

The Freethinker

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THE NAME AND FAME of Pope Clement XIV, Lorenzo Ganganelli, shine with a peculiar lustre, both on account of the one spectacular action by which he is still remembered—not only in ecclesiastical history, but in the more general history of Europe and of the world—as also on account of the macabre circumstances amid which he ended his life and reign. For Clement lives in history as the pope who suppressed the Jesuits in his Papal bull, *Dominus ac Redemptor*, July 21st, 1773, from which date, down to their restoration in 1814 by another (equally infallible) bull of Pius VII, the order had no legal existence in the Roman Catholic Church. It was this spectacular achievement which has prolonged his fame, but probably cost him his life, that Ganganelli still lives in world history.

A Pope's Letters

I was recently fortunate enough to acquire a French translation of Ganganelli's letters written when he was still a Franciscan monk. He was clearly a remarkable man, a brilliant writer, a liberal in theology and an outspoken critic of the contemporary superstitions within the Catholic Church of his day. Indeed, some of his caustic comments upon the reactionary theologians would not have been out of place in the pages of his contemporary French rationalists. The letters reproduced in this first volume of his correspondence, and addressed to a cosmopolitan circle, were all written in the 1740s and 1750s (Ganganelli himself was born in 1705). Thus we learn that "these theologians speak of God as if they were His next door neighbours", and that "too many Catholics in their zeal to avoid believing too little, end by believing too much".

Ganganelli was, in particular, an outspoken critic of his contemporary Mariolatry and saint-worship, about which he often addressed his correspondents in language reminiscent rather of the Protestant reformers than of a Franciscan friar and a future pope. From the general tenor of this correspondence, it seems clear that the future Pope Clement would not have approved of such more recent Catholic devotions as Lourdes and Fatima, and that the Catholic Church in the 18th century must have been a much more liberal place than it became after the outbreak of the French Revolution had aroused its latent fanaticism and incidentally led to the restoration, in 1814, of the Jesuit "Old guard of Counter-Revolution" (as I have elsewhere termed them). Pope Clement was evidently an ecclesiastical reformer more akin to say, the present Pope, than to the line of ultra-reactionary popes (usually denominated as Pius) who succeeded him. One can quite understand why a pope so evidently influenced—as Ganganelli demonstrates in this correspondence—by the spirit of his contemporary "Age of Reason" was disliked by those arch-reactionaries, the Jesuits.

Relics

Some of these letters, which abound in lively asides and in shrewd comments, are extremely vivid and interesting. The 18th century was the great age of letter-writing and

Ganganelli was evidently not only in, but of it. Thus, in writing to a fellow-monk about to set out for South America (then still part of the Spanish Empire), Ganganelli caustically warns his celibate friend of imminent danger to his priestly virtues. America, he writes "is the modern Garden of Eden, but certainly not Eden before the Fall". Whilst referring to the contemporary extravagances of saint-worship and to the multiplicity of their relics, he dryly comments: "if all these relics are genuine, we must assume that every saint had ten arms and ten heads apiece". (What would he have thought of present-day Mariolatry, as expounded say, by Fr. Gallery?)

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

The Pope Who Suppressed the Jesuits

By F. A. RIDLEY

Berkeley

However, from the point of view of present-day English readers, the most interesting section of this correspondence is to be found in the frequently acute comments upon the famous contemporary English-speaking philosophers, Berkeley and Locke. Having begun (in a letter to a Scottish correspondent named Stuart) by a sharp reference to Berkeley as "a brilliant lunatic" (in my opinion a very apt description), our Italian cleric goes on to make some very interesting criticisms of Berkeleyan Idealism from the point of view of the Aristotelian Realism upon which Catholic theology is based. For example, the basic dogma of Transubstantiation would be impossible on the assumption that matter had no real existence, hence Rome condemned Berkeley from the start. In my own opinion, the only valid critique of Berkeley, is to indicate that he is perhaps the supreme example of the philosopher who persists in asking questions to which *ipso facto* no answer is conceivably possible. However, one could hardly have expected even the most liberal of Popes to adopt such a completely sceptical point of view as this!

Locke

Upon the other great English-speaking thinker of his age, John Locke, Ganganelli speaks with much greater enthusiasm. Writing to an aristocratic Venetian lady who had just completed a MS translation of the great English philosopher (in 1753), our Italian friar refers in glowing terms, both to Locke's philosophy in general and to the excellence of his correspondent's Italian translation. Our celibate friar becomes almost a feminist by contrasting the studious habits and elegant style of his lady correspondent with the sluggish torpor and excessive devotion to pleasure of her Venetian male contemporaries.

However, Ganganelli has one reservation to his otherwise apparently unstinted admiration for Locke—for he was, after all, a Franciscan friar and a future pope. A note of obvious horror, elsewhere foreign to his lively and urbane style, creeps into his correspondence when he notes a passage in which the English author raises the question as to whether matter can think. Modern materialism was making perhaps its first appearance in Papal Rome, and at its apparition the future Pope throws up his hands in horror, and indulges in a burst of ecclesiastical

denunciation of the idea that contemptible matter could ever be capable of such a sublime process as abstract thought. Why, he asks ingeniously (or ingenuously), does not the very fact that his correspondent quits the material pleasures of her notoriously gay city for the rigours of abstract thought involved in translating Locke, itself afford an irrefutable disproof of materialism and itself constitute an invincible demonstration of the general superiority of mind over matter? Perhaps only Ganganelli's fellow (Anglican) bishop, "the brilliant lunatic", Berkeley, could have convincingly answered that query.

