

The Freethinker

Volume LXXX—No. 30

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Sixpence

BEFORE ME IS THE Library Edition of the New English Bible, beautifully printed, and with none of the old distinctive features of the Sacred Volume which forced our forebears to accept it as direct from Almighty God Himself. The vast majority of Victorian Bibles, with the exception of those called "Family Bibles", were printed in small (sometimes in very small) type, with funereal black covers; and they generally occupied the centre of the drawing-room table side by side with *Hymns Ancient and Modern*. The Family Bibles were more often than not a fixture on the sideboard, and made a very convenient stand for teapots or fruit dishes. Most of the small Bibles I encountered in my youth had red edges—why, I never succeeded in finding out. I think they still have, for both the copies of the Authorised Version and the Revised Version in my possession are red-edged.

"Witnesses"

The AV and the RV have long and mostly boring introductions, a feature which the translators of the NEB were careful to avoid. And I must congratulate them for the splendid way in which they have told us almost nothing about their 14 years of labour in giving us this new translation. We are of course told about these labours, but those of us who want to know from what Greek manuscripts they made their translation are left completely in the dark. We are told that, the translators have taken into account (a) ancient manuscripts of the New Testament in Greek, (b) manuscripts of early translations into other languages, and (c) quotations from the New Testament by early Christian writers. These three sources of evidence are collectively referred to as "witnesses". It would be difficult to imagine anything on the subject more disingenuous than this account of the sources and the "witnesses". A manuscript in Greek dated at the earliest, the fourth century, is described as a "witness"! A witness of what? Certainly not of Jesus, or of what he is supposed to have said. All that the "witness" is, is an anonymous ancient manuscript, of no more consequence than any other fairy tale.

We are not even told the titles given to the various manuscripts or versions used. These are coyly (or is it discreetly?) withheld. As far as I can judge, the actual Greek text mostly used by the translators is the one used by the translators who gave us the Authorised Version, and God alone knows exactly how that was gathered. I tried to track down once where was the "original" Greek manuscript from which our AV was translated, and needless to say I signally failed. On the title page of the first edition of the AV we have the words, "Newly translated out of the Original Greeke", though the instructions to the translators were that the "Bishop's Bible (1568) should be "as little altered as the truth of the original will permit".

And what were the instructions to the translators of the Bishop's Bible? Merely that they must not "depart from the Great Bible" (1539). This was "truly translated after the veryte of the Hebrue and Greke textes". In actual

fact, the Great Bible was "a revision" of Coverdale's Bible (1538) which, when it first appeared, was (so we are told in the British Museum Guide to the Bible Exhibition of 1911) "so full of faults" that he had to see the next edition through the press himself. But there is a still earlier English Bible, the first actually printed in English, by Coverdale, and he makes no secret of the fact that it was "the Olde and New Testament faithfully and truly translated out of Douche and Latyn" (1535). "Douche" was German, and this German text was made by Luther; but from which Greek manuscripts, if any, I have not found out. The New Testament used in churches in his day was in

Latin, the much-revised Vulgate attributed to Jerome, and made early in the fifth century. Luther probably used the Greek text of the New Testament as well which was "made up" by Erasmus and which first appeared in 1516. And it must be added that this Greek Testament was the one also used by William Tyndale for his translation of the New Testament into English first published in 1525.

Erasmus

Erasmus was a great scholar and Humanist, and it is claimed that he "took as his basis a collection of several manuscripts which he found at Basle" as well as "incorporating variant readings" from other manuscripts (BM Guide). He also went to various Latin manuscripts. But this is what the Rev. A. Roberts says of Erasmus in his *Companion to the Revised Version of the English New Testament*—"In the Gospels he principally used a cursive MS of the fifteenth or sixteenth century . . . In the Acts and Epistles he chiefly followed a cursive of the *thirteenth or fourteenth century* . . . For the Apocalypse he had only one mutilated manuscript . . . There were and are words in the professed original for which no divine authority can be pleaded, but which are entirely due to the learning and *imagination* of Erasmus". (My italics).

But what about the opinions of translators on the work of other translators? If Tyndale had not been burnt at the stake on the continent he would have suffered the same fate for his "heresies" here in England. The Defender of the Faith, our much revered Henry VIII, delighted in nothing better than butchering "heretics". Though he had a row with the Pope, he never ceased being a Roman Catholic; and it was only with difficulty that he allowed any translations of the Bible to be made. Like the Catholic Church, he hated translations and translators. Luther's translation was attacked by Zwingle—"Thou art known to be an open and notorious perverter of the Holy Scriptures" he said. Needless to add that Luther in turn attacked the translators of Zwingle's Bible—"A set of fools, anti-Christ, and impostors" he called them.

In any case, back we have to go to the Greek "original" of Erasmus for the real source of our New English Bible, though the more "ancient" manuscripts used for the Revised Version will these days have been no doubt also looked into. They are the Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, and

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

Another Look at the New English Bible

By H. CUTNER

Alexandrinus Codices, and it must have been heartbreaking for the translators of the New English Bible to have to admit that all sorts of famous and well-loved readings have had to be questioned because these ancient "witnesses" witness that they are fraudulent, that is, deliberately invented and inserted into later MSS.

