

# The Freethinker

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IN THAT HOLY OF HOLIES of secular learning and rational thought, the Reading Room of the British Museum, upon that hallowed spot where (within a few years of each other) Karl Marx applied to the world-structure of his contemporary society that literary nuclear bomb entitled *Das Kapital*, and where the Russian theologian Vladimir Soloviev actually saw the Holy Trinity (all three of them in person—or so he said!), I recently encountered an American scholar then engaged upon a scarcely less exciting task. For he was preparing a thesis upon the intriguing and certainly historically interesting theme of the Anabaptist “Kingdom” of Munster (Westphalia) in 1534-5. At first sight it might well seem that this undeniably interesting, though certainly unusual line of study represented an odd, and perhaps even a risky undertaking for an American scholar to tackle in this year of grace and of the Cold War 1963; one that only a few years back might have entangled its learned student within the fell clutches of the late Senator McCarthy’s notorious Committee for un-American Activities. For were not the Anabaptists, including especially those who set up the 16th century “Reign of the Saints” in Munster, dangerous revolutionaries, and did they not represent the contemporary “Red” (or even Crimson) Peril in the eyes of all the contemporary leaders of church and state, including both Luther and the pope?

Nor are the criminal tenets of the Anabaptists of merely ancient memory. For every time we open the Book of Common Prayer (as no doubt readers of *THE FREETHINKER* constantly do) we will find amongst the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England, that number 28 warns us against the Communistic practices of the Anabaptists: “property is not to be held in common as the Anabaptists do vainly boast”, etc., etc. The originally German Bruderhof, whom I visited recently in their present domicile in Shropshire, represent a still surviving off-shoot of the Anabaptist movement, and still practice a modified form of Christian communism. However, apparently American students are nowadays allowed to write books about Communism, provided it is four hundred years old, and thus preceded the Declaration of Independence. Or can it possibly be that President Kennedy and the FBI have never even heard of the Anabaptist “Kingdom of Munster”?

**“History is Bunk”**  
As I had occasion to point out recently (in connection with the classical Servile revolution led by Spartacus), the modern student of such ancient movements of social protest finds himself up against all sorts of difficulties if he attempts a sympathetic, or even a reasonably objective account of these ancient “enemies of society” such as the classical Spartacists and the medieval Anabaptists. For all their extant historians were their bitterest enemies; while democracy and the democratic toleration of minority opinions were conspicuous by their absence, particularly

in the age of the Reformation. As far as the short-lived, but spectacular “Kingdom of Munster” was concerned—as in the earlier case of the Spartacist revolution in Ancient Rome—all that we positively know about these sensational events which yet probably shook their contemporary social orders to their foundations, could be written down in a single exercise book. Speculation, bias, and often enough demonstrable slander actually make up the bulk of all extant accounts.

In the case of the Anabaptists, when theological bigotry (both Catholic and Protestant) combined with political and economic hostility, perhaps less is known than of any other radical

## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### *Communists of the Reformation*

(*The Anabaptists of Munster*)

By F. A. RIDLEY

movement, and I can probably relate all that is known (as distinct from what has been stated or conjectured) about the Anabaptist “kingdom” in the course of the next paragraph. For unless my American acquaintance, who has now optimistically gone to Munster to look for still surviving clues, happens to stumble upon some contemporary documents which would almost be an “Act of God” at this time of day, we shall probably never know any more than we do at present about the Anabaptist “kingdom” of Jan of Leyden, which struck such universal terror in its contemporary Europe. For when, as in the case of virtually all subversive movements in church and state, their historians are invariably their enemies, Henry Ford’s controversial comment, “history is bunk”, is, by and large, correct.

#### **Social Heresies**

The Anabaptists, the stepfathers, as one may term them, of the present Baptist Churches, represented the extreme left of the Reformation, so much so indeed, that the more orthodox reformers like Luther and Calvin disavowed them completely and Anabaptist appears to have become a contemporary term of abuse, much like Communism or Fascism in various contemporary circles. From the theological point of view, it is rather difficult to comprehend this furore since, apart from their practice of adult baptism (from which the sect derived its name), their tenets do not appear to have been very sensational, or even to have gone much beyond what Luther himself had stated at the inception of his movement.

For example, the Anabaptists are stated to have advocated religious toleration, but then so did both Luther and Calvin at the start of their reforming careers. Probably the Protestant historian of Anabaptism is correct in stating that it was their social, rather than their contemporary theological heresies that got them so bad a name. In particular, their communism, real or alleged, brought upon their heads systematic persecution by both the Catholic and Protestant orthodoxy of the 16th century, backed to the full by all contemporary secular rulers. Even the relatively tolerant Elizabeth of England sent Anabaptists to the stake. As in the case of other persecuted religious movements of an originally peaceful character, it appears to have been the frightful persecu-

tions to which they were subjected in both Catholic and Protestant states alike, that drove them to take up arms against their oppressors as a counsel of despair. This they did in 1534 in the Westphalian town of Munster then under the feudal rule of a prince-bishop.

### "The Kingdom of Munster"

First invited to the town by a sympathetic burgomaster, the Anabaptists soon swarmed to the "New Jerusalem" from all over Northern Europe. Eventually, the saints seized power by an apparently unopposed *coup d'état* under the leadership of two Dutch Anabaptists, Jan Matthys and Jan of Leyden, both of whom successively reigned as "kings" of Munster. Matthys was killed in a sortie early on, but Jan of Leyden, having issued an invitation to all Anabaptists everywhere to come to the aid of the "New Jerusalem", proceeded to defy the prince-bishop, Franz von Waldeck and defied the power of the Holy Roman Empire, which promptly came to the aid of the Catholic prince-bishop. Whatever the truth of the fantastic deeds alleged to have been perpetrated by "King Jan" and his Anabaptist entourage, it seems evident that he was an able military leader, and that the Anabaptists fought with heroism (or fanaticism, the terms would be synonymous in such surroundings).