Died of Fear of Dying

Pope Clement's correspondence first appeared in a French translation (from the Latin and Italian originals) in 1776, "with the permission" of the then King of France, the ill-fated Louis XVI. By this time, the brief but eventful pontificate of Clement XIV was over. The Jesuit order had been "abolished, abrogated and extinguished for ever" in the words of the Papal bull. Ganganelli had died

in 1774, allegedly poisoned by the Jesuits, whose precepts and practice upon the subject of regicide, had already demonstrated that they were quite capable of such a feat. On the whole, though, it seems more probable that (as a contemporary diplomat remarked) the pope "died of the fear of dying", as, for example, Oliver Cromwell had done before him. This is not the place, nor have I here the space, to recapitulate this spectacular drama. The Jesuits owed their eventual restoration to the outbreak of the French Revolution which made this crack "Praetorian guard" once again a necessity to the Church. Since then, there has never been another pope styled Clement.

All this however, still lay in the future when this fascinating volume of correspondence by Fr. Ganganelli was originally compiled. I can only hope that I shall not be accused of papal proclivities if I close by stating that I do not now propose to lend my copy of these presumably extremely rare *Letters of Pope Clement XIV* even to the most persistent borrower!

The Press and The Vatican Council

By DENIS WATKINS

THE EARLY PUBLICITY given to the Vatican Council ranged from the prattling gossip of the tabloids to the more serious appraisals of the quality papers. In most instances, however, the papers kept well clear of the controversial issues besetting the Roman Catholic Church. Generalisations and guarded comment were the order of the day. The world was regaled with tales of bishops who rode in buses; with pictures of benign old men gratuitously pronouncing their interminable blessings; and titivated with a multitude of stories of encounters between ordinary people and these Olympian beings. Usually there was a strong flavour of wonderment in the reports a sort of grateful amazement that the members of the Council should actually behave like ordinary humans.

The unusual reverence accorded to the Vatican Council was surprising in that it is apparently reserved for this body. While the United Nations, governments, business corporations or, indeed, other ecclesiastic bodies are all open to severe criticism, the Roman Catholic Council appears to have its own peculiar immunity. Its deliberations were treated with a delicacy which eschewed robust comment.

This prevailing press attitude, which continues to operate wherever Roman Catholic activities are concerned, results in an impression being given of acknowledgment of the superior—if not supernatural—powers of the Roman Catholic Church. There seemed to be a general feeling that the Vatican Council transcended secular activities and that it possessed intrinsic qualities which caused it to deserve unquestioning respect. An impression came through that to rock the Vatican boat was to interfere with the God-guided destiny of mankind. Even non-Roman Catholic Churches, recently inimical in their attitude to Rome, rushed, with indecent haste, to be identified as belonging to the vanguard of those wishing the Vatican Council well.

The result of all this was to accede to Rome the authority and pre-eminence which it has never hesitated to claim. Disinterested observers must surely have seen the almost whimsical humour in the priests' smiling acceptance of the acknowledgments of their superiority. The other religious bodies, in grotesque self-deception, at present see themselves as the partners of Rome in the coming resurgence of a united Christendom. Partnership is, of course, very far from the Roman Catholic mind and the priests cheerfully watch the stray lambs head for the fold.

There is, however, only one fold and its shepherd is the Pope.

The press prides itself on its power to shape public opinion and on its influence on policy-making bodies. Where the Vatican Council was concerned, however, it appeared to regard the offering of advice as presumptuous. The real reason, one suspects being its sensitivity about circulation figures: fear of the effects of offending a particularly virulent section of the population. Roman Catholics are open to manipulation *en masse* by their priests, whose readiness to use their powers in the interests of their Church is well known. While small sporadic pockets of dissatisfaction are not a force to cause concern to the press, the full weight of the Roman Catholic population is a different matter.

As a result the Vatican Council was left to its deliberations without being subjected to the normal pressures one would expect to operate where important and controversial issues were involved. Papers noted that certain questions would be discussed, that Italian dominance might be queried, even quoted a few Catholic lay critics, but shirked any serious assessments. Many Roman Catholic doctrines are morally indefensible and painfully vulnerable to reasoned criticism. But where a shift in policy is likely to prove beneficial to the Vatican, amazingly ingenious interpretations of absolutely binding and unambiguous doctrines can be produced. In making no attempt to force the Vatican to change some of its indefensible, and cruel laws, the press relinquished an outstanding opportunity of contributing to the sum total of human happiness. In Britain, a country rich in scepticism and healthy irreverence, the press allowed itself to be muzzled by its own apprehension.

UNFAIR PLAY

WE HEAR a lot about the slump in church attendances, said a "Regular Reader" of the Watford (Herts) *Observer* (16/11/62), and some people blame TV. "The public is playing fair with the Church", he went on, "but is the Church playing fair with the public?" Certainly not in the instance he cited, where funds were collected to build a rectory, and the site then sold at a profit for the building of a shop. Many citizens of Watford had subscribed for the rectory, said the reader, but they have never been offered any compensation.

George Eliot and Religion

By H. CUTNER

IN THE DAYS—far away, alas—when I was busy reading all the masterpieces of English literature which I could beg, buy, or borrow, the name of George Eliot loomed very large as the greatest of our women novelists. Not to have read *Adam Bede* or *Middlemarch* showed a lamentable lack of culture. If I felt that *Pride and Prejudice* or even *Jane Eyre* interested me more, I had reluctantly to conclude that this was because I really needed more culture, for most, if not all, literary critics could hardly conceal what Professor Sainsbury called “the extravagant heights” to which they had raised her reputation.

