

The Freethinker

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Charles Bradlaugh

By F. A. RIDLEY

THAT nowadays incredibly remote and unreal age still named after its titular figurehead, Queen Victoria, was marked by extreme contrasts. On the one hand it was *par excellence* the age of the financial and industrial bourgeoisie, smug, eminently respectable—the supreme Victorian virtue—and above all, intensely hypocritical; as indeed they had to be in order to reconcile the harsh facts of Victorian life with the unctuous religiosity that the Victorians professed. On the other hand, probably no age has been more prolific in both odd and eccentric characters, and in startling acts of defiance against the most cherished taboos elevated by popular prejudice to the sacrosanct level of religious and moral dogmas. It was the age of Mrs. Grundy (Victoria RI); it was equally the age of Karl Marx and Charles Bradlaugh. The spectacular effects of *Das Kapital* were, it is true, not fully disclosed within the precise limits of the Victorian era, but the strong case of Bradlaugh burst like a thunderclap into the humid atmosphere of “Good Queen Victoria’s golden days”—to paraphrase the Vicar of Bray who, as the supreme conformist in our literature, would surely have disapproved most strongly of Bradlaugh, one of our greatest non-conformists.

The Bradlaugh Case

Today, most radical thinkers would probably subscribe to the thesis that God’s own country, the USA, represents the supreme example of collective conformity in the Western World. It is accordingly all the more gratifying to see the latest study of *The Bradlaugh Case* (Clarendon Press, Oxford University Press, 50s.) emanate from an American university.

Its author, Professor Walter L. Arnstein, was over here a few years ago busily engaged in collecting material for this present work, and he has certainly done his job with professional thoroughness. Whilst it is probably impossible at this time of day to add anything—at least of major factual importance—to the well-known official biography by the iconoclast’s daughter, Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner (the mother of the present genial President of the World Union of Freethinkers) with the collaboration of that most encyclopedic of modern freethought scholars, John M

Robertson, Professor Arnstein has documented the famous case extremely thoroughly and has in any case the advantage of objectivity that only a later age can bestow.

Complex Question

Perhaps indeed the learned author is open to the charge of over-documentation, for his documentary trees are so thick in places that one almost loses sight of the wood of the Bradlaugh case considered as a thing in itself. But certainly anyone whose memory is at fault upon any feature of this extremely complex case, will find it all set forth with all the i’s dotted and t’s crossed. As a kind of Baedeker guide through the labyrinthine mazes of *l’affaire Bradlaugh*, Professor Arnstein’s volume is invaluable. For the Bradlaugh case was extremely complex; in fact it almost ranks with that famous puzzle which haunted the secret diplomacy of the Victorian era, the question of Sleiswig-Holstein, which Prince Bismarck summed up in the cynical observation that only three people had ever understood it: Palmerston, who was dead, a Danish diplomat who was in a lunatic asylum, and himself who had forgotten it! One imagines that the participants in the Bradlaugh affair, from Gladstone downwards, must have felt very similar.

Bradlaugh and the Victorian Age

Walter Arnstein adds this subtitle: “A Study in late Victorian Opinion and Politics”. Here, the operative word is clearly “Victorian”, for it is difficult to imagine the Bradlaugh case

occurring in any other age but that of that royal anti-type of Mrs. Grundy. For in essence, the case of Charles Bradlaugh, MP, was simple. The electors of Northampton, surely knew their own minds (even a contemporary Tory journal described the town as “a stinking den of republican cobblers”) when they sent Bradlaugh, not once but repeatedly, to the House of Commons as their duly elected representative. For Charles Bradlaugh by the 1880s was already far from unknown; in fact quite the contrary. As an Atheist of international repute—for the National Secular Society had been founded long before in 1866—his anti-theistic opinions were already universally known. Obviously any oath taken by him which involved theistic



belief, could only be taken by Bradlaugh in a purely formal and official sense.