If the reader would take up the Teacher's Variorum Bible, he would find on almost every page dozens of variant readings given in learned notes with the opinions of famous Biblical scholars for or against. Many of these readings come from the three great "witnesses" I have named—which, by the way, very often disagree with each other. Another work well worth studying is the volume in the famous Tauchnitz editions—Dr. Tischendorf's New Testament. This is the Authorised Version "with various readings from the three most celebrated manuscripts of the original Greek texts". This work no doubt whatever must have greatly influenced the eminent scholars responsible for our Revised Version, for they made drastic cuts which the New English Bible has (perhaps with regret) had to follow. It would be impossible for me to deal with them here, but I have always been surprised how few of these omissions are known to the average Christian.

For example, the famous story about Jesus and the Woman Taken in Adultery is omitted by the Vatican and Sinaitic Codices. But, as every Christian will tell you, it can be found in later MSS, and it is so very like what we expect from "our Lord" that very few Christians have given it up. It is *not* in the RV, or in Tischendorf, and it is obvious that the translators of the NEB were in a dilemma for, instead of telling its readers that the two most ancient manuscripts *omit* the yarn, they say "Some witnesses here *insert* the passage"; and they then give it on another page. They do not tell us as does the RV clearly, "Most of the ancient authorities omit John 7, 53 — 8,11. Those which contain it vary much from each other". To soften the blow for Christians, here are their exact words: "This passage, which is in the most widely received editions of the New Testament in the text of John, has no fixed place in our ancient witnesses. Some of them do not contain it at all. Some place it after Luke 21, 38, others after John 7, 36, or 7, 52, or 21, 24". But the new translators do not tell us if they believe the story is "authentic".

Or take that other marvellous text which is also so like "our Lord" that every Christian *must* believe it. It is Luke 23, 34—"Father forgive them, for they know not what they do". The NEB notes (like the RV) that "some witnesses omit" it, but we could have been told here that *they* inserted it because it was just what we expected from Jesus. I have never heard any Christian tell us that when Jesus said you must hate your parents to be his disciple, that passage was so like what we expected from him. The NEB translates it: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, even his own life, he cannot be a disciple of mine". We now know this at least is authentic.

The one thing which mystifies me looking through the NEB is why it should have taken a number of scholars fourteen years to have produced it. Most of the text of the AV could have been put into modern English by any competent journalist in a few weeks. The "difficult" texts, or those as unintelligible as many we get from Paul might have taken a little longer. However, the publishers must be very pleased with their enterprise—something like two million copies (we are told) have been sold. Yes—but how many convinced unbelievers have now been convinced that the Bible is the Word of God? Any at all?

"Mother and Teacher"

By EVA EBURY

HIS HOLINESS has produced his Magnum Opus, the world-shattering *Mater et Magistra* to celebrate the 70th Anniversary of the equally world-shattering *Rerum Novarum*, which was commemorated by the world-shattering *Quadragesimo Anno*, so-called Workers' Charters, which together provided the ideological and spiritual foundation for the Fascist Corporate State.

Catholic workers now have their Magna Carta, their charter of rights against unjust exploitation. It was however an unfortunate choice of phrase by the BBC, with which this blessed encyclical was introduced to English Catholics, for history informs us that Innocent III did not take kindly to the signing of the Great Charter, and threatened John with excommunication. John may have been a poor fish by many standards, but he did resolutely withstand the Pontiff over the right of election of the Archbishop of Canterbury. It was not until the Pope had not only excommunicated him, but absolved the English and Irish from their oath of allegiance, divested him of all authority, and given the Kingdom of England and Ireland to Phillip of France, that John capitulated and made England tributary to the Pope.

But that is ancient history; we have now received the weighty words, 20,000 to be exact, of the present Pope. I have not read the document, but suggest that the substance might well be reduced to the simple words of William Teeling. Teeling is a Catholic of unimpeachable lineage, scion of an old Catholic family, having had an uncle a Papal Chamberlain and a cousin an officer in the Pope's Noble Guard. Writing of the indignation felt by large numbers of working class Catholics in England when Cardinal Bourne categorically condemned the General Strike, Teeling says, in support of Bourne and Papal policy: "But it was proof of what the right elements in the Catholic Church have always stood for, that private property and properly constituted order must always be defended and supported, unless something of vital importance to religion is being attacked". Accurate, and succinct; indeed an example of clarity to the Pope.

In 1933, 450 unemployed workers, hugging their "workers charters" to their bosoms, visited Pius XI. The Pope extended his blessing to the pilgrims and their families and the towns and villages from whence they came. He told them: "If Divine Providence has caused you to be deprived of work, It did it for your own good. Being without work, you will therefore all the more appreciate work when it returns to you. The fact that you are lacking in material work does not prevent you from doing spiritual work. This spiritual work will fortify you in withstanding the consequences of the great tribulation represented by enforced idleness". The unemployed pilgrims returned with their charters still clasped to their bosoms; I forget whether they were granted the inestimable boon of kissing the Papal toe. They were not very bright. Teeling tells an amusing story of the Irish contingent. As it was impossible to provide fish on the return journey which fell on a Friday, Pius gave special permission for meat to be eaten. The Irish pilgrims however were seen reverently adhering to potatoes and other vegetables. Mr. Teeling pointed out to them that the Pope had graciously given them a dispensation to eat meat; after a pause, came the answer, "Ah, the Pope should know better than to say a thing like that".

The Popes appear to be blessed with an unconscious

(Concluded on page 236)

Sky Pilots at Buckingham Palace

By F. A. RIDLEY

HER MAJESTY Queen Elizabeth II, is, amongst other things, Defender of the Faith. It is consequently hardly surprising that amongst the VIPs who periodically frequent Buckingham Palace, are religious leaders ranging from Archbishops to evangelists of a more publicised kind. Amongst these last, in recent years the American hot gospeller, Dr. Billy Graham, has been a prominent visitor. During the successive visits that this eminent preacher of the Gospel has paid to these sin-infested shores, he has preached before the Queen, besides being received in the most exalted social circles.