Whether George Eliot—she was born Mary Ann Evans in 1819—is still read to the extent she was in the latter part of the 19th century, I do not know for certain, but I doubt it. One has to have plenty of time to read—and I do not mean skip—*Middlemarch*, a book so packed with observation and character-drawing and everything that makes a novel a work of art, that I believe it is still put above *Vanity Fair* or *David Copperfield*. I do not share this opinion, but *Middlemarch* is certainly a great novel.

Later, when I began to read the opinions of eminent Freethinkers on great novelists I found that many of them looked upon George Eliot as not only an “unbeliever” but as quite “irreligious”, and it was only years later that I learnt for myself something like the truth about her religious opinions.

Brought up in a strict Nonconformist atmosphere, she was in her teens when she became known to the Hennell family and encountered a sturdy Freethinker in Charles Bray who, forgotten these days, was well known in his own as the author of a number of “unbelieving” works.

The Hennell family was a remarkable one, for it was Charles Christian Hennell who became famous for his *Enquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity* (1838) a work much praised later by J. M. Robertson and which, I am sorry to say, I have not had the luck to come across. It was his sister who married Bray, and another sister Sarah (or Sara) who in 1857 won a prize of £20 for her *Christianity and Infidelity: an Exposition of the Arguments on Both Sides*—another work I have not seen. She gave both sides an equal chance, confirms Robertson.

Hennell's own book was highly praised by D. F. Strauss whose much more famous and thorough work, *Life of Jesus*, had appeared a year earlier. Strauss had Hennell's translated into German with a flattering preface of his own, and Robertson adds it “fully deserves Strauss's praise”.

It was in this milieu that young Mary Ann Evans grew up, and one result was, she undertook the heavy task of translating Strauss's *Life of Jesus* into English (1846). An earlier attempt at translating Strauss's work had been made by (I think) J. C. Blumenfeld and published in penny numbers by H. Hetherington, but I have not been able to trace it. Blumenfeld is credited with the anonymous *Existence of Christ Disproved* (1841) also published by Hetherington—a brilliant work about which I hope to write one day.

Whether it was an heroic task translating Strauss, or because George Eliot was inherently religious and was quite unable to shake off the very strong influence of Methodism during her early days, it is impossible to say. But she appears—to me at least—never to have been influenced by the almost thunderous attack against the myths of Christianity she must have found in the great

work of Strauss. It is a great work, but Strauss appears to me to have been not a little frightened at his own temerity, for he says in his preface, “the author is well aware that the essence of the Christian faith is perfectly independent of his criticism”. In his book he is literally merciless in his thorough exposure of the myths which form the basis of Christianity, but they really don't matter after all!

And that really was the position of George Eliot and, for that matter, of Hennell also. According to Professor Basil Willey in his brilliant *Nineteenth Century Studies*, Hennell was thorough in exposing “the accretions of imagination and myth”, the “gradual elevation of Jesus” to the “status of incarnate ‘logos’”, and finally, “to that of God”. But it was all done in a very reverent manner. Hennell showed that the Gospels could not have been written by “eye-witnesses”, and that John “attributes to Jesus long theological discourses in a style utterly different” from the first three Gospels, and so on.

It was after his book was published that Hennell became aware of Robert Taylor's *Diegesis*, which he found contained “an immense deal of learning” and was “honest-hating, reckless, witty, abusive, take-hold-of-anything special pleading”, though he was convinced that “he [Hennell] was nearest the truth”. He obviously did not realise—perhaps he could not—that the *Diegesis* was at least 100 years before its time.

But however that may be, the fact remains that if anybody influenced George Eliot it was Hennell and not Taylor. In 1854 she translated Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity* just before she left England for a time with George Henry Lewes, that much under-estimated writer and brilliant thinker whose *Problems of Life and Mind* so much influenced the philosophic outlook of the late Chapman Cohen. Her connection with Lewes influenced her to turn to writing fiction in which she certainly won fame and “immortality”.

But she was throughout obsessed with religion, or perhaps I should say, with conduct influenced more by ethics than with actual religious dogmas. In fact, there are numerous passages in her books full of ethical ideas and teaching based on perhaps a reverent Secularism. Professor Willey puts it this way:

The suppression of God by Humanity, of Faith by Love and Sympathy, the elimination of the supernatural, the elevation of the natural, the subordination of intellect to heart, thought to feeling—these may all be found in her novels as well as in her letters. Heaven will not help us, so we must help one another . . .

All the same, this engendered “a wide tolerance and reverence for all religious forms which have expressed, and still express, the primary needs of the human heart”. In fact, “merely negative kinds of ‘freethinking’” were hateful. And she added in a letter (1863) quoted by Professor Willey,

Pray don't ever ask me again not to rob a man of his religious belief, as if you thought my mind tended to such robbery. I have too profound a conviction of the efficacy that lies in all sincere faith, and the spiritual blight that comes with no faith, to have any negative propagandism in me. In fact I have very little sympathy with Freethinkers as a class, and have lost all interest in mere antagonism to religious doctrines. I care only to know, if possible, the lasting meaning that lies in all religious doctrine from the beginning till now.