In this sense Bradlaugh was always prepared—a cardinal fact that emerges more clearly than ever from Professor Arnstein's comprehensive narrative—to take the oath of allegiance obligatory upon every MP in a purely formal manner, even though both as an Atheist and a Republican, he could not possibly take it literally, so as to involve belief in both divine and human monarchy, both of which he repudiated. Such was the Bradlaugh case, in essence an entirely simple one which the most elementary common sense could and would have solved with the minimum of fuss.

But it was precisely at this point that our author's operative word "Victorian", came into effective play. For the Victorian age was, in fact, anything but a rational age. It was, conversely perhaps the most hypocritical age that this country has ever known, and—as the case of Bradlaugh demonstrated with transparent clearness—in the then Prime Minister, Gladstone (the leader of the Liberal Party of which Bradlaugh himself was one of the more radically-minded members), Victorian hypocrisy found its supreme embodiment. For the Grand Old Man had carried the art of self-deception to such a consummate point of artistry, that he was not even conscious of it himself! Lord Randolph Churchill, the other major figure in the case, was not a hypocrite so much as an unscrupulous political gangster out to promote his own particular brand of racketeering by blatant appeals to religious prejudices which he could hardly have shared himself. (A generation later, another leading light of the Tory party, F. E. Smith, was also a past-master at this form of political blackmail).

Victorian Incongruity

Put briefly the causes of this profound hypocrisy were social in character and arose ultimately from the complete incongruity between the actual role of the predatory imperialistic and exploiting Britain of fact and the highly moral England of official fiction; the England which blew the Indian mutineers alive from cannon, and the England that simultaneously observed the Sabbath with puritanical fidelity. To bridge the actually impassable gulf between these two contemporary Englands, a social myth was psychologically necessary. Here, the Victorians resorted to the oldest myth of all, God! They evidently agreed with Voltaire that if God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him.

Now whilst Charles Bradlaugh was many other things besides, he was pre-eminently an Atheist, and to let an Atheist into the Holy of Holies of the Victorian establishment, the House of Commons, would be at least the beginning of the end of God's social utility, without which (as both Queen Victoria and Gladstone were firmly convinced) nothing further stood between society and red ruin and the breaking up of laws. I suggest that this was the real issue that ran like a continuous thread throughout all the intricacies and complexities which underlay the Bradlaugh case. It is a thesis abundantly illustrated, if not explicitly affirmed, in Professor Arnstein's profusely documented pages. I submit that the Bradlaugh case represents surely the supreme example of Victorian bourgeois-religious hypocrisy in the political sphere, just as the Oscar Wilde case a few years later represented its supreme example in the sphere of morals.

Newman and Manning

An interesting point which appears to emerge from the case is that the religious leaders seem to have been as divided upon the propriety of admitting an avowed Atheist to take the name of God in vain as were the

politicians. It is interesting to note that Newman, the most famous Christian of his day, did not see any harm in Bradlaugh taking the parliamentary oath. There may however, have been a reason for this that has escaped Professor Arnstein. Newman's fellow cardinal, Manning, was one of Bradlaugh's most bitter and influential critics. As the relations between the two cardinals were not precisely cordial, this may well have influenced Newman in the opposite direction.

Bradlaugh was of course, a Victorian; he belonged to what is now an irrevocably vanished age, and on many points at least his views cannot be ours. At the same time our author hardly seems to demonstrate his usual critical acumen when he dubs the present-day National Secular Society a "Victorian Institution", merely because it was founded in the reign of Queen Victoria. Is Professor Arnstein to be himself described as a McCarthyite merely because he had the ill-luck to be a countryman and contemporary of the deservedly ill-famed Senator? I think that it is really rather arbitrary of him to compare the founder of the National Secular Society favourably with his two, in my opinion, equally eminent successors, G. W. Foote and Chapman Cohen. It would surely be more correct to describe each of these three great Presidents as an authentic master in his own special field. The admitted fact that Bradlaugh had other interests besides atheism is surely irrelevant. As for atheism itself today, the arguments in its favour only differ from those in vogue in Bradlaugh's day, by being much more strongly supported by contemporary scientific discovery; e.g. modern cosmology has put paid to the argument from design, still at least plausible in Bradlaugh's day; whilst the Dead Sea Scrolls have abolished the last vestiges of even religious originality in the New Testament. Bradlaugh himself would have nothing to retract but much to add were he able to restate the case for atheism today.