### The End

At least the "Kingdom of the Saints" defied the combined efforts of both the Catholic and Lutheran princes to suppress it since both Catholics and Protestants appear to have united in defence of law, order and property. The Anabaptists repulsed attack after attack for sixteen months, and the city, after holding out for a year, was eventually only taken by treachery. Since aid failed to reach them from the outside world, despite attempts at relief by Dutch Anabaptists, the end of the unequal struggle would appear to have been ultimately inevitable—as usually happens in social wars from the days of Spartacus to those of General Franco. The capture of Anabaptist Munster was followed by an appalling terror, "King Jan" and his lieutenants being torn to pieces alive with red-hot pincers in the presence of the restored Bishop of Munster. We learn that his episcopal Lordship of Munster went on reciting the seven Penitential Psalms whilst the butchery was proceeding, until the stench of burning flesh compelled the spectators to quit. Evidently the Nazi Gestapo had its predecessors in German history!

### Fact and Fiction

The above represents all, or at least pretty nearly all, that is known for certain about the "Kingdom of the Saints" in Munster from 1534-5. But it is not more than is known (sic) to its contemporary historians, both Catholic and Protestant alike, who regale us with all sorts of hair-raising stories about the goings-on of the "Saints" in the Munster "New Jerusalem". For if we are to believe them, Jan, on becoming "King Jan", not only kept a harem in imitation of King David ("the man after God's own heart") but then proceeded to "dance naked before the Lord" in the presence of his wives in imitation of that Biblical hero. From the same biased sources (from say, "Our correspondent in Munster"), the Saints literally put into force the Biblical injunction "the last shall be first and the first, last" by making the burgomaster public hangman and the public hangman, burgomaster.

How much, if any, truth there is in these obviously tall stories, we have now no means of ascertaining. But if only upon the time honoured principle that "the defendant is entitled to the benefit of the doubt", they are *ipso facto*

excluded from the purview of serious history. All that we know for certain is that the Anabaptist "kingdom" made a tremendous sensation in its contemporary Europe and that it must have been defended ably and bravely to have held out for so long. But we know little else. Even its alleged communism may have merely amounted to the war-rationing customary in a long siege. However, it would appear possible that the "kingdom" has left its traces upon English literature as well as on the Thirty-Nine Articles. For according to some modern historians, Bunyan's *Holy War* and *Pilgrim's Progress* incorporated actual incidents in the siege of Munster stories of which lingered on in Baptist circles.

## Convent Horror Exposed

WE DON'T know whether John Justice of *The People* read Margaret McLroy's Views and Opinions on his article on Adoption (THE FREETHINKER of April 19th was sent to him as well as to his editor). If he did, he might relate it to the front-page story in his own paper of April 21st, headlined, "Girls' Hair Shorn in Convent Horror". Mrs. McLroy, it will be remembered, pointed out that the real tragedy of adoption (overlooked by Mr. Justice) is that "thousands of 'Catholic' children are doomed to institution life because no Catholic couple wants them, and non-Catholics may not have them". A succession of nurses, she said, "or nuns, who are not permitted to form a personal attachment to any living creature, cannot replace loving parents".

It was at the orphanage of St. Martha's, Bundoran, in Co. Donegal, Ireland, run by the nuns of the Order of St. Louis, that the horror referred to in *The People* occurred, and it was exposed when Mrs. Bridget Daly, an Irish woman living in Alton, Hampshire went there in response to a letter from her daughter, Philomena, aged 13. "If only you saw us you would die", the girl wrote about herself and her two sisters, aged 14 and 12. "I beg you to get me out. Please pity me."

"The children had been thrashed with canes," *The People* reported. "Their hair had been cropped to within an inch of their scalps. They had been put on short rations. All for disobedience and playing truant."

A picture showed the three girls with their hair cropped, and a reporter told how they stood to attention like soldiers when they were introduced to him, and how it "took 30 minutes of gentle persuasion before they would open their frightened mouths to speak of the horror of St. Martha's", to which they had been sent by the Eire Ministry of Education when Mrs. Daly and her husband parted in 1956.

When Reverend Mother Martina, who is in charge of the convent orphanage, was asked about the treatment of the girls—and of five others who had also had their hair shorn off—she said: "Cutting off a girl's hair is a common punishment here. But it is administered only in extreme cases. What the girls did was inexcusable. We gave them the choice of choir singing or library attendance on a Sunday evening. But they didn't want to do either. Instead they played truant and gave us a bad scare. The second time they vanished we even had to call in the police".

Readers may feel that it is rather the nuns' conduct that is inexcusable. Even at its best, institution life is, as Mrs. McLroy indicated, no substitution for family life. At its worst, under frustrated celibate women, it can, as *The People* showed, be sheer hell.

# Bertrand Russell

By G. L. SIMONS

NO ARTICLE can do full justice to Bertrand Russell; no single book can either. For he is a man about whom whole libraries will be written in the future. But despite this, I feel it worthwhile to mention some of his remarkable achievements to indicate his stature to those people who are unfamiliar with his work. Much of the following information is derived from the excellent biography by Alan Wood, *Bertrand Russell—The Passionate Sceptic*.