No doubt this is a sentiment, as Professor Willey adds, (Concluded on next page)

This Believing World

In his interview with Dr. Israel Brodie, who is the Chief Rabbi in Britain, Mr. Malcolm Muggeridge did not look half so depressed as he did with the ex-Archbishop of Canterbury. Whatever Freethinkers may think of Dr. Brodie's basic beliefs, he answered every question with dignity, and shirked none.

★

Horror of Horrors! The "Sunday Pictorial" (November 4th) reported that "lipstick" had actually been found on that holiest of holies—a chalice, and it was the special kind of lipstick which won't come off. The Rev. Guy Potter of All Saints Church, Alton, Hants, thinks this is "hardly reverent"—a delightful understatement. Mr. Potter also complains that his girl parishioners make holes in church hassocks with their stiletto heels. With blatant unbelief resulting in smaller and smaller congregations, and Sunday excursions in motor cars helping the obvious decline in religion, our poor parsons never had it so bad, and feel more and more that they are not needed—even without such irritating additions as lipstick and stiletto heels.

★

But it becomes even worse when our clergy realise that in these hectic days something like 31 per cent of Christian brides are pregnant before they enter the holy state of matrimony, though it is true that half of these prefer a register office marriage to a white one in church. So the Rev. A. Methven of St. Michael's, Sydenham, appeals to all brides, pregnant or not, to come to church to be married. After all "our Lord" saw precious little harm in adultery!

★

The decline in holy reverence for Jesus has even descended into our new grammar schools. For example, one in Highcliffe, Hants, has just spent £250 on a statue of Christ to be erected in the school, and this has been strongly criticised by some Christians as an unnecessary waste of money. In fact, as the London *Evening Standard* reported (November 15th), one critic said: "This statue has nothing to do with education. It is just decoration". But surely, even if a statue is merely a shaped block of stone, the representation of "our Lord" infuses everybody with true education, in fact, the *only* true education, that of Christianity? We always thought that Jesus was the greatest educationalist that ever lived. Is this no longer true?

★

We had no idea that the Ghost Club, an association which loves hunting out spooks from haunted houses has been in existence 100 years, and still meets in London every month to discuss witchcraft, vampires, flying saucers, dervishes, and even such a modern mystery as the elusive inhabitant of Loch Ness. The secretary, Miss Muriel Hillier, is one of the privileged members, because she is "psychic" herself, and on Sundays acts as a medium. She, like many other members, has seen many ghosts, and this she declares, "makes one unafraid of death".

★

We are not surprised that most spooks take the form of nuns and cloaked figures, and though they are all "spirits", they never have any difficulty in wearing heavy clanking chains, and making a row with their heavy footsteps. And we have never been able to understand why the vehicles in which spooks ride furiously through deserted villages are always of the seventeenth century or earlier. Can't a motor car just for once come along in spirit form and thus confound the silly sceptics?

One aspect of the Common Market never touched upon by Mr. Heath and his colleagues is religion, and this appears to have been specially noticed by a Jesuit, Father Corbishley of Farm Street Church, London. He rightly points out that we ought to look at the wonderful religious links with the Continent that the Market will give. It will link us up with a "family of mainly Christian nations". Nothing could be more welcome to Protestant England than having predominantly Catholic nations on its doorstep, and the hope of "unity", that is, Catholic unity, would be so immeasurably strengthened. Needless to add, Fr. Corbishley discreetly left out the word "Catholic" and spoke instead of "Christian". The only true Christians are Catholics.

GEORGE ELIOT AND RELIGION

(Concluded from page 379)

"which would have been echoed by Coleridge, Carlyle, Maurice, Arnold, Sidgwick and many others", but they and George Eliot shirked the real question, which was not what was "the lasting meaning in all religious doctrine", but was it true?

Neither Hennell, Strauss nor Feuerbach had actually much influence with George Eliot when it came to a reverent religious feeling. I read somewhere—I have not checked it—that in the biography written by the man she married after the death of Lewes (J. W. Cross), he says that she always prayed before going to bed and read her Bible regularly with devotion.

She admitted as late as 1863 that "we can never have a satisfactory basis for the history of the man Jesus, but that negation does not affect the Idea of the Christ either in its historical influence or in great symbolic meanings". A hundred years after she wrote that, she would have found here kindred souls in such "idealism". This is a "religion" against which neither historical evidence nor any logic could possibly prevail.

I found a good deal of this out before I read Professor Willey's fascinating volume, and against a lot of articles by Freethinkers trying to prove that George Eliot was with them, I came to the conclusion she was not. She was in truth still dazzled by religion, by "something in religion" to the end of her life.

"THE AMERICAN RATIONALIST"

WE ARE pleased to report that from January *The American Rationalist* will be published monthly, instead of bi-monthly as now. This decision was taken at a meeting of members of the Rationalist Association in St. Louis. A monthly publication, they declared, "can serve our cause better by reporting Freethought news quicker and printing more articles of interest to our readers. We consider it our foremost duty to keep our subscribers informed about Freethought events . . .". The new subscription rate will be \$4.50 per year, \$8.00 for two years, payable to PO Box 1762, St. Louis 99, Missouri, U.S.A.

WITHOUT COMMENT

If parents cannot give their children the Christian faith . . . they cannot blame young people for admiring gang leaders, emulating pop singers, giving themselves to the juke box and the Twist and worshipping money.—Mrs. Ronald Halifax, Central President of the Mothers' Union (*Evening Standard*, 16/11/62).