Finally, in congratulating Professor Arnstein upon an immensely learned and, in general, excellent book, we may console ourselves (if not our American author) with the reflection that if Charles Bradlaugh had a rough passage in Victorian England, there have also been periods in American history from Thomas Paine to the Committee for Un-American Activities where the great iconoclast would probably have had an even rougher one.

South African Rationalist Refused Passport

James Ravell who made the Afrikaans translation of Bertrand Russell's *Why I am not a Christian*, which the South African Rationalist Association published in 1960, has been refused a passport to enable him to continue his studies in the Netherlands. When security police interviewed him in connection with his application for a passport, he was told: "You hold views which are foreign to those held by the majority of South Africans".

A teacher in a Coloured school in the Cape, Mr. Ravell was one of the founders of the Cape Town Branch of the Rationalist Association and its first honorary secretary. In 1960 he won a prize of one hundred dollars awarded by the International Humanist and Ethical Union for an essay entitled *Ethical Humanism as a Way of Life*.

Mr. Ravell, who holds the BA degree of the University of Cape Town, was offered a bursary by the Stichting Universitair Asyl Fonds, which would have enabled him to proceed with further studies in his chosen subject, history, at a university in Holland.

Window on the World—Through the Foreign Press

By OTTO WOLFGANG

L'Express (France)

OWING to governmental pressure the mental climate of Bulgaria is changing. In order to eliminate "religious obscurantism" non-conformists are being paid certain premiums, e.g. 20 Levas (£6 15s. 0d.) to parents who refrain from having their child baptised, 60 Levas to couples getting married without religious ceremonies, and 10 Levas for a civil interment (April 19th).

The same issue reported that Mme Françoise Dior-Jordan—the Second-in-Command of our British Nazis—has given Frs 200,000 to Jean-Claude Monnet, leader of the *Parti Proletarien National-Socialiste*, to assist him become the Fuhrer of the Neo-Nazi organisations of Northern Europe.

Roger Peyrefitte, author of the bestseller *The Keys of St. Peter*, has published another study, *Les Juifs* (The Jews, Flammarion, Frs. 24) to show that most of our leading politicians and intellectuals have had at one time or another an admixture of Jewish blood, e.g. our Royal Family, Adenauer, Segni, Salazar, de Gaulle, Fidel Castro, Kennedy and President Johnson, not to mention Loyola (founder of the Jesuits) and Torquemada, the infamous Grand Inquisitor of the Inquisition.

We may note in this connection that a recent issue of the *Jewish Quarterly* quoted from a book by Donald E. Worcester *inter alia*: "During the Middle Ages, the most distinguished Christian families mixed with Jews whenever this was both advantageous and possible . . . When the persecutions began, many New Christians and the descendants of earlier converts were fearful of taint . . . Spanish society grew more and more fanatic in its Christianity . . . Few were so bitter against the Jews as the New Christians. Torquemada . . . was a convert and Ferdinand of Aragon was of Jewish descent on his mother's side".

Reviewing *Les Juifs*, which claims to counter anti-semitism and the ludicrous aims of Aryan purity of blood, J.-F. Revel pointed out that unnecessary snooping of the Peyrefitte kind gives boost to anti-semites who in their irrational hatred tend to generalise certain faults as arising from inferior blood in racial or social minorities. What they would excuse as Dionysiac exuberance, high-jinks and flirtatious levity in the Gaul would become the "horrid sexual obsession whipped up by alcoholism" in the Negro; or what is "shrewd prudence" in the peasant becomes "base and contemptible avarice" in the Jew.

Newsweek (USA)

Under the heading "Rites and Wrongs" an article dealt with the conversion of Luci Johnson to Catholicism and the uproar it caused in the separate branches of Christianity. Had she not been the President's daughter, it would of course not have been sensational at all. But "in the current euphoria surrounding the Christian-unity movement the mishandling of Luci's baptism was a timely reminder or how easily religious sensibilities are bruised" (July 19th).