Personally, I have always thought that the frequent visits of this American spiritual ace constitute something of an insult to our own still so numerous bona fide British men of God. Have we not our own holy and learned representatives of Christ, able and willing (and incidentally well paid), to spread the glorious light of the Gospel on these benighted shores? Is it not a defeatist gesture, a slur on the spiritual capacity of our own religious guides of all descriptions, from Cantuar to the Red Dean and Dr. Donald Soper, so continually to import American evangelists to reclaim the British people from the lusts of the flesh and the wiles of the Devil? Do we not keep (at enormous expense) an Established Church for this precise purpose? Yet the list of such visitors is a long one, stretching from Torrey (whom I met in my youth) and Alexander, via Moody and Sankey—plus the ineffable Billy Sunday—down to our own day and Billy Graham. Indeed the more than cordial reception given to the Graham circus by local religionists would seem to indicate an urgent need for recurring Transatlantic spiritual reinforcements. Evidently "Fings ain't wot they used t' be" in this dear old country of ours!

Dr. Billy Graham, like his predecessors, is a sky pilot and a very eminent one at that; but he is not the only one. Indeed, he and his colleagues, past and present will now have to face celestial competition of the most formidable kind, for this year of Grace 1961, has witnessed the emergence of a new species of sky-pilotry associated with the embryo science of astronautics, which has not failed to obtain royal recognition and patronage. For, along with Billy Graham, Major Yuri Gagarin has also paid a highly-successful visit to our shores and he also was invited to Buckingham Palace to lunch with Her Majesty and with that very clever and progressively-minded young man, the Duke of Edinburgh.

Space-travel (and Communism—Russian vintage), are evidently becoming respectable. The Duke of Edinburgh at least, like his predecessor Albert, is reputed to be keenly interested in science (the Prince it will be recalled instigated the Great Exhibition of 1851) and we have no doubt that the intrepid Russian astronaut whose coolness and courage, not less than his remarkable professional efficiency, have won the deserved admiration of the world, got as cordial reception at Buckingham Palace as he did in less exalted quarters.

One cannot, however, suppress the wish that Her Majesty could have invited Billy Graham and Yuri Gagarin to lunch simultaneously. That would indeed have represented an appropriate version of Hymns Ancient and Modern. The band might have played the Ascension Day Hymn, "Thou art Gone up on High" as the royal party went in to lunch. But perhaps Dr. Billy, who is reputed to desire particularly the salvation of Communists, might have improved the shining hour (and the unique oppor-

tunity) by trying to convert the gallant and atheistic Major.

In a recent issue of this paper, I outlined what may perhaps be termed the highlights that marked the evolution of the older variety of space-travel—the religious one. I then noted briefly the galaxy of famous names traditionally associated with this pre-scientific type of transport: Enoch, Elijah, Jesus Christ, St. Paul, Muhammed and—most indefatigable space-traveller of them all (at least if we may judge from her recurring trips to and from Heaven)—the Blessed Mother of God, the Virgin Mary. It will be noted that more dubious examples of space-travel by pre-Christian deities are omitted from this strictly veracious list. All the above authentic examples of sky pilotry are guaranteed by the infallible authority of either Biblical tradition or the tradition of the Church.

A Protestant Fundamentalist like Billy Graham would presumably accept at least the Biblical examples of what we may perhaps term Sacred Space-travel. Now, however, a new astronautic cycle is commencing its initiator, our distinguished contemporary, Yuri Gagarin, has now visited our shores and has lunched with Her Majesty, an honour unknown to Enoch, Elijah *et al.* It seems clear that when we discuss astronautics in future, we shall have to begin by carefully distinguishing which kind we mean—old or new, religious or scientific; the type pioneered by the Hebrew Patriarch, Enoch, or by the Russian, Major Gagarin.

Present developments in astronautics underline the age-old conflict between religion and science, for they reveal in a particularly apposite manner the fundamental incompatibility of religious and scientific views of the Universe. For is it not a ridiculous contradiction that this country should give a hero's welcome to the first human being to enter and to return from outer space, whilst simultaneously continuing to practise (and pay for) a religion stuffed with obsolete myths and prehistoric legends which have only to be considered in relation to current scientific phenomena to be shown up as obviously absurd anachronisms? Every schoolboy knows that Elijah and his fiery chariot could not, and would not, have got clear of this planet in their romantic gallop into outer space.

Nor is it only the incidental divergences that separate the world-view of Major Gagarin and the Russian Academy of Sciences from that still peddled by Dr. Billy Graham—and presumably by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The one view is historical and scientific, the other prehistoric and pre-scientific in character. Gagarin is a sky-pilot in the real sky, whilst Graham and Co. only navigate an ocean of myths. Recent developments in astronautics contrapose past religious myths and present scientific realities in their sharpest antithesis.