A grandson of the Liberal Prime Minister, Lord John Russell, Bertrand Russell was born in 1872. He became an orphan when he was four and led a somewhat solitary childhood. At 15 he started to doubt the validity of the religion in which he had been brought up, and recorded his doubts in a diary, using Greek characters lest it be discovered. He also doubted Euclid, not satisfied with the necessity of having to assume certain axioms; he was delighted when he heard of non-Euclidean geometry.

At 18 he entered Trinity College, Cambridge and for the first time found that intelligence was not regarded as odd. At Cambridge he met men who were later, with himself, to dominate English philosophy. In his *Portraits from Memory*, Russell recalls and describes some of the interesting and important men whom he met. It seems that Russell derived more from conversation than actual tutorship; his Cambridge lecturers temporarily diverted him from empiricism, and for a time he became a follower of Kant, Hegel and Bradley.

In 1895, when 23, he went to Berlin and studied German politics at first hand. At that time both Communism and right-wing politics were active in Berlin. Russell condemned Prussian arrogance and although expressing sympathy and admiration for the *Communist Manifesto*, made his first (of several) hostile criticisms of Marxist philosophy. A year later his first book appeared—*German Social Democracy*. In the same year, at 24 he lectured in America on the logical nature of geometry; a second book appeared the following year. Three years later he lectured at Cambridge on Leibniz, presenting a new interpretation. True to form a new book appeared on Leibniz. This work enabled him to reject Hegel and Bradley and he began to organise a new philosophy based on "common sense tempered by mathematical logic". In his own words "The change in these years (1899-1900) was a revolution; subsequent changes have been of the nature of an evolution".

In 1900 he decided that the whole of mathematics was an extension of logic, and in a mighty prose work, *The Principles of Mathematics* (1903), began to establish this theory. And in 1903, with Professor Whitehead, started on what was to be the greatest creation of his life. *Principia Mathematica* took Russell and Whitehead ten years to write and is acknowledged universally as one of the great achievements of the human mind. In three volumes it runs to almost 2,000 pages and is largely cast in logical symbology, being an attempt to derive the whole of mathematics from the propositions and principles of pure logic.

Despite the work involved in producing *Principia Mathematica*, Russell somehow found the time for other writings and activities. In 1907 he stood for Parliament as a Liberal and was defeated. In 1908 he was made a Fellow of the Royal Society. In 1912 he wrote *The Problems of Philosophy*, which did much to establish him

as a philosopher. Numerous articles also appeared in *Mind* and similar publications.

In 1914 Russell was again lecturing in America, this time at Harvard on philosophy. These lectures formed the foundation of *Our Knowledge of the External World* which appeared in the same year and consolidated his reputation as a philosopher. Then came the First World War, and on returning to England Russell plunged into pacifist activities. (These are also recounted in *Portraits from Memory*.) In 1918, for criticising the government, Russell was committed to Brixton for six months. But the time was not wasted. He wrote *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* and did other important work. Because of his pacifist activities he was also dismissed from Cambridge.

In 1920 he visited Russia and China. In Russia he met Lenin and Trotsky; in China after lecturing in Peking, he contracted acute pneumonia and almost died. Professor Dewey wept at his bedside, and when Russell finally returned to England he had the pleasure of reading his obituary in *The Times*. In the nineteen twenties Russell wrote 15 books on such diverse topics as Bolshevism, relativity, morality, nuclear physics, philosophy, China and education. He also stood as a Labour candidate in two General Elections, being defeated each time but reducing a Conservative majority. In 1924 he lectured in America and predicted the future rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union. He also predicted the use of atomic power in his *ABC of Atoms* (1924). In 1927 he founded an experimental school which for a period he almost succeeded in establishing; however he ran it almost unaided and after some time it had to close through administrative difficulties. His experiences in the field of practical education led to a questioning of Freud, and two further books.

In the nineteen thirties Russell wrote another ten books, largely on moral or sociological questions. His awareness of an impending world conflict stimulated him to write two highly relevant books—*The Way to Peace* which he would not now be prepared to defend, and the social analysis, *Power*, which in certain circles is regarded as a classic.

In 1940 Russell was again lecturing in America and was invited to lecture at the College of New York. But Catholic opposition succeeded in achieving a judicial verdict that Russell was unworthy to teach, and the college refused to engage him. This is perhaps the unhappiest period in Russell's life. The shabby affair is described in an appendix to *Why I am not a Christian*. Russell was supported by all the leading American academics and even some liberal religious leaders. His final rejection was based largely on his innocuous *Marriage and Morals*, although in fact he was to teach mathematical logic and philosophy. In the nineteen forties three of Russell's most important books were to appear—*An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth*, based on his recent Californian lectures, the *History of Western Philosophy* and *Human Knowledge—Its Scope and Limits* which is regarded as the last full-scale treatment of his philosophical position. In 1944 he was invited back to Cambridge to lecture. In 1948 he lectured in Norway, although once again he nearly died. His plane crashed in the sea, and at 78, in an over-

(Concluded on next page)

## This Believing World

In spite of the fact that Bradlaugh's Oaths Act was made law in 1888, there are still many magistrates and coroners who appear never to have heard of it. They get quite angry at anybody refusing to "swear on the Bible" (as if that really meant any more than swearing on Grimm's *Fairy Tales!*) The other week, a Methodist parson in court refused to take the oath, and quoted the Bible in support (Matthew 5, 34) which so surprised the Chairman of the magistrates that he threw overboard the Precious Words of Jesus, and insisted that the parson must swear or get out.