NEXT WEEK

BBC BROADCAST

"ATHEISM"

Burke and Paine Together

By CHRISTOPHER BRUNEL

IN TERMS of circulation and influence Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* was an instant success, from the time it was first published early in 1791. Paine was attacked and vilified, his publishers cruelly persecuted, yet editions of *The Rights of Man* continued to be printed. Later, a conspiracy of silence about Paine spread, and with a few notable exceptions, such as G. O. Trevelyan, historians failed to mention him. But more editions came out, and still do.

I welcome any fresh publication of Paine's writings, not just as a part of restoring to him the credit denied him for many years; rather, because it is a reaffirmation of the lasting qualities of his works. This time he is teamed with one of his adversaries, Edmund Burke, for preceding *The Rights of Man* in the same paper binding is Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Dolphin Books, New York, distributed in Britain by W. H. Allen, 10s.). It was Burke's book, published on November 1st, 1790, that prompted Paine to set down the principles of democratic government in *The Rights of Man*.

Edmund Burke and Thomas Paine had been on the same side in supporting the American Revolution, and both might have been expected to support the Revolution taking place in France—certainly in its early days, before the guillotine got busy. What made Burke defect? There is little doubt that he was given a secret Government pension, and that did the trick, though Burke denied this, and in a memorandum to Pitt in 1794 implied that the Government had never rewarded him in any way for his various services. (The letter is published by Earl Stanhope in a collection of *Miscellanies*, 1863.)

This brief introduction perhaps helps to explain the queer theory Burke put forward in his *Reflections*, that some hundred years before "in the cornerstone of our constitution" the Declaration of Rights had taken the rights of the people and vested them in monarchy for all time. In opposing the ideas of such as Dr. Price, who had said, according to Burke, "that by the principles of the Revolution the people of England have acquired three fundamental rights" to choose our own governors, to cashier them for misconduct, and to frame a government for ourselves, Burke said that the people of England would have no share of Price's "unheard-of bill of rights", they would utterly disclaim it and resist it with their lives and fortunes.

Burke's *Reflections*, undoubtedly one of his greatest works, was full of erudition to sweeten the pill of his reaction. But Paine sweeps it all away. The first thing to note is that *The Rights of Man* is spiced with well perceived jibes, such as:

I cannot consider Mr. Burke's book in scarcely any other light than a dramatic performance; and he must, I think, have considered it in the same light himself, by the poetical liberties he has taken of omitting some facts, distorting others, and making the machinery bend to produce a stage effect.

—and Paine proceeds to answer the misrepresentations regarding the storming of the Bastille and other events of the French Revolution.

More than once, too, he answers Burke's fundamental theory. "The rights of man", writes Paine, "are the rights of all generations of men and cannot be monopolised by any. That which is worth following, will be followed for the sake of its worth". Whatever the constitution or government, argues Paine, it ought to have no other object than the *general* happiness, but when government creates and increases wretchedness in any section of society, "it is a wrong system, and reformation is necessary".

That sort of writing hit the nail right on the head in the Britain of the 1790s (and many might argue that it can be applied to Harold Macmillan's Britain, too). It was bad enough that the great Burke was taken apart at his seams, but Paine did far more than engage in a polemic with a publicist for the ruling class—he was putting clear thoughts into the minds of a suffering people. John Brewster sums it up nicely in *A Secular Essay: Containing a Retrospective View of Events, Connected with the Ecclesiastical History of England, during the Eighteenth Century; with Reflections on the State of Practical Religion in that Period*, in 1802 (no need to explain what side this cleric was on), in saying that what brought *The Rights of Man* under the clutches of the law was that it proposed to combine practice with principle.

Because Paine was not an armchair democrat, reaction was afraid of both the man and his works. The persecution of some of those who published *The Rights of Man* makes the present disgraceful treatment of *Der Spiegel* journalists in West Germany seem mild—and, because I, too, am no armchair democrat, I insist on quoting a case of present-day suffering to illustrate my point that *The Rights of Man* is still valuable today, because it is perhaps the clearest statement of the principles of democratic government in its widest and most liberal sense.

The two books in the same volume make an interesting and useful historical contrast. With a total of 515 pages, 10s. is not expensive for a paperback.

Pilgrims Transgress

By DENIS COBELL

"PASSPORT PHOTOGRAPHS can infuriate the least vain of men—'Surely I am better looking than that? Next time I'll go to a man who knows his job.' Maybe, but it's good for our pride. And that is my reaction to Paul Ferris's picture of the Church of England." So wrote the Bishop of Southwark in his review in the *Evening Standard* of Paul Ferris's book, *The Church of England* (Gollancz, 25s.). Dr. Stockwood indicates in this review that he thinks a lot of the criticism in the book is valid—and as a member of the hierarchy of the Established Church, whose photograph has appeared in the popular press, showing him enjoying a pint of beer outside the George Inn, Southwark (nearest public house to THE FREETHINKER office), he may be taken more seriously than many clergy. He is definitely a member of the Anglican *avant garde*—his sermons attracted large undergraduate congregations in Cambridge. Unfortunately the greater majority of the clergy are far behind him, as Mr. Ferris's book shows.