Undoubtedly a society like ours, which simultaneously professes to believe in modern science and in religious mythology, stands at a very great disadvantage in relation to a society like that built up in the USSR since 1917, where they no longer practise "double book-keeping" of this incongruous kind. One need hardly look further for the startling progress made in the Soviet Union. In British society this glaring contradiction is strikingly revealed in the strange case of the Duke of Edinburgh, host of Yuri Gagarin and of Billy Graham, the Archbishop of Canterbury and so on. Here we have a clever young man, fully alive to present progressive trends and with an

(Continued on next page)

This Believing World

So at long last an attempt is to be made by the Government to put an end to the disgraceful, if pious, Sunday laws which govern this free and once mighty land of ours. A Commission has been appointed to look into the problem, and we were pleased to see that Mr. William Hickey of the *Daily Express* (July 14th) has—on his own account—looked into the Commission. And—as if it wanted saying—most, if not all, its members are thorough-going believers in a Sabbath Day or a Lord's Day (which is for them the same thing). They are all Christians.

★
Mr. Hickey asked Mrs. Gulbenkian who is French-born what she thought of our Sunday, and her answer is typically French. "The English Sunday is a crashing bore", she said, "I prefer the Continental style—Mass in the morning and then go gay afterwards". Something like this appears to be the view of the Commission—there is a Sabbath Day, it was divinely instituted, and so long as people go to church at least once on Sunday, they should be allowed to buy sugar, watch a car rally, buy a tin of peas, row a boat, and do many other similar things which are not allowed at the moment by our Sunday laws.

★
All the same, there will be furious opposition to any change, especially from the Lord's Day Observance Society and most of the very religious magistrates who administer our licensing laws. It will be a hard fight to force these godly people to allow dancing, golf, football, tennis, and other forbidden games, to be freely played on Sundays—to say nothing of being allowed to buy tea, sugar, aspirins, and many other things when and how you like. What will "our Lord" say if our Christian and saintly magistrates do not still force us strictly to observe a medieval Sabbath Day so beloved of our Puritans and Non-conformists?

★
A Mr. Slotkin who became famous overnight writing to the Queen in Mr. Billy Graham's name has publicly apologised to that reverend gentleman for thus using his name in vain. In return, Dr. Graham has given Mr. Slotkin the Bible he used in his latest crusade. We cannot help wondering whether Mr. Slotkin will now want an apology in turn. After all, whatever may have been the value of a Bible in the glorious Dark Ages, has not its own glory long since departed? Who wants a Bible these days—to read?

★
However, for Dr. Graham, his world-wide evangelism has brought about what he calls "the religious renaissance" in America, and he has an easy answer to explain the vast increase in crime there going side by side with belief in Christ Jesus. "Every time you have religious revival" he claims, "you have tremendous satanic opposition. You have action and reaction". Poor old Satan—the things he gets blamed for! But if crime is so bad in America, does not this mean that Beelzebub—or whatever this real living rival to the Almighty is called—is winning?

★
Best-selling novelist Dennis Wheatley—his books have sold to the tune of 15 million copies—has told *Psychic News* (July 15th) that "reincarnation is the only possible answer to the riddle of life". He gives as a reason that if we do something unkind in one life, then we must come back "and make reparation for it" in another life. Strange how such nonsense persists, especially as Mr. Wheatley admits being "a complete duffer" in many things. However, he does insist that "much of Spiritualism's beliefs can be explained by hallucination and wishful thinking".

Somewhat a smack in the eye for *Psychic News*?

★
One of the things for which our Spiritualists will never forgive "our Lord" is that when he returned from the dead, he told us nothing whatever about the marvellous Summerland all good believers in spooks will go to after passing out of this hateful vale of tears. This fact appears to have upset even Mr. Hannan Swaffer who tells us (*Psychic News*, July 15th), "Jesus had the greatest story that could ever be told and yet did not tell it". Obviously Jesus was *not* the greatest reporter that ever lived, and we can only express our sheer amazement!

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, JULY 19TH: Present: Messrs. F. A. Ridley (Chair), Arthur, Barker, Cleaver, Corstorphine, Ebury, Hornibrook, Johnson, McIlroy, Mills, Tribe, Mrs. Ebury, Mrs. Venton, the Treasurer (Mr. Griffiths) and the Secretary. The President extended a welcome to Mr. Tribe who was attending his first EC meeting. New members were admitted to Kingston, North London and Sussex Branches which, with Individual members made 7 in all. Mrs. E. C. Trask's resignation from the Committee was received with regret and tribute was paid to her work. Mr. Barker agreed to send reports to our Trinidad Branches for the time being. An invitation from Leicester Secular Society for the 1962 Conference was gratefully accepted. Correspondence from the Home Office regarding a girl committed to a Roman Catholic approved school and from Viscount Alexander regarding Legion of Mary hut on Euston station was noted. NCCL and Humanist Council reports were presented. Mr. Anthony Wedgwood Benn would unveil LCC plaque to Bradlaugh on Friday, October 13th. A Tea at the House of Commons would follow. Coventry Council decision on Family Planning clinic was noted with pleasure. Midweek indoor meetings in the Carpenters' Arms would be tried later this year. Mrs. Ebury and Mrs. Venton agreed to examine HMSO Adoption regulations publications and report back. Rough draft of leaflet for young people by Mrs. McIlroy was approved. Glasgow, Manchester and San Juan Branch matters were dealt with. The new Departmental Committee on Sunday Observance was referred to and it was decided to watch developments. Mr. Ebury handed over the usual North London Branch contribution of £5 to the Building Fund. The next meeting was fixed for Wednesday, August 16th, 1961.