★

That is to say, 75 years after the Oaths Act became law, we have magistrates ignorant of it, and quite ready to penalise a witness, though they have no right whatever to do so: he was following both the Bible and the law. This is typical of Christian arrogance and should in every case be resisted. We congratulate the Rev. D. Martin on his courage.

★

We were always taught that Christianity was God's greatest contribution to the way erring man should live while on probation in this sinful world. But Dr. Coggan, Archbishop of York, pooh-poohs this out-of-date conception of his divine belief and roundly claims (*Daily Express*, April 13th) that "the first object of Christianity is to tell a story without parallel . . . that it is such astonishingly good news that many have been offended by it". And what is this marvellous story which "offends many"? Simply that "Man was in a mess", and that this mess "reached its zenith when he crucified Jesus". Of course we know that that has to come in somewhere whenever an Archbishop writes an article, but again, we were always taught that God Almighty deliberately sent his only Begotten Son into the world to die for us.

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In other words, it was the Lord himself who saw to it that Jesus was crucified, that is, if there ever was a crucifixion—for this word does not occur anywhere in the Bible. Dr. Coggan's article is full of the phrases so beloved of the tract writers of the nineteenth century—"the Cross of Jesus", "power of Christ", "the once-crucified but now living Lord", "the essence of Christian belief released for the believer", "a spring of hope and joy", "a song of discovery and deliverance", and similar nonsense. Still, we must expect this kind of thing at Easter from an Archbishop.

★

Writing to the London "Evening Standard" (April 2nd) a correspondent thinks that "praying from a prayer book" is "childish and lifeless". Prayer "should come from the individual soul". But what happens to a naughty soul who (or which) refuses to pray? A Church of England spokesman in reply admits that changes in prayer are "needed", but the Book of Common Prayer cannot be changed without Parliamentary authority. What a pity that the unbelievers in Parliament—and there are quite a few—are so often silent when discussions on Christianity take place in the House.

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Isn't it time that Parliament should leave religion out of its domain and let the Christian clergy discuss it in their own preserves? Modern science has annihilated the outworn and outgrown beliefs of an ignorant Oriental people with its supernatural naive nonsense. Does even Mr.

Macmillan really believe that Jesus went after his death up to "Heaven" in full view of his followers?

★

On ATV's "About Religion" (April 21st) we had a Jesuit and a Communist discussing the Pope's Encyclical. It was a most interesting discussion, for the Communist agreed with the Pope on some social aspects of modern life, while disagreeing altogether with his theology. The Jesuit appeared pleased to learn that the Encyclical was not condemned out of hand—though it is only fair to say that he did not appear to agree with anything except Roman Catholicism. Still the discussion does prove that Communists and Catholics sometimes can agree—if only agreeing to differ!

### BERTRAND RUSSELL

(Concluded from page 139)

coat, he had to swim until he was picked up by a boat. Several people were drowned. A short time later Russell lectured as though nothing had happened.

Although in his eighties, in 1954 he started his work for nuclear disarmament (which was later to involve a second visit to Brixton) by founding the Pugwash Committee—an international group comprising world-famous scientists and philosophers who were prepared to take a stand against nuclear arms. One of Einstein's last acts was to express support for Russell's work in this field. But Russell's work in other fields did not diminish. In the nineteen fifties, twelve new books appeared, including a brilliant philosophical autobiography, *My Philosophical Development*, and two lively works of fiction of which Russell said "I do not think the reader's surprise . . . can be greater than my own". Even now, almost 91 years old, Russell continues to work. Already four books have appeared in the nineteen sixties.

The present article is wholly inadequate. There are many important aspects of Russell's work which I have not mentioned. I have said nothing about his chairmanship of the India League or his support for family planning, equality for women, democratic socialism, world government. I have not mentioned most of his popular works, or indicated the wit and beauty in his prose. His intellect and moral courage are doubted only by the ignorant, the stupid and the apathetic. It is some measure of the man that he has earned the praise of such widely differing people as Henry Moore and Huxley, Schweitzer and Einstein, U Thant and Khrushchev.

For me, Bertrand Russell, OM, FRS, holder of the Nobel Prize, the Kalinga Prize (UNESCO), the Sonning Prize, the De Morgan Medal, the Sylvester Medal, the Grotius Medal, etc., passionate fighter for humanity and truth, hater of all things that threaten or restrict human happiness, is unquestionably the greatest living Englishman. Some say that this title belongs to Sir Winston Churchill. But whereas Churchill's genius is undoubted he is essentially an Englishman; this is his limitation. Bertrand Russell, whilst his love of England is certain, speaks for mankind.

### BERTRAND RUSSELL IN PAPERBACK

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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. 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, May 5th, 6.45 p.m.: J. B. DURK, "The Catholic Church Today".

Iford Humanist Group (Friend's Meeting House, Cleveland Road), Monday, May 6th, 7.45 p.m.: Speaker from Federal Union.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, May 5th, 11 a.m.: DR. JOHN LEWIS, "Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and the Nature and Destiny of Man".

