cultural and scientific purposes. Throughout the whole story, science has depended on freedom of thought. In social improvements, he maintains, Christianity never leads but always follows: the conscience of the Church is moved always from the outside. He concludes that "Civilisation can be guided by religion or by science but not by both."

Forsyth sees religion as an obsessional neurosis, motivated by a sense of sin and propitiation. The idea of God is connected with that of the earthly father, or nearest authority, whose admonitions survive as conscience. Consequently a deep dependence on God, a heavenly Father, in after life indicates a partial failure to mature. Prof. G. Burniston Brown gives expression to the same idea: "It has always seemed to me that 'good' and 'bad' applied to actions are learned when we are children and mean roughly, 'pleasing or displeasing to Mama or Papa or Nanny', and that when we grow up we drop Mama and Nanny and change Papa into God. But God, being a hypothetical entity, can be made to like what we please and has in the past, for instance, liked human slavery. At the present time it is not quite certain whether this hypothesis likes birth control. Therefore, even for those who believe in theism the question of what is a good act degenerates into the question of what is pleasing to a hypothesis, and to those who do not require this hypothesis it is meaningless."

Dependence may also take the form of mediation: "Through Jesus Christ our Lord" is the equivalent of the child's request to his mother, "Ask daddy for me". It will be seen that the R.C. Church possesses a twofold appeal lacked by Protestantism, God the father and also the Mother of God. And so the infantile habit of dependence survives as prayer, petitionary or propitiatory. It can originate, Forsyth maintains, in the magic belief that words have a potency in the outside world, and he finds magic to be very closely connected with religion, children being easy victims. This is not hard to appreciate. The infant who cries suddenly finds his wants appeased. He comes to associate crying with appeasement of want. A conditioned response is established.

The phenomenon of conversion is dealt with by Forsyth as essentially one of adolescence, a view held also by Prof. de Sanctis, who says, "Psychologically the phenomenon is none other than the new strong tide of sexual feeling that accompanies puberty, being checked in its usual course and deflected into religion. The check comes from an undue sense of guilt about sexual matters, and this is the outcome of a correspondingly undue strictness in the child's earlier training." The frequent close connection between mental, including sexual, disorder and

religious ecstasy is dealt with in many authoritative works.³

The experience of Christ entering the heart is thus misplaced sexual feeling. Conversion is preceded by a feeling of sin and of revulsion from it. Then comes a crisis bringing subsequent peacefulness, a process well known to other religions. The sense of sin reaches its maximum in melancholic insanity, and is at the root of the psychology of the doctrine of the Atonement. Forsyth finds the experience of the mystic also to be sexual, "another instance of misplaced and unsatisfied sexual desire. In view of this it is instructive that mystics attach great importance to a period of sexual abstinence as a preliminary and aid to getting themselves into the mystic state" (*op. cit.*). There are actually Mohammedan and other recipes and disciplines for mysticism, such as *Yoga*. Forsyth agrees with other inquirers in finding the behaviour of nuns to be susceptible to sexual interpretation; in their adoration of Jesus, for example, to whom they are symbolically married by ring.

¹ *Philosophy* (Jan., 1938). ² *Religious Conversion*. ³ e.g. *Inquiries into Human Faculty* (Sir Francis Galton), *Conduct & Its Disorders* (Dr. C. Mercier), *Clinical Lectures on Mental Diseases* (Sir T. S. Clouston) and *First Signs of Insanity* (Dr. B. Hollander).

(To be concluded)

Despised by Men

By H. A. ROGERSON

IN ALL ITS LONG HISTORY the Christian Church has been guilty of much persecution of minorities, burning of heretics and massacre of innocents, but it has practised nothing more shameful than its long drawn-out campaign against that most unfortunate of all mortals, the leper.

The sufferers from the terrible, disfiguring, crippling and incurable disease of leprosy have always been objects of intense loathing, though in more recent and enlightened times this feeling has been tempered with pity, and today much is done to alleviate their suffering, but in the past the Church has branded those affected by Myco-bacterium *Lepæ* as both physically and spiritually unclean, regarding them as persons especially cursed by God.