"MOTHER AND TEACHER"

(Concluded from page 234)

humour. Pius XI in his encyclical *Caritate Christi Compulsus* ("On the Present Distress of the Human Race", 1932), gave this inspired wisecrack: "If those who, through the excessive production of manufactured goods, have fallen into unemployment and poverty, made up their minds to give the proper time to prayer, there is no doubt that work and production would be brought soon within reasonable limits; and that the conflict which now divides humanity into two great camps, struggling for transient interests, would be changed into a noble and peaceful contest for goods heavenly and eternal". Thus, the most facile expedient for overproduction ever to be solemnly blessed and delivered to a shipwrecked economy!

As I have said, I have not yet had the opportunity of reading through the 20,000 infallible words of the "Mother and Teacher", but am convinced that they will equally manifest the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

SKY PILOTS AT BUCKINGHAM PALACE

(Concluded from page 235)

obviously keen interest in phenomenal scientific developments, yet he is compelled to affect an equally keen interest in outmoded religious mumbo-jumbo; to read the lessons in Church, to entertain religious dignitaries, and to assist his wife in her royal duty as Defender of the Faith. It must be all very confusing for His Royal Highness.

However, off duty he probably enjoyed meeting sky pilot Gagarin better than sky pilot Graham.

THE FREETHINKER

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

- Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (The Mound).—Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN, McRAE and MURRAY.
- London (Tower Hill).—Every Thursday, 12—2 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER and L. EBURY.
- Manchester Branch N.S.S. Thursday lunchtimes, THE FREETHINKER on sale, Piccadilly, near Queen Victoria Statue. (Platt Fields), Sundays, 3 p.m.: Messrs. G. H. MILLS and G. A. WOODCOCK.
- Marble Arch N.S.S. (Marble Arch), Sundays, 12 noon: MESSRS. F. A. RIDLEY, D. H. TRIBE, C. H. CLEAVER and G. F. BOND. Sundays, from 4 p.m.: MESSRS. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER, C. E. WOOD, D. H. TRIBE and H. A. TIMMINS.
- Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.: Sundays, 7.30 p.m.
- 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, Nottingham).—Every Friday, 1 p.m., Every Sunday, 6.30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.
- Sussex Branch N.S.S. (Peace Statue, opposite Embassy Court, Brighton Front), Sunday, July 30th, 3.30 p.m. D. H. TRIBE, A. H. CONWAY and F. PEARCE.

INDOOR

- Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Midland Institute Cinema, Paradise Street), Sunday, July 30th, 6.45 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY, "Spinoza—the God Intoxicated Man?"
- Southend Humanist Group (Leigh Community Centre, Elm Road, Leigh-on-Sea), Saturday, July 29th, 7.30 p.m.: COLIN McCALL, "The Fallacy of ESP".

Notes and News

WE QUOTE from the City of Coventry Health Committee Proceedings Minute 63/61: "The Town Clerk reported that the Council at their meeting of the 6th June, 1961, referred to this Committee a petition entitled 'The Coventry Catholics' Petition against Family Planning Units' in the following terms. 'We the undersigned—Coventry Catholics—wish to register our condemnation of the Family Planning Unit that has been opened in Coventry on the ground that their main objective is to promulgate artificial birth control. We strongly disapprove its existence and would certainly oppose the establishment of further units. The intention of the Family Planning Unit is in direct opposition to the natural law. As ratepayers we cannot be expected to countenance indirectly, a service we consider immoral'. Councillor Sheridan, who submitted the petition to the Council, attended the meeting in accordance with Standing Order No. 6. The arrangements which the Council has made with the Family Planning Association were outlined to Councillor Sheridan. Resolved that the petition be noted".

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THE CLINIC, then, we are glad to report, will continue to function at Gulson Road, Coventry, from 5.30 to 8.30 p.m. on Tuesdays.

SPEAKING AT THE inaugural meeting of the Coventry and District Branch of the Family Planning Association on Friday, July 14th, Canon E. H. Patey referred to "people who opposed the use of contraceptives because they considered it to be contrary to the will of God . . .". But, he said, it was "equally important to state that the vast majority of people—including the great majority of Christian people—in this country believed that the reverent and responsible use of contraception methods not only ministered to marital happiness but was according to the will of God". Perhaps Councillor Sheridan and Canon Patey ought to be left to debate the "will of God" aspect between themselves. In truth it is quite irrelevant: it is the will of man (and woman) that is all-important. And tribute here should be paid to those who wrote to the Coventry City Council supporting the venture and urging it to dismiss the Roman Catholic petition: to organisations like the National Secular Society and Branch 5/121 of the Transport and General Workers' Union, and to individuals. To the few, in other words, who defended the rights of that vast majority of whom Canon Patey spoke.

★

ANNOUNCEMENT OF CSE (Certificate of Secondary Education) the proposed new examination for schoolchildren below GCE standard, provided the Minister of Education with an opportunity to dilate on one of his favourite themes, the importance of religious instruction in schools. We were witnessing, said Sir David Eccles in the House of Commons, on July 17th, a decline in Christian morality: children today frequently came from homes with no strong religious ties. "This is an aspect of education that should command more attention", in his view, and "I believe many people would be glad to see Parliament give a stronger lead in this direction". Our generation had lost its faith, and "we must turn to the schools and ask them to accept the challenge and become the instruments of recovery and renewal". Thus, H.M. Minister of Education in 1961.