## Notes and News

SO MUCH for Franco's new "liberalism"! The execution of Julian Grimau has put an end to it, if it ever existed. Mr. Gavin Freeman, a London barrister engaged by Mrs. Grimau to hold a watching brief, described the trial as "legally a farce" which "proved nothing except that Grimau was a Communist", while Mr. John Mendelson, Labour MP for Penistone called it "an act of vengeance against a man" and "nothing whatever to do with justice" (*The Sunday Times*, 21/4/63). A priest stood by as Grimau faced the firing squad, in case he should abandon his "earlier refusal to confess and take Holy Communion, but he did not change his mind" (*Sunday Citizen*, 21/4/63). The National Secular Society, like many other bodies, has addressed a protest to the Spanish Ambassador. And we trust that Franco will be proved wrong in estimating that Grimau's execution would be just a "two-day wonder".

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"BY KILLING Grimau"—wrote Tom Akass in the *Daily Herald* (23/4/63)—"Spain has shown that she is still not part of the world that calls itself civilised. Personally for a holiday I would prefer to go to a country that does".

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A LITTLE while ago, San Juan (Trinidad) Branch of the National Secular Society purchased a small printing press for propaganda purposes, and we have nothing but praise for the resultant bimonthly, *The Thinker*, devoted to

Freethought and Secularism. The editor, S. Gustavus Stephen, apologies for the occasional "literal" and transposition, but these are notably few—and the blight of all editors anyway! In fact, *The Thinker* is an extremely competent production in every respect and we send our congratulations to Mr. Stephen and his colleagues.

★

THE NEW edition of H. C. Lea's *The History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages* (Eyre and Spottiswoode, 25s.) contains an introduction by Walter Ullmann, Reader in Medieval Classical History at Cambridge which under the pretext of being "purely historical", reads suspiciously like an apologia for the Inquisition. As the book will be reviewed by S. D. Kuebart, we don't propose to comment further upon it here. On April 18th, however, *The Listener* printed a Third Programme talk, "The Inquisition: an Explanation", in which Dr. Ullmann goes even further in attempting to justify what he calls "this task of eradication, an intellectual surgery" of the disease of heresy. "This was the rational business of Inquisition", Dr. Ullmann goes on. "It was a regular legal procedure in place of a mob violence". Historical phenomena, he argues, "can be explained only by the standard supplied by history itself". To which we reply: historical phenomena must be *judged* as well as explained.

★

PETER KELLY, an ex-monk, who now lives with his wife in South Africa and works for an advertising firm, believes that the vow of celibacy "throws men and women straight into Hell" (*News of the World*, 21/4/63). He had, he said, seen fine, normal men and women turned into cranks or worse, for "If you suppress the sex instinct in a normal, healthy human being, sooner or later nature takes her revenge". Few people realise, Mr. Kelly continued, "the temptations that torment priests, monks and nuns shut off from sex, love and affection by this wholly unnatural vow". If priests had been allowed to marry, Mr. Kelly would never have left the Church, for he is still a staunch Catholic. "Many other priests and monks, and presumably nuns, are leaving—or have already left—the Church for the same reason, though the layman never hears about them", Mr. Kelly said. No doubt, they are smuggled out, as he was, at four o'clock in the morning.

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THE OCCASIONAL magistrate still displays intolerance when confronted by an unreligious person (or even, as instanced in "This Believing World", a religious person) who asks to affirm instead of taking the oath. And Hugh Delargy, MP, deserves credit for branding as "impertinent" the behaviour of Bow Street magistrate, Mr. K. J. P. Barraclough (*Sunday Citizen*, 21/4/63). Three Aldermaston marchers refused to take the oath and told Mr. Barraclough they had no religious beliefs. "Yet", he said, "you blindly follow the Canon". Apart from the fact that they were entitled to affirm, commented Mr. Delargy, "it is rather odd to assume that the Canon was leading a religious procession".

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ANOTHER *Sunday Citizen* columnist, Merry Archard, had wheeled her six-month-old twins on the last lap of the Aldermaston March and heard many adverse comments from bystanders. But why shouldn't they come along? Mrs. Archard asked. "And anyhow, what's the difference between taking my babies on a march or having them christened or, when they're older, sending them to Sunday school? Isn't a little boy too young to decide whether he wants to be a Christian or not?"

# A Few Notes on Sir Leslie Stephen

By H. CUTNER

LET ME ASSURE my old friend William Kent (THE FREETHINKER, February 22nd) that I was quite aware what Sir Leslie Stephen meant by the word "apology" in *An Agnostic's Apology* — and I'm only sorry that my little quip misfired, Newman took no chances, and called his history of his religious opinions an "apologia".

In truth, *An Agnostic's Apology* is a fine work and well worth all the eulogies showered upon it. It is one of the best defences of Agnosticism I know, and has the additional merit of being short as well as of being sincere. Stephen wrote just as well on other aspects of religion and of Christianity for he had no more belief than T. H. Huxley — perhaps even less. But he appears to me to have hated "militant Atheism", or even militant Deism, and this in an offensive "militant" spirit. In his *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth century* he took Paine as an example of militancy against Christianity and attacked him with a malignancy utterly surprising for anybody with the gentlemanly character Stephen is credited with by those who knew him.

John M. Robertson's pamphlet, *Thomas Paine: An Investigation*, written in 1888, is a devastating analysis of Stephen's strictures against Paine. Robertson was a consummate debater, and he followed Stephen step by step, exposing not only a monumental ignorance but an angry one. So angry was Stephen that he did not hesitate to misrepresent if it suited his purpose. Just as one of the many examples noted by Robertson, he says,

He (Paine) explains . . . that his chronology [in the *Age of Reason*] is taken from the dates printed on the margins of the "larger Bibles" which he apparently supposes to be part of the original documents . . .