Mr. Ferris makes many remarks of which the Free-thinker is well aware: "The Church has a privileged position, and large numbers of young men who are going to have power in politics, law, management and teaching get several years of compulsory attendance at chapel, once daily and sometimes twice on Sundays. Confirmation is 'the done thing'." Against this it is helpful to know that Dr. Ramsey "personally expects to meet atheists in Heaven". I wonder if F. A. Ridley and H. Cutner expect to meet him there? I presume the Archbishop thinks that the Atheist is entitled to a position in Heaven by his virtue in forsaking position in this world! But of course, this is not the whole situation. God still has his mentors on earth: "The headmaster of one leading school said it was

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

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

London Branches—Kingston, Marble Arch, North London: (Marble Arch), Sundays, from 4 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER, C. E. WOOD, D. H. TRIBE, J. P. MURACCIOLE, J. A. MILLAR

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

Manchester Branch NSS (Car Park, Victoria Street), Sunday evenings.

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

North London Branch NSS (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY

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

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch NSS (Midland Institute, Paradise Street), Sunday, December 2nd, 6.45 p.m.: W. LINDESAY-NEUSTAITER, MRCP, "Homosexual Law Reform".

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Tuesday, December 4th, 7.30 p.m.: HECTOR HAWTON, "Rationalism and the Puritan Tradition".

Hornchurch Humanist Society (Unitarian Hall, High Road, Ilford), Saturday, December 1st, 7.45 p.m.: I. LLEWELYN JONES, "The Problem of Alcoholism".

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, December 2nd, DEBATE: "Is Christianity True?". For: REV. BILL MATTHEWS; Against: T. M. MOSLEY (NSS).

Marble Arch Branch NSS (The Carpenter's Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1), Sunday, December 2nd, 7.30 p.m.: D. H. TRIBE, "I'm no Saint!"

North Staffordshire Humanist Group (Guildhall, High Street, Newcastle-under-Lyme), Friday, November 30th, 7.15 p.m.: A MEETING.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, December 2nd, 11 a.m.: H. L. BEALES, "The Scope of Social Policy".

Notes and News

THIS SUNDAY, Leicester Secular Society is staging a debate, "Is Christianity True?", between the Rev. Bill Matthews, vicar of Copt Oak, Leicester, and our own veteran propagandist Tom Mosley of Nottingham. The debate will be held in the Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate, Leicester, and should draw a good crowd. Next week, F. A. Ridley will be the speaker at Leicester, and his subject is "The Spartacus Revolution and Christian Origins". That debates still have a special appeal was demonstrated by the very large crowd at Tower Hill, London, at Thursday lunchtime, November 22nd, when the protagonists were Len Ebury and an evangelist preacher.

★

MRS. ANTONIA BRETTON, a 50-year-old Barking school-teacher, told a reporter of the *Dagenham Post* that she had been cured of "recurring gastric ulcers" at a divine healing session at the Full Gospel Church, Albany Road, Chadwell Heath. The cure, it was reported (14/11/62) "brought to an end 10 years of violent vomiting and terrible headaches every morning of her life". She was

praying in her bedroom when, "The Lord spoke to me and gave me a telephone number which I did not know and told me to ring there for help". To her, but not our, surprise, it turned out to be the church, and she accordingly attended campaign meetings conducted by evangelist William Harvey, and "decided to go forward". "I knew as I got up that I was going to be healed", Mrs. Bretton said. And, while Mr. Harvey was praying she "felt a sort of fluttering inside" and "knew" she was cured. We have written to Mrs. Bretton for rather more precise details.

★

"THE POINT I am making is that the concept of God and of religion in general, as we understand it from our Christian education, seems to me to belong to an outmoded view of the world." This is taken from an article by Professor Fred Hoyle in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (22/9/62), which has only just reached us. Other points made by Professor Hoyle included the following: "It is suggested sometimes that science seeks to explain how the universe began. My own answer to this, of course, is that I do not think it did begin. It was always there". "It is also asked: could not God exist outside space and time? But I do not understand what this means . . . The problems we scientists are able to grapple with are already difficult enough. We cannot afford to waste thought on such issues as this".

★

MR. R. RODERICK of Rhondda sends us a copy of a prayer which he tells us is circulating in parts of South Wales. It is a familiar enough form, claiming originally to have come from the Netherlands and to have been four times around the world. "The luck of it has been sent on to you. You are to have good luck a few days after receiving it. Do not keep this copy. Send it and four others to those who [*sic*] you wish good luck . . .". It is amazing how many people still fall for this sort of nonsense, and amazing how many more say, "Well you never know, what have I got to lose?" Incidentally, the examples given of good luck for continuing, and bad luck for breaking the chain, are both financial.

★

NOT all church rallies are dull, particularly if someone like 23-year-old Peter Hoare of Weybridge, a member of the Young People's Fellowship, is assigned to keeping order, as at Spurgeon's Tabernacle, Southwark, London. It seems that some youths began cat-calling during a solo, and Hoare went to quieten them. He succeeded for a time but soon the noise started again and "four or five youths came down from the gallery towards Hoare and made threatening gestures" (*South London Press*, 16/11/62). Hoare "drew two knives from his belt to defend himself" and an off-duty policeman arrested him. Admitting five previous convictions, Hoare said: "I was only defending myself. I didn't mean to bring the knives with me and I didn't mean to show them. I pulled them out and then put them back".

★

"WE CANNOT honour laws made for a primitive tribe in deserts of Palestine some 4,000 years ago, and even the reformed Jewish laws of Christ are out of date", said the *South London Press* in its editorial of the same date on the Belgian thalidomide trial. This virile and outspoken paper, published twice weekly, is edited by Eric Kinton, who last week lectured most interestingly to Marble Arch Branch of the National Secular Society on "The Churches and the Press".