Leprosy probably originated in Egypt (the Papyrus Ebers mentions it), though Manetho asserts that the Egyptians drove out the Israelites because they were afflicted with the disease. It was established in Greece and Italy in the first century B.C. and Pompey the Great's legions spread it throughout Europe. The Crusades did much to spread it further, but it was known in Britain as early as the fifth century.

The Book of Leviticus must bear the blame for the Leprophobia of the Christian Church. Therein we read of the leper that "his clothes shall be rent and his head bare—and shall cry 'Unclean! Unclean!'—he is unclean, he shall dwell alone." Before this the leper had not been regarded with such horror; he had only been shunned as a person dangerous to associate with. Leviticus includes many forms of skin diseases under the category of leprosy, and it is highly probable that many of those persecuted with such zeal in medieval times were afflicted with nothing worse than acne, scabies or scurvy. Such was the power of Holy Writ.

In 583 A.D. the Council of Lyon prohibited lepers from associating with other human beings, and in 644 Rothari of Lombardy shut all lepers in a derelict building near Milan, with no provision for their maintenance. The saintly Olaf II of Norway excommunicated and banished them.

There is little evidence of Christian charity in the old records. The book of rules of the St. Albans lazaretto opens: "The disease of leprosy may be considered the most loathsome, and those smitten ought to bear themselves as more to be despised and as more humble than all other men."

In 1179 the Church introduced a special religious ceremony for the banishment of lepers. The leper, wearing a shroud and carrying a cross, proceeded to the church accompanied by his mourning friends. Holy water was sprinkled over him by the priest and Requiem Mass was said for the man now regarded as dead. As he knelt before the altar earth was thrown over him as a token of symbolic burial. He was given hooded robes, gloves and a Lazarus bell to warn others of his approach, and then was sent out into a world that recognised him no longer as a human being. He was forbidden to wash in a stream, to frequent public places or to associate with any other than lepers. He must shun any person he might meet.

In the reigns of Henry II of England and Philip V of France even more drastic action was taken against lepers—they were burned alive, and in Edward I's reign it did not stop at a symbolical funeral service—they were buried alive. The four million lepers in the world today receive more humane treatment at the hands of the Church, but the memory of centuries of hideous brutality still remains.

G. W. Foote on Morality

SECULARISM finds motives to righteousness in human nature. Since the evolution of morality has been traced by scientific thinkers the idea of our moral sense having had a supernatural origin has vanished into the limbo of superstitions. Our social sympathies are a natural growth, and may be indefinitely developed in the future by the same means that have developed them in the past. Morality and theology are essentially distinct. The ground and guarantee of morality are independent of any theological belief. When we are in earnest about the right we need no incitement from above. Morality has its natural ground in experience and reason, in the common nature and the common wants of mankind. Wherever sentient beings live together in a social state, simple or complex, laws of morality must arise, for they are simply the permanent conditions of social health; and even if men entertained no belief in any supernatural power, they would still recognise and obey the laws upon which the welfare, and indeed the very existence, of human society depends. "Even," said Martineau, "though we came out of nothing and returned to nothing, we should be subject to the claim of righteousness so long as we are what we are; morals have their own base, and are second to nothing." Emerson also confesses that "Truth, frankness, courage, love, humility, and all the virtues, range themselves on the side of prudence, or the art of securing a present well-being."

Not only must all moral appeals be made, ultimately, to our human sympathies; it is also a fact that theological appeals are essentially not moral but immoral. The hope of heaven and the fear of hell are purely personal and selfish motives. They make men worse rather than better. They may secure a grudging compliance with prescribed rules, but they must depress instead of elevating character. By concentrating a man's attention upon himself, they develop and intensify his selfish propensities. Secularism appeals to no lust after posthumous rewards or dread of posthumous terrors, but to that fraternal feeling which is the vital essence of all morality and has

prompted heroic self-sacrifice in all ages and climes. It removes causation from the next world to this. It teaches that the harvest of our sowing will be reaped here, and to the last grain eaten, by ourselves or others. Every act of our lives affects the whole subsequent history of our race. Our mental and moral like our bodily lungs have their appropriate atmospheres, of which every thought, word, and act becomes a constituent atom. Incessantly around us goes on the conflict of good and evil, which a word, a gesture, a look of ours changes. We cannot tell how great may be the influence of the least of these, for in nature all things hang together, and the greatest effects may flow from causes that seem so slight and inconsiderable.