And what did Paine really say? Here it is: —

The chronology that I shall use is the Bible chronology, for I mean not to go out of the Bible for evidence of anything, but to make the Bible itself prove historically and chronologically that Moses is not the author of the books ascribed to him. It is therefore proper that I inform the reader . . . that in the larger Bibles, and also in some of the smaller ones, there is a series of chronology printed in the margin of every page, for the purpose of showing how long the historical matters stated in each page happened or are supposed to have happened, before Christ, and consequently the distance of time between one historical circumstance and another.

And what was Robertson's comment on this example of Stephen's misrepresentation of Paine? "I doubt," he said, "whether wilful dishonesty could reach worse results in the way of false witness than Mr. Stephen contrives to get to through mere carelessness and prejudice".

The reader who is lucky enough to possess Robertson's pamphlet will see how dozens of Stephen's preposterous assertions are countered, and it is with regret that I cannot quote them all. So angry was Stephen throughout that he could even insist that Paine was "in a sense but the echo of Collins and Woolston, but the tone of the speaker is altered" which Robertson characterises, as "a choice Hibernicism". In one part of Stephen's book, Woolston was called "poor mad Woolston" and "the most scandalous of the deists", in another we are told that he "wrote for educated men" as against Paine who wrote for the uneducated—which is of course sheer nonsense. Some of us in any case would like to see how many of our "educated" theologians and bishops would now answer *The Age of Reason*? The Bishop of Llandaff tried his best, but so poor a performance had little chance of surviving, though I believe copies of his

*Apology for the Bible* can be picked up among heaps of theological rubbish, sometimes for only a penny.

Of course, we are told by Stephen that Paine's "ignorance was vast", a phrase "which might loosely be used of any man", says Robertson who adds: —

But I observe that it matters nothing to Stephen whether Paine were well-informed or not: either way he will contrive to belittle him.

Stephen agreed that Paine had shown that it was impossible for Moses to have written the Pentateuch. But then, Stephen must have felt that he had praised Paine too much for he immediately added, "The same difficulties had been suggested long before by Spinoza and by Newton; but those writers were apparently beyond the range of his reading". If Paine came to the same conclusions as Spinoza and Newton without knowing them, surely it was to his credit? But not in the eyes of Stephen.

Robertson's pamphlet was of course utterly ignored as was only to be expected; but when Moncreux Conway's classic, his *Life of Thomas Paine*, was published, Stephen had to think again; and his "recantation" (to which Mr. Kent refers) appeared in the *National Reformer* in 1892. He says there,

The account which I gave of Paine in the book upon the 18th century was, I have no doubt, erroneous. My only excuse, if it be an excuse, was the old one "pure ignorance". I will not ask whether or how far the ignorance was excusable . . .

But as Robertson pointed out in a note, all this referred to Paine's *life*, and not at all to his writings. In fact, Stephen in the course of an article in the *Fortnightly Review*—Conway's life of Paine forced him to write it—said, "My description of Paine's last years was taken from a statement by a witness whom Mr. Conway has proved to be utterly unworthy of credit . . .". Of course, but Stephen would even then not let go of the stories of similar "witnesses" that Paine "drank brandy to excess", a "crime" which he did his best to perpetuate even in his article on Paine in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, albeit not quite so strenuously. Indeed, as Robertson made clear in his article "Mr. Leslie Stephen on Paine" (*The National Reformer*, August 27th, 1893), "he has taken pains to make his retraction an occasion for a fresh criticism of Paine somewhat on the old lines". And Robertson proceeded to give Stephen a terrific onslaught on the same lines of his previous one, far too long, I am sorry to say, to deal with here, for it is too brilliant a critique to be abridged.

The truth is that, although Stephen, sadly enough, admits that many of the "facts" he cited about Paine were taken from lying "witnesses"—Cheetham and Chalmers, for instance—Stephen had very little sympathy with the Deists of the eighteenth century whom he considered quite inferior to their Christian opponents. And, just as one example of his editing the *Dictionary of National Biography*, I have often wondered whether his selection of the Rev. A. Gordon to write on Robert Taylor was deliberate. Fancy choosing a parson to write about a man who looked upon Jesus as a myth! Gordon was forced to be fair to Taylor because he had his [Taylor's] autobiography before him as to details of his life, but would anyone in his senses trust Gordon's criticism of Taylor's work? Stephen probably disliked the "Devil's Chaplain", and his work as much as he disliked Paine.

For the rest, it may be worth recording what Robertson said of Stephen in his *History of Freethought*:

... What had exasperated Stephen was not any shadow of suggestion that he had not made proper retraction, but the remark that in handsomely retracting as to Paine he had fallen into a new historical error ... His anger was to take pathological forms (cp. Maitland, p. 494), and was at times wildly hurled even at his old friends. But the record of his fortitude under his heavy trials, and finally under his sufferings from cancer, outweighs and effaces all memory of infirmities. His final modesty of self-estimate, indeed, was as excessive as any of his judgments had ever been.

I wonder whether Stephen could have written so of Robertson?

## Police Raid Home of Montreal Freethinker

USING AS A pretext the fact that several bombs had been thrown about by an unidentified terrorist group known as the FLQ (Front for the Liberation of Quebec), the Federal, Provincial and Municipal Police Forces joined up in a series of raids on the private homes of some fifteen people known for their advanced thinking in various fields.

Among the fifteen who were thus visited at 4.40 in the morning and taken away to a cell, without a warrant, was Joseph La Rivière, an outspoken French-Canadian anti-clerical.