★

MR. ERIC MORLEY, an executive of Mecca Ltd., "the biggest bingo operators in London" (*The People*, 18/11/62) would like each bingo session to begin with a short prayer.

not his practice to take atheism seriously. He added, without irony, that he told boys there was such a thing as respect for other people's opinions; they had to read the Lessons in chapel even if they were convinced of their own lack of belief. 'In the last resort,' he said, 'this is simply a question of good manners. If you don't believe you can get out! I'd rather not have that quoted.'

It is reasonable to assume that most of the criticism in this book will flow above the heads of the clergy. Mr. Ferris is a journalist, and as such has no right to intrude on an organisation which is "not a bureau for furthering sound morals or a pressure-group for better behaviour, but the place men arrive at in order to worship God". It is difficult, as the writer of the preface to *Crockfords* 1962 edition also found, to alienate the Church from the world: indeed, Dr. Matthews, Dean of St. Paul's is worried, and has written recently concerning spiritual values, that, "without them we should be no more than a large commercial undertaking" (*Daily Telegraph*, 10/11/62). The Anglican Church certainly flourishes commercially—on the Stock Exchange. It also held a service of thanksgiving in a City church for directors of Courtaulds after their successful victory over ICI, earlier this year. It seems the days of praying for rain may not yet be over!

Mr. Ferris had a difficult task. The Church of England is so rambling, and diversities abound. Compare the young intellectual clergyman: "The historical question of whether He rose from the dead doesn't matter" with the principal of a low, evangelical, Church college, who had a photograph of Billy Graham on his office desk, signed "With affectionate regards, Billy". I know which attitude I prefer, but one could argue why should the former be bothered with the Church at all? Its pillars are an affront to his reason, which is obviously the power he uses most in pastoral work. I think Mr. Ferris's book indicates some weaknesses of the Church of England, but I doubt if it will play much part in its disestablishment; allowing it rather to continue more or less like any other private body. This, though, is a course many clergy would welcome. Still, I think all Freethinkers should borrow this book from their public library. It is heartening.

The Myth Theory

By "HISTORICUS"

AS ONE who has read THE FREETHINKER for many years and, also, as one who has keenly admired its contents and editorship, I should like to be permitted to make a few remarks anent Mr. F. A. Ridley's article, "The Jews and Jesus" (September 21st, 1962). I have just read Mr. H. Cutner's rejoinder "Still Unrepentant", October 5th, 1962) which I believe meets amply Mr. Ridley's main strictures and should like to add, as an old "mythicist", a few observations on the subjects.

I do not think it is necessary for Mr. Ridley to evaluate Mr. Cutner's various articles on the myth theory with the following line: "Mr. Cutner really ought not to allow his apparent *obsession* with one particular theory of Christian origins (the mythicist) to destroy so obviously his critical faculty in approaching the literature of a bygone age". (Emphasis not in original.)

Throughout the many years that I have, myself, engaged in polemics regarding the myth theory as against the so-called historic one, I don't recall anyone calling his opponent "obsessed". The pivot of the problem is whether there is an historic person in the *Gospel Jesus*. As John M. Robertson pointed out in his *The Jesus Problem*, though every cult has an *historic causation* this does by no

means entail that "the historic basis must be the historicity of the God or Demigod round whose name the cult centres" (p. 18).

If the Church destroyed a vast amount of material critical of its beliefs and tenets, it, likewise, invented a lot of non-historic "records". The Gospels appeared much later than the alleged ministry of Jesus. Their authorship is unknown and we certainly can't accept them as being certified copies of the originals . . . if there had been any "originals". The case is put very succinctly, again by John M. Robertson, as follows:

One hypothesis might, indeed, be hazarded to save the possibility of an actual evangel by the Founder. If, taking him to be historical, we assume him to have preached a political doctrine subversive of the Roman rule, and to have thereby met his death, we could understand that, in a later period in which the writers connected with the movement were much concerned to conciliate the Romans, it might have been felt expedient, and indeed imperative, to suppress the facts. They would not specify the evangel, because they dared not. On this view the Founder was a Messiah of the ordinary Jewish type, aiming at the restoration of the Jewish State. But such a Jesus would not be the "Jesus of the Gospels" at all. He would merely be a personage of the same (common) name, who in no way answered to the Gospel figure, but had been wholly denaturalised to make him a cult-centre. *On this hypothesis there has been no escape from the "myth-theory", but merely a restatement of it.* (Emphasis not in original.—*The Historical Jesus*, p. 56.)

The present writer recalls the late Joseph McCabe's castigation of the mythicists as a "hotch potch of amateur historians" and my answer to that charge is recorded in three articles (*Truth Seeker*, January and September, 1944 and May, 1945). Mr. McCabe also readily admitted that, "We cannot be sure of a single biographical detail about Jesus if we follow the ordinary historical principles, so it is not a matter of great importance whether there was such a person or not". (*How Christianity Grew out of Paganism*, p. 13.)

The keenly analytic mind of Albert Kalthoff saw the significance of the fact that the whole of the older Church, including the New Testament rejected the notion of a human founder of Christianity. The late Archibald Robertson with whom I corresponded for over seventeen years on the subject and who was a staunch historicist himself had this to say about the pros and cons of the problem: "If we had to choose between the mythicist interpretation and the view which tries to explain Christianity by the genius of a personal founder, we should have to pronounce for the myth theory as more scientific." (*The Monthly Record*, South Place Ethical Society, March 1945, p. 10.)