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ALTHOUGH SOUTH AFRICANS were able to see the play, *Inherit the Wind*, in 1959, they will not be permitted to see the film based upon it. It has been banned by the South African Board of Censors. It deals, of course, with the notorious Tennessee "monkey trial" when John Scopes, a high school teacher, was charged with violating a law prohibiting the teaching of evolution in state-supported schools. Commenting on the ban, *The (South African) Rationalist*, says: "It is interesting to note that the issues raised at Dayton, which have become matters of mere historical interest in the more civilised parts of the world, are still vital in South Africa. 'Apartheid' means separation. South Africans, black and white, must as far as possible be kept apart, not only from each other but also from ideas which are common currency in the great big world beyond our borders. It may also be no coincidence that Dayton, Tennessee, is in the Deep South, or 'Bible Belt', where racial apartheid is fighting its last losing battle in the USA".

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MR. CHRISTOPHER BRUNEL reminds us of the 200th anniversary of the birth of one of Thomas Paine's most loyal friends and admirers, Thomas Clio Rickman, on July 27th, 1761. Coming, as did Paine, of Quaker stock, Rickman is said to have left the Society of Friends early in life and to have professed to belong to no sect of religion. In Upper Marylebone Street, London, he published a number of Paine's works, as well as providing accommodation there for Paine for a while.

Under The Roman Catholic Church

By GABRIEL COCA

2. THE COMMUNION

WHEN DEATH is as cheap as it was in Franco's prisons after three years of terrible war, one almost becomes inured to the daily executions and tortures. Truly, the war was terrible, but a thousand times worse was its end, bringing not the benefit of peace but Catholic revenge. More starvation and bloodshed than in the heat of hostilities, and all on one side. They were the victors, and woe to the vanquished! Battered, diseased, hungry—not eating, but eaten by lice, fleas and bugs—our emotions were cooled. No longer did I look with an intense interest at the faces of the men and women carried out to be shot, for that humane dignity, easy to detect in the most distressing circumstances. Intelligence, nobility, sincerity, were all to be seen, but there were those who marched off to die cheering Franco, crazily hoping for reprieve. Some went sneering. There were, too, the blind, the armless, the lame, and the aged and men and women who went to destruction weeping like babies.

There was an unforgettable day in 1940 in Madrid's Porlier Prison. Early on, through the windows we saw the streets being hectically decorated with flags and festoons.

Soon came the music and the chanting: "One, two, three. Tangier is ours. Gibraltar will be next". Franco's troops had entered Tangier and were in possession of the international zone. The Fascists were jubilant: this was the first prize of the promised empire. Franco had not deluded his people!

At this time I was in the smallest of the prison galleries, the Provisional, with only 600 prisoners, and we were driven upstairs to the sixth, to be confronted with the most formidable array of Roman Catholic priests I have ever seen in my life. What pretty creatures! One hundred and twenty of them preparing to take confession in the small rooms, for next day was to be a general communion.

Forthwith, one old man produced a newspaper cutting from his pocket. They couldn't administer communion to him. He was under the Papal decree of excommunication, as the cutting proved. But they were not so easily deterred, and inside they pushed him. What a joke it was, for them, humiliating this helpless unbeliever; forcing him to comply with their repugnant ceremonies.

I, too, was caught like a mouse in a trap. In front of me was the bald figure of the chief officer, Mr. Sanchez, with whom I had to contend. I recalled a childhood fear when my father took me to the September fair in my native town of Albacete and I saw in the waxworks a horrible murder. At a table were a beautiful girl and a middle-aged man, while behind the latter's back was another man holding a bloody hammer. The murderer was Captain Sanchez, Keeper of the War School, the girl Marie Luisa Sanchez, his daughter and incestuous sweetheart. She had lured the rich businessman and had plotted his murder and robbery. They walled him up when dead, but "murder will out" and Captain Sanchez was tried and shot. The Captain and Maria Luisa were the father and sister of our chief officer.

However, I stepped out of the ranks, made the compulsory Fascist salute and informed Mr. Sanchez that I would not go to confession. He stared at me: "What is the matter? What are you talking about?" I repeated my statement.

"You will not go to confession", he exclaimed. "Is this some trick? When you came to prison, did you not register as a Roman Catholic?"

"They did not ask me," I told him, "Had they asked me, I should have said that I was not a Roman Catholic".

"You do not know what you are saying" he bellowed, "you display neither knowledge nor discretion in refusing confession".

"I beg your pardon, Sir, but I speak in full knowledge of my convictions."

"Shut up!" Mr. Sanchez grasped me by the arm and pushed me into a room before the startled priest, don Felix Garcia, who ran a lucrative business, smuggling out prisoners' letters for 10 pesetas a time.

"Good morning, don Felix," I said.

"No, my son," he said, "when you come to confession you kneel down and say, 'Ave, most pure Mary'."

"But you have seen that I was conducted here by force. I will not make confession".

The sacristan of the Church of St. Francis, a prisoner who ministered to the priests of the prison and had seen the whole occurrence, then entered the room. "Don Felix," he said, "they are threatening and punishing those who do not want to confess. That must not be; it is not Christian".

But the priest refused to yield and when I was roughly led away the chief officer instructed a subaltern to put me under special arrest after communion the next day.

All went smoothly at the mass the following morning. The gold and purple shone mockingly in front of thousands of hungry and lousy prisoners. Some of the latter surreptitiously played games with matches or read novels or letters; others mumbled derision instead of prayers for the eucharist. Afterwards, when the six-hour-long ceremony was over, we had our own meetings in the lavatory of the gallery, and a group of friends who had kept the wafer between their teeth, showed their handkerchiefs, on which they had spat what the Roman Catholic Church had forced into their mouths. The dry paste did not even seem worth trampling on.