Four officers of the law searched his home from top to bottom, including the frigidaire and the wine-cellar, but had to be content with seizing Freethought literature in several languages, including copies of *THE FREETHINKER*, *The Indian Libertarian*, *La Raison*, *Forces Laiques et Sociales*, *La Réveil Rationaliste*, etc.

Released a few hours later as his lawyer brought pressure to bear upon the Police Department, Mr. La Rivière promptly issued a statement for the press in which he accused the Church of having denounced him, in order that the police might have a chance to visit his library and distributing centre of anti-clerical literature. On Saturday, April 20th, he was given an opportunity to denounce the illegal raid over the network of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, when he announced that legal proceedings would be taken against the police to force them to reveal the source of their information ...

LANJE GARDYEN.

## Catholic Lapses

ON FEBRUARY 8TH, *The Universe* reported an annual lapsing of 5,000 Catholics in Austria, as revealed by the Austrian statistical central office. "In 1959, 8,473 Catholics lapsed from the Church. In 1960, 9,113 and in 1961, 9,642". But the rate of conversions and "returns to the faith" rose from 3,796 in 1959 to 4,857 in 1961, and *The Universe* seemed to get some consolation from the higher rate of loss in the Evangelical Church (0.51 per cent) and the Old Catholics (0.88 per cent).

## The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

Previously acknowledged £98 19s. 6d. S. H. Hoddes, 10s. 6d.; K. B. Kough, £1 2s. 6d.; F. Soater, £1; C. Minet, £10; D. Partington, £1; J.B., 1s.; W. E. Huxley, 14s. 6d.; D. Behr, 10s.; T. W. Archer, 15s.; R. Atherton, 3s.; F. Kumar, 5s.; A. Ungherini, £3 7s. 6d.; R.R., 7s. 5d.; W.G., £1 1s.; N. M. Brooke, 10s.; M. Rupp, 7s. 6d.; M. Vernon, £2 2s.; In Memory of Mrs. E. A. Tarry, £2. Total to date, April 26th, 1963, £124 16s. 5d.

## The New Psalter

By ANTON JAMES

SUCH IS THE LACK of respect paid to the sacred writings by a Commission of the Church of England presided over by the Archbishop of York, that hell itself may be abolished and the ancient natural history of the Near East re-written.

The Commission was set up to revise the Psalms as they appear in the official Prayer Book Psalter, "to remove obscurities and serious errors of translation". Its report was recently published (SPCK 9s 6d.).

In some respects it follows the lead of the Nonconformist body which has drained the blood from the more cannibalistic hymns in the "fountain filled with blood" tradition.

It has also mildly bowdlerised a few passages to make the Psalms rather more respectable and bourgeois than when first translated in an uncouth age. The Roman Catholic Church, of course, set a precedent years ago with the Douai Bible which, in its various editions, kept the party clean by excluding the dirty bits.

Coming down to hell, the Commission decides that the "wicked shall be turned into hell" no longer, but "given over to the grave" along with (and the Commission is silent as to this), the righteous. Perhaps the wicked just get there sooner, though Adam, the first and original sinner, avoided the inevitable for 930 years.

The Psalmist's natural history has suffered by the substitution of many of the original characters. The poor and humble conies have gone but, far from becoming rabbits, reappear as badgers, whilst the wild asses are camouflaged as zebras. Some of the domesticated ones appear to have been sitting on the Commission.

Dragons no longer belch fire and smoke but are substituted by that cowardly sneak-thief, the jackal. Just think of the valiant Christian knight rescuing the glamorous Princess from a jackal!

The poor mythical unicorn, with his single horn, loses all his mystery in becoming a wild ox with two. Why not a rhinoceros, whose unique facial structure possibly gave rise to the unicorn myth? But the word does not fit well into a chant.

The Egyptian plague of "lice in all their quarters" becomes "gnats in their borders". Why not "ants in their pants?" This is at least euphonious and alliterative, as are the "asp and the adder" which replace the "lion and the adder".

A reverend gentleman replying to critics says that the Commission set out to cure occasional infelicities, frequent archaisms and not infrequent nonsense.

To one who regards the Psalms, whilst ignoring much of their content, as outstanding examples of translation, retaining their original poetry and clothing them in mellifluous English, this pretended cure achieves less than nothing. It has yet to be accepted by Convocation and then Parliament, before it can be appointed for use in the church. Accordingly, the intrusive asp, badger, gnat, jackal, ox and zebra have not yet supplanted the original fauna. Perhaps they never will.

In addition to Freethought literature  
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## CORRESPONDENCE

The Editor welcomes letters from readers, but asks that they be kept as brief and pertinent as possible.

### "SPARTACUS"

With reference to the letter by Mrs. Eva Ebury (19/4/63) relating to Mr. H. Cutner's criticism of Mr. Ridley's book *Spartacus*, I would like to add the following comments:

1. Mr. Cutner completely misses the point when he states "There is no evidence that his [Paul's] Epistles were 'spiritual opium' for the early Church", and in fact misquotes Mr. Ridley, who certainly did not state what Mr. Cutner alleges. The fact remains, as J. M. Robertson, Ingersoll and many others have pointed out, an essential prerequisite to the rise of Christianity was the failure of the Spartacus Revolution and the denial of hope in this world leading men to turn towards another mythical world where injustice would cease and conditions be ideal. Even the Church does not deny its role as an "opiate" when it so frequently asserts that one of its important functions is the "consolation of the distressed"—to lag behind the theologian in perception is indeed leading the van from the rear!