[*The Freethinker*, November 6th, 1910]

The Rising Generation

XXXIV (1)—THE ICE AGES

MILLIONS OF JEWS AND CHRISTIANS still believe in the Creation story given in the first two chapters of Genesis, though in them there is nothing whatever about the remarkable Ice Ages which geologists insist this Earth of ours had to go through in the course of its marvellous history. It is in fact impossible to deal with the history of the Earth at all if the five known Ice Ages are not taken into consideration.

They were periods lasting hundreds of thousands, probably millions, of years and they had an incalculable effect on the evolution of life, not only of animals, but of man himself.

The causes of our Ice Ages are still obscure, but a number of geologists agree that they probably came when land began to shoot upwards—perhaps when our mountain ranges, or other mountain ranges long since disappeared, came into being. Probably, too, when the first Ice Ages came, there was no life whatever on land. If life originated first in water, it seems likely that ice and snow would be free from it altogether. Only when water is favourable can life be sustained in it, and the earth and its atmosphere had perhaps to be of some warm temperature to support the first forms of life.

The Earth had, however, its long periods of warmth during which vegetation grew abundantly, and these eventually formed our widely distributed coal beds. It was indeed after they had been formed that the great Permian Ice Age occurred and it spread over many lands now lost under the sea. It covered India and even what used to be called British South Africa. Not until the land could support the earliest reptiles and monstrous animals were they able to flourish and, no doubt, as they required warmth, the Permian Ice Age gradually killed most of them off. If any survived, it was because conditions of heat and cold operated very slowly, and the survivors had time to adapt themselves to changed conditions.

The great reptile age lasted probably 150 million years, after which came what is called the Cretaceous (like chalk) Ice Age, which had not the devastating destructive power of the earlier Ice Ages. But it left the two Poles covered with ice caps which subsist at this day. All the same, it was then that the evolution of the great primates and man himself occurred and perhaps it was because the climate of the earth gradually becoming warmer, that we owe Man as we know him today. But—and this must never be forgotten—it took literally millions of years for Man to evolve.

CORRESPONDENCE

THE THIRTY-NINE ARTICLES

One occasionally comes across in print, or even *viva voce*, the question "What do we mean exactly by Christianity?"

To this the obvious answer should be (but isn't) the Thirty-nine Articles of the Christian Faith, and the two Creeds, which cover the whole field. The majority of Christians, however, are not Protestants, and, indeed, these are often referred to by Catholics as heretics, and as such are presumably damned. One of these Articles says some unkind, if not actually rude things about image-worshipping Catholics and some of their beliefs!

To the rationalist, calmly looking on at these irreconcilable quarrels, it all seems just rather sadly funny, the pot bravely asserting his "convictions" that two plus two makes five and the kettle insisting that all Christian evidence clearly demonstrates that they add up to seven. Both the contestants are often perfectly sincere in their beliefs. What they both share in common is ignorance of their subject. They cannot reason it all out because all religious people proclaim their rejection of reason when it comes to their "convictions."

It is my very long experience that few so-called Christians (who really believe that they believe that the salvation of their immortal souls depends upon their acceptance of the Faith as anciently decided upon by the Christian Fathers), have ever actually bothered to read through, much less study, these Articles and then search their heart (the organ they use for thinking with) for possible misgivings. In fact, the vast ignorance of religious people of what used to be known as the Higher Biblical Criticism, of the origins of their unknown translators from the original, the evolution and modernisation of their own, let alone of the older religions (upon whose legends, miracles and social ethics Christianity is so obviously based), has always been a source of astonishment to me. For instance, when the Archbishop of Canterbury broadcast some startling truths about the contents and origins of their Bible (which, one would have thought, everyone interested in religion would have known all about) and some unpalatable comments on our antiquated and ridiculous Sunday laws (*Sunday Times*, 15.9.57), these simple souls—including many priests—were dumbfounded, really shocked to the core. One gathered from extracts from various sources that many even disapproved strongly of their own supreme Authority!