In the afternoon, loaded with my shabby belongings, I was locked in a subterranean cell. Having a year's experience in chambers of horrors, I was not afraid of its darkness, but, of the dampness which kept me continuously shivering. My diet was technically "bread and water" but, as there was then no bread for those outside the régime's select society—despite the blossoming of Empire!—we were given six figs per day instead. Mr. Sanchez ordered me six figs and half a pound of carrots cooked in horse fat. In my solitary confinement I had but one diversion pulling out the hairs of my beard when they reached my chest.

After a month and a day I marched out of the cell, dull-sighted, skinny and deaf, but my will was unbroken. The punishment had, indeed, been less severe than I might have expected, and I had already previously suffered tortures far worse which are now the most painful memories of my life.

(This is the second of two articles)

NEW REVISED FOURTH EDITION

Adrian Pigott's **FREEDOM'S FOE: THE VATICAN**
A collection of Danger Signals for those who value Peace and Liberty. Now available, 3/- (plus 6d. postage).

The Story of a Book

By COLIN McCALL

HOW OFTEN, on picking up an old volume, have we exclaimed, "If only this could tell a story!" Through the kindness of National Secular Society Vice-President Len Ebury, I have before me now a book which actually does. And it isn't fiction.

An ordinary enough edition, you might think from the outside, of *The Trial of Theism* by George Jacob Holyoake, revised in 1877 (the first edition having appeared in 1858 after being issued in penny and sixpence halfpenny sections) published by Trübner and Co., 57 & 59 Ludgate Hill, London, E.C.4, in red cloth for four shillings. Open it up, though, and the red end-papers bear cuttings from *The National Reformer*, *The Weekly Bulletin* and the *Hackney and Kingsland Gazette*, as well as the rules and regulations of the Stoke Newington Free Public Library, Lending Department. Turn the title page and find, above the two errata, a rubber stamping, "The Commissioners for Public Libraries & Museums for the Parish of Stoke Newington in the County of London", and written in ink, copperplate style, "107 Pres[ented] by Mrs. L. Samson". No wonder that a former owner—or salesman—has written in pencil on the title-page itself, "Historical Copy—see Inscription!"

Louisa Samson was the wife of John Samson, a Free-thinker who was the promoter of the Public Library movement in Stoke Newington. "When the first Library Commissioners were elected, Mr. Samson headed the poll", *The National Reformer* tells us (April 3rd, 1892), and at the opening of the temporary premises a few months after, the Rev. Prebendary Shelford, rector of the parish, who was in the chair, paid this tribute to him: "It is due to one member of the Commission, Mr. John Samson, that we have been able to procure a large number of books at very low cost. He has taken pains, far more than could have been expected from him, and he has given his time and ability to the task with grand results for us all".

That was before Mrs. Samson, in October 1891, offered the library some of her husband's books (works by Bradlaugh, Holyoake, Ingersoll and others, *The Trial of Theism* among them) and had them rejected on the grounds that they would "undermine the morals of the young people of Stoke Newington". Yet, as *The National Reformer* noted (*op. cit.*), one of the Commissioners who spoke most violently against the books, a Mr. Sage, had "bought with the ratepayers' money two duplicate copies of the amorous *Memoirs of the Count de Grammont* and *The Chronicles of Crime, or new Newgate Calendar*, for the moral delectation of the youth of Stoke Newington". And evidently the Commissioners of Clerkenwell Public Library thought rather more highly of their young readers, for they promptly accepted Mrs. Samson's gift instead. (In passing it is interesting to note that Mrs. Samson contributed an article on Walt Whitman to the following issue of *The National Reformer*, April 10th, 1892. Bradlaugh, of course, was dead, and John M. Robertson was then the Editor.)

When, however, Stoke Newington Vestry came to select three Library Commissioners to retire in 1892, a vestryman hoped that "no one would vote for an Atheist", and Mr. Samson was selected as one of three to retire. His re-election was proposed and seconded, and attention drawn to his good work, but there were several other nominations and, although both the other retiring Commissioners were re-elected, he was not. Indeed, he was bottom of the poll with only two votes, presumably those

of his mover and seconder. The Rev. E. L. Shelford, his praiser a year earlier, was sitting on the Vestry at the time, as was Mr. Sage.

The author of *The Trial of Theism*, George Jacob Holyoake, had of course been convicted of blasphemy, as John Osborne's TV play, *A Subject of Scandal and Concern*, has reminded us. But he was not, as Mr. Osborne thought, the last person to be imprisoned for the "crime" in this country. Holyoake was sentenced to six months' imprisonment in Gloucester gaol in 1842. It was in 1883 that the Editor of THE FREETHINKER, G. W. Foote, received 12 months in Holloway prison, W. J. Ramsey, the publisher, 9 months, and H. A. Kemp, the printer, 6 months. Even they were not the last. The last man to be imprisoned for blasphemy in England was J. W. Gott in 1921—for the fourth time. And by a coincidence, this very copy of *The Trial of Theism*, written by Holyoake, who had suffered blasphemy imprisonment, once belonged to Gott. Nor does the story end there. It now belongs, as I intimated at the start, to Len Ebury, who was the last person in this country to be prosecuted for blasphemy. Mr. Ebury was fined £5 in London in 1941, on the evidence of two policemen and against that of seven witnesses.