2. Whilst it is true that it brings us no nearer to knowing anything of a historical Jesus, surely it cannot be denied that since crucifixion was reserved for revolutionaries, some parts of the Biblical narratives must of necessity have derived from historical events and cannot be explained by mythology alone?

3. Like Thomas Paine, Mr. Ridley will undoubtedly have to wait until after his death for his revolutionary ideas to become "respectable". Although Mr. Cutner may not know it, as long as the Church and the state are two sides of the same coin, he also is a revolutionary.

J. A. MILLAR.

### DOGMATIC ATHEISM

Mr. G. L. Simons (19/4/63) freely mixes "dogmatic" and "dogma". A dogma, he writes, "goes beyond or against the available evidence". No quarrel there; but why not be dogmatic (quite a different word) about atheism instead of joining the waverers, who want to go beyond or against available evidence; perhaps because of their lack of self-confidence, or because they have lost contact with the world of breakfasts and jobs—and censorship and persecution too—in their pursuit of attempts to make it a world of meanings, playing tricks with reason instead of using it!

Unlike Mr. Simons I'm grateful to Dr. Duhig for his very useful list, "Theology or Truth", in dogmatic form (one can refer to old FREETHINKERS and other sources if it seems that items go beyond or against available evidence) and it is more useful than attempts to dispute the dogma that the existence of God can be proved by reason (12/4/63) perpetrated by the trained tricksters of the Roman Catholic or any other religion!

JIM LITTLE.

I wonder if it occurred to Mr. G. L. Simons that he could be said to be "dogmatic" about Dr. Duhig, as he seems to think the Doctor is about atheism. Does Mr. Simons know the difference between being "dogmatic" and being merely "didactic"? Personally I suspect we could do with a little more of the Doctor's John Bluntness. What a mixture of susceptibilities one has to consider!

REGINALD UNDERWOOD.

If atheism is not to become dogmatic, says Mr. G. L. Simons, "it must permanently retain an element of agnosticism". Is he seriously suggesting, then, that we should not tell our children that fairies or angels do not exist, since this "goes beyond the evidence"?

ROBERT DENT.

Dr. Duhig is an admirable advocate, who presents his case strongly but not dogmatically.

H. FAIRHURST.

I am quite confident that Dr. Duhig can and will demolish the arguments of Mr. Simons quite easily. What the latter fails to understand is that the onus of proof lies on those who make assertions. If they fail their case is lost. Non-existence can never be proved. It is rightly inferred from the lack of valid proof of existence. Mr. Simon's last sentence is sheer bunkum.

Incidentally, for the information of Mrs. Tacchi-Morris (12/4/63), "we" means the writer and people of his persuasion. Ideas can be fought and killed without shedding blood.

W. E. HUXLEY.

### RELIGIOUS BELIEFS OF STUDENTS

The short review "Religious Beliefs of Students" (THE FREETHINKER, Vol. 83, p. 114) brings to mind several questions which must be answered before any conclusions can be drawn from the presented data.

Firstly, the scores as given in the review were means and the psychologists doubtless tested for significant changes of the mean score with year of study by statistical analysis. The tests with which I am familiar make assumptions about the populations

from which the compared means are obtained, one being obvious—that the populations are comparable. It is reasonable, therefore, to ask what differences exist between the student populations of different years of study. Taking the two extremes, first and fourth years, the most striking difference would be the diminished number of students in the latter. This is accomplished by a steady elimination of both less-able and less-industrious students. Thus the comparison of two student years, the members of which must of necessity differ in ability and application, cannot be straightforward.

Secondly, and arising from what has gone before, the review does not give the period over which the survey was conducted. If it was undertaken during one academic year the change in the mean may merely reflect a change in the populations compared. If the survey followed the four-year careers of those who entered their first year during say 1959, then the data would be more likely to reflect a change in individual opinion, but a comparison of means cannot show this.

Unfortunately, I have not had the opportunity to read the *Sunday Times* article which may very well discuss these points, the existence of which the social psychologists were no doubt aware. Their existence, however, underlines the difficulties attendant upon any inquiry of this type, and the tentative nature of any conclusions therefrom.

G. LEWTHWAITE.

[No doubt, as Mr. Lewthwaite says, the social psychologists are aware of the points he makes; some may be referred to in their full report, though they are not in the *Sunday Times* summary, which didn't even state whether the survey was confined to one university. The conclusions are tentative, we agree, but, in conjunction with our personal experience, suggestive.—ED.]

### OBITUARY

We send our deepest sympathy to William Collins of Stockport, for many years a member (and from time to time President and Secretary) of the Manchester Branch of the National Secular Society, on the death of his wife Marion. Mr. F. A. Hornibrook, a close friend of Mr. and Mrs. Collins, represented the Executive Committee at the funeral on April 19th.

Edith Annie Tarry, of Derby, who died on March 14th at the age of 68, had been a widow for 25 years. She and her husband, but the late Frederick George Tarry, were married in church, but gradually became sceptical and, after the death of her husband, Mrs. Tarry's anti-religious views strengthened. Like her daughter, Miss D. Tarry, she was a member of the National Secular Society and a reader of THE FREETHINKER for many years, and was never afraid to express her opinions. She had been ill for six months.

A secular service was conducted by Mr. J. W. Challand, Hon. Secretary of Nottingham Branch NSS, on March 16th. We send our deepest sympathy to Miss Tarry and her sister.

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