Mr. Ridley, whose writings I follow with keen interest and delight may not like Mr. Cutner's position on the question or his manner of critical approach, but, I don't think it is quite fair to opine that Mr. Cutner "appears to regard the whole question of Christian origins more from the present-day point of view of actually scoring points in current debates with modern Christians than in finding out what *did* actually happen". Mr. Cutner's writings and books on the subject amply attest throughout the many years he has appeared in Freethought journals that he hasn't skimmed lightly over the field.

CORRESPONDENCE

FOR THE RECORD

I appreciate your kind and continuous publicity for the works of Emmett McLoughlin in THE FREETHINKER. Being a kind of "nut" on accuracy, I was bothered to note that in your pleasant plug on page 317 of the October 5th issue, you give your readers some sales figures for the books which aren't precise.

There are 41,000 copies of *American Culture and Catholic Schools* in print—so a sale of 70,000 would be hard to imagine. Our books don't divide into holy trinitities!

At any rate, I wanted you to know this for the record. As for *Crime and Immorality in the Catholic Church*: You mentioned that the *Chicago Tribune* had turned down advertising for the book. So has the *New York Times*, *The Reporter*, *The Atlantic*, and all other nationally consequential magazines and periodicals to whom such advertising was offered. Many bookshops, frightened by the title, haven't stocked the book. Many who've stocked it, have hidden it. And even the jobbers haven't all listed the book though they have all stocked it.

Meanwhile, the finishing touches are being put to a new book by McLoughlin!

Cordial greetings, and again, our thanks for your consistent support. LYLE STUART (New York).

CHARLES BRADLAUGH AND ATHEISM

I received THE FREETHINKER (2/11/62) with Mr. Colin McCall's reply to my remarks on Charles Bradlaugh. Since I believe in the complete freedom of the press, I shall reprint it in *The Word* either in December or January. My reply will be (I expect) very brief, for really it is only one point. I do not think the Richard Carlile statement was poetic, although wonderfully expressed. I think Bakunin's statement might have had a flourish, but was correct as a statement of attitude. Bakunin always wrote with a flourish. In this respect he differed from Marx.

I think Bradlaugh's statement overly cautious but it comes to exactly the same conclusion as that of Carlile and myself at the end. It does mean that *there is no God*. I put aside the mysticism with which Carlile played at the end of his life. I do not share this mysticism, which I consider a kind of subjective nonsense. Carlile was indulging himself a little. He deserved to do so if it pleased him, but I think that it was most unfortunate and somewhat unhappy. But he remained an Atheist just the same.

GUY A. ALDRED (Editor, *The Word*).

TRYPHO

I find myself in general agreement with your contributor, Mr. J. Rosse (16/11/62) in his attitude towards Christian origins. But I find his identification of Justin Martyr's antagonist, Trypho, to be very unlikely. Actually, I was already aware that this identification has been suggested, and before composing my own article on Trypho, I took the trouble to read the biographical article in *The Jewish Encyclopedia* on Rabbi Tarfon. It never even mentions Trypho in connection with Tarfon.

Actually, had Tarfon, apparently next to Akiba the most famous Rabbi of the age (early 2nd century), ever engaged in public controversy with the also Palestinian (Greek) Justin Martyr, surely Jewish tradition would have preserved some record of such an encounter between such celebrated protagonists of their respective creeds as Tarfon versus Justin Martyr; particularly since Tarfon was the recognised anti-Christian Jewish champion of his day. According to *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, Tarfon carried his hatred of nascent Christianity to such a point that he actually instructed his disciples to burn the Gospels, despite the fact that they contained the sacred name of God, which by Jewish custom should have rendered them sacrosanct.

Accordingly I think it to be much more likely that Trypho was either (as I suggested in my reply to Mr. Cutner) a Christian "Aunt Sally" put up by Justin Martyr, in order to demolish Jewish current criticisms; or else he was some kind of a Jewish heretic putting forward (according to Mr. Cutner) the quite un-Jewish view that Jesus never existed. Evidently the rabbis did not regard Trypho very seriously, or else some record of him would still survive in Jewish circles.

Whilst upon this topic, it may be of interest to note that the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Israel Brodie, in a recent TV appearance (since my article was written), whilst sharply criticising certain features in the Gospel story (*viz*: the trial of Jesus by the Sanhedrin, etc.) nowhere questioned the historicity of at least some kind of Jesus. This surely indicates, what I stated in my article, *viz*., that the "Mythicist" theory forms no part of the recognised Jewish tradition about Jesus; a point recently still further demonstrated in these columns with appropriate citations from Jewish rabbinical literature by my friend, "Akiba".

COMMUNIST ATHEISM

Reading Mr. Charles Doran's letter (16/11/62) on the superiority of Communist Atheism over our native inferior brands reminds me of a serious oversight in a letter of mine you were kind enough to print recently emphasising Russian excellence generally. I should of course have mentioned that our Soviet peace-fighting friends have the best Atheists. This oversight, in a letter to THE FREETHINKER, was unpardonable, and I hope you may be able to find space for this *amende*.

It is most encouraging to read in the papers of the heroic resistance that the Chinese Atheists put up against the aggressive Indian warmongers—superstitious tribesmen egged on by their property-owning holy men. This must be a great comfort to Mr. Doran, since of course the Chinese Atheists are Communist Atheists.

W. E. NICHOLSON.

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