In conclusion, a few words about the book itself, *The Trial of Theism*. It is a fascinating work which may be considered, as Holyoake's bibliographer, C. W. F. Goss, said, "a history of a fifteen years' discussion and propaganda . . .". Dealing with the "Design" argument, Holyoake rightly points out that, if man may not exist without design, neither may a deity—"a being of far more wonderful powers than man—exist without design". "But if Deity may exist without the action of a Pre-poser", he goes on, "the world may exist without the action of a Pre-poser. All the wonders of the Universe, human, animal, and inorganic, may exist without a Pre-poser; for all taken together are a less miracle than the existence of God—*i.e.*, a Being who began to be before there was Time for anything to be; who was omnipresent—*i.e.*, everywhere, before there was *anywhere to occupy*". The Natural Theologian who, says Holyoake, "praises the divine contrivance which has given man *two eyes* . . . would have been equally rapturous had he had four, so that he could have looked east, west, north, and south at the same time; and successive Paleys would have celebrated the providential arrangement which enabled policemen and sentinels to conduct four-fold observations without turning their heads. Again, if man, like Polyphemus, had had but *one* eye given him, then Dr. Paley would have proved it impossible that he could ever have seen at all with two: or if he had, that he would have seen double . . . Had man only *one* arm, no Natural Theologian would have missed the other; had he had three, they would find reason to praise the Trinitarian arrangement, and no doubt declare it to be a mystic symbol for the confutation of Unitarians".

That, I suggest, shows George Jacob Holyoake as a delightful satirist. And it is occasionally worth remembering that nineteenth century Freethinkers, despite their beards and sedate names, had their lighter sides.

NEXT WEEK
CHURCH AND STATE IN 1961
By F. A. RIDLEY

World Union of Freethinkers

Conference at Beatrice Webb House, near Dorking,
September 8th to September 10th

Our readers may like to know something of the speakers who will generously take an active part in this conference. Lady Barbara Wootton, who will open the conference on Friday evening is probably well-known to all as our first life-peeress and a leading Socialist; she was Professor of Social Studies at the University of London, then a Nuffield Research Fellow. In the meantime she served for some years as a Governor of the BBC. The National Secular Society President, Mr. F. A. Ridley and the South Place Ethical Society Secretary, Mr. J. Hutton Hynd, will welcome the guests, particularly those from abroad, for whom the Secretary of the French Federation of Freethinkers, M. Jean Cotereau will reply. This will complete Friday evening's proceedings.

On Saturday morning the first session will be addressed by M. Olivier Lutaud of the Sorbonne who is an authority on certain periods of English literature and has recently published a book on the Levellers of Cromwell's time. His subject will be "Early Freethinkers in England and France 1633-1668"; he will show how vigorous the movement already was at this time. He speaks English well and has a lively sense of humour. The second morning session will be addressed by Professor P. Sargant Florence, C.B.E., formerly Professor of Commerce at the University of Birmingham, where he inspired and encouraged for some years a student rationalist society, just as, while a don at Cambridge, he kept going the Heretics, of which in pre-first-world-war days he had been the secretary. He has recently returned from Amman and will speak on "Religious Obstacles in Backward Countries". If the afternoon is fine those who enjoy a walk can stroll up to the summit of Leith Hill, the almost-mountain of S.E. England. In the evening we shall hear that undaunted champion of liberty, Mr. Fenner Brockway, M.P., on "The Challenge of Africa", and we may expect to take part in the discussion of this problem a Polish student of the question Michael Horoszewicz.

The first Sunday session will be in the hands of Professor Marcel Homès of the Free University of Brussels, who is highly respected by Belgian Freethinkers and is described by a French admirer as "a remarkable dynamic personality". His subject—he is a biologist—will be "Plant Physiology and Hunger in the World". This sounds as though it should appeal to vegetarians; nevertheless I think we shall all find in his words abundant food for thought; he also speaks English well and will do so to us "if we are sufficiently indulgent". The second session we will have the pleasure of hearing Dr. Maurice Burton whose articles on wild life are well known to readers of *The Sunday Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, etc. He has been busy debunking the Loch Ness monster and will tell us how "Scientists may Burst Bubbles"—so that our morning may be filled "with beaded bubbles winking at the brim".

The last session—it is hoped that we may have the privilege of hearing one of Holland's distinguished astronomers Professor Jeger and, when we are all starry-eyed with celestial visions, Mr. Geoffrey Kirk, President of the Leicester Secular Society, will wind the proceedings up—not that they will have run down, we trust. After which we shall disperse, to catch trains or planes homewards so that we may be ready for another Monday.

There are still a few vacancies for this interesting weekend, but those who wish to be present should book right

away with Colin McCall, Secretary National Secular Society, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1.

C.B.B.

CORRESPONDENCE

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations on your paper, and especially D. Tribe's article in your issue of July 7th. (Dr.) W. BRYN THOMAS.

CHURCH ATTENDANCE

The *Daily Herald* (13/7/61) gives figures showing the number of people who attended Communion at Easter, together with the number in a position to attend, taking most of the country. It works out roughly that 8 per cent of those who could attend did. Is not this a glaring argument for the Disestablishment of the Church of England?
W. PERKINS.

NOT GOOD ENOUGH

Mr. P. G. Roy's article, "The Essence of 'Christian Love'" (21/7/61) was interesting, but too vague to be really valuable. It is not good enough to say: "The civilisation of Antiquity considered . . ."; "Rome bought corn and gave it away at a nominal charge"; "In Christian lands neither the state nor the Church cared for the needs of the poor"; "In Christian times men . . . were . . . often cruelly punished", etc. There was not just one civilisation of Antiquity; not just one Rome; Christian lands varied considerably in conduct during the different Christian times. In short, Mr. Roy should document his sociological statements as well as he does his Biblical references.

ROBERT DENT.

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