Whenever I read that there is another conference of Church dignitaries assembled at Lambeth Palace, as at present, I find myself chuckling over a report that found its way somehow into an American journal (most of these delegates were Americans, I believe) some years ago which caused and is still causing merriment in godless circles. This report stated that, *inter alia*, the desirability of revising or even of deleting some of the Articles of Faith so as to bring the code more into line and less in conflict with modern knowledge was discussed. After a while, one of this august assembly rose and naively pointed out that apparently every one of the Articles was being objected to by some section of the congregation, and that if these were all to have their way there would be no Articles left! This was meant, of course, as just one of those harmless little clerical jokes, but the stunned silence with which it was received told him he must have made a boner. No one laughed.

Should this letter happen to be read by some really intelligent Christian with a genuine desire for information I might recommend, as a starting point, a study of the history of these individual Articles, and also of the history of the compilation of the two Creeds, these latter being particularly enlightening, but, let me warn him that a realisation and discovery that the origin of all religious beliefs dates back to primitive, superstition-dominated minds leads inevitably to doubt (if the student is intellectually honest with himself), and then, a little more study, thought, discussion and argument, and he finds himself rejecting the supernatural *in toto*, and Aunt Agatha is cutting him out of her will. And now, children who used to play with him run from him screaming. Even dogs snarl and cats spit as he goes by. But he's got his information, and got rid of some illusions.

Knowledge is a pitiless iconoclast, a deadly debunker of ancient superstitions; hence the Pope's famous, or rather infamous *Index Expurgatorius*, his list of forbidden studies which, believe it or not, includes the Protestant Prayer Book!

M. C. BROTHERTON, Comdr. R.N. (Ret.).

A giant named Goliath found the sword was not the thing
To beat the guided missile from wee David's little sling.
Yet military nitwits even in these latter days
Think bayonet-armed battalions can defeat the Atom's
rays.
COLLIN COATES.

A.R. INTERNATIONAL RATIONALIST
PEN-PALS CLUB

THE following have asked for their names to be published and wish to correspond with fellow freethinkers elsewhere.

N.B.: All speak English and if other languages are spoken they are bracketed after the address.

Felix Bourbon, 4128 Pelham Road, Dearborn 9, Michigan, U.S.A. (Spanish).

Eric McKeever, 439 Old Trail, Baltimore 12, Maryland, U.S.A.
Anne Bartlett, 1008 West Hill Street, Champaign, Illinois, U.S.A.
Nancy Henshaw (aged 11, child of American Rationalist.

Readers' children are invited to correspond!) 54, Whitman Street, Pawtucket, Rhode Island, U.S.A.

Jeffrey J. Ravell, 22 Industry Street, Bellville South, Cape, South Africa (Germanic languages).

Mr. R. J. Westall, P.O. Box 11, Kasama, Northern Rhodesia.
Mr. Anselm Ezeabasili, Hall IV, University College, Ibadan, Nigeria.

Aylmer V. Peris, 31 Cooper's Hill, Colombo 3, Ceylon.
Fräulein Hilka Buscher, Rostrup, Bei Bad Zwischenahn, West Germany (German).

Mr. J. Th. J. Cornelisse, Diemerkaade 45, Diemen, Holland (Dutch, German, French, Norwegian).

Mr. Jan Algra, Dan Stalpertstraat, 78t, Amsterdam-Z, Holland (Dutch).

Mr. T. De Winter, Clingendaal 70, Rotterdam-Z, Holland (Dutch).

Mr. P. E. J. Jordan, 18 Pembroke Road, Southville, Bristol, 3.

Mr. J. P. Grant, Uplands, Burley, Ringwood (New Forest), Hants. (French).

Mr. S. W. Brooks (not an atheist or materialist but would like to discuss religious matters), 67 Victoria Road, Southend-on-Sea, Essex.

John Thomson, junr., 13 Fereneze Drive, Paisley, Renfrew, Scotland.

Mr. F. S. Haughton, 19 Carslith Avenue, Blackpool, Lancs.

Mr. H. A. Rogerson, "Severn View," Lloyd's Road, off Wesley Road, Ironbridge, Salop.

Arthur Alexander, 10 Davies Court, Garndiffaith, Mon. S. Wales.

Alistair Mackenzie, 28 Easdale Drive, Glasgow, E.2, Scotland.

Miss Aimee Muspratt (aged 87), 7 Pembroke Walk, London, W.8.

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