Rabbi Blau, the fiery 72-year-old leader of Judaism's small ultra-orthodox sect, the *Neturei Karta*, whose wife died in 1963, felt lonely and approached a *shadchen* (professional marriage broker); the latter selected for the rabbi a former French resistance worker, Madelaine Feraille, who had hidden Jews from the Nazis and eventually became converted to Judaism. She adopted ultra-orthodoxy because, as she explained, "if I do something

I do it one hundred per cent".

But when the rabbinical court heard of the rabbi's engagement to the converted *shiksa*—who had adopted the new name of Ruth ben-David—it was horrified and pronounced such a liason "would only be grist for the mills of scoffers and gossipmongers". It would, the court ruled, not "benefit a man of his stature". However, the rabbi seems adamant in his marriage plans (August 9th).

La Raison (France)

Our French contemporary reported in its August issue that the thorny question of the Vatican Council whether or not to clear the Jews of the scriptural charge of deicide (i.e. the ludicrous idea of having "killed" a god), has in particular embarrassed the Mohammedans living in Israel. The Arabs have no justification on religious grounds to reject the absolution of Jewry, they do it for political reasons; now the cadis of the Israeli Mohammedans have found what they consider to be a way out: they issued a declaration that according to verse 156 of the Sura on "Women", the Koran asserts that Jesus was neither killed nor crucified. Being divine he was fully aware of his opponents' plans and asked for one of his disciples to substitute for him, take on his outer appearance and be sacrificed. Obviously not too clever a subterfuge!

Monthly Review (USA)

The well-known American Humanist, Dr. Corliss Lamont, argues with the philosopher Barrow Dunham (whose book *Man Against Myth* every freethinker ought to have read) who in his last publication *Heroes and Heretics*, stated that lately there have been no indictments for blasphemy. This, says Lamont, is a generalisation, considering that books are still being banned on all sorts of accusations such as "obscenity" and that non-believers are socially or economically ostracised. It is true that the Churches themselves no longer persecute, but the powers-that-be do it, and it is just as difficult for an avowed atheist as for a professed communist to get a position as a teacher or civil servant, or have his uninhibited say on radio or TV (April issue).

Le Nouvel Observateur

A new publication on the relations between the Vatican and the USSR by Maxime Mourin (Editions Payot) is reviewed, showing that the demise of both Stalin and Pius XII appear to have opened a certain rapprochement between the two fronts. Jailed princes of the Church are being released, Soviet Russians were admitted as observers to three sessions of the Vatican Council, etc. (June 17th).

Similarly, Philip Ben, correspondent of *Le Monde* (Paris) and an Israel paper, deals with religion in Russia in an article published in the American *New Republic* of December 26th, 1964. Since 1961 more churches have been closed and the clergy has to pay taxes. Quite naturally the Soviet government could not make exceptions for the Jewish cult, and treats them no more favourably than the orthodox church.

The Churchman (USA)

This is a quite exceptional monthly in that it is the organ of the Protestant Episcopal Church and yet a highly intelligent and progressive paper. Reporting on a study of the
(Concluded on page 316)

This Believing World

THE one thing that did not happen when Malcolm Muggeridge undertook a trip to Lourdes for BBC TV, was a miracle. We had instead some interesting glimpses of pilgrims in high hopes of being cured, and plenty of pilgrims who were not sick—though whether he showed us more of the swindle of Lourdes than Zola did in his shattering novel named after the town is a matter of opinion. We may be wrong, but we thought Mr. Muggeridge looked rather disappointed at the absence of a thoroughgoing miracle, or even of a cure, but these disappointments are no doubt given deliberately to try us.

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BUT why are there so few miracles these days? In those wonderful early years just after the appearance of the Virgin Mary to Bernadette, miracles of healing were almost as plentiful as blackberries, and they no doubt contributed to the astonishing popularity of the shrine ever since. But where, oh where are the miracles *now*? Even Mr. Muggeridge could not tell us.

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BBC Sunday biblical expositions were once a weekly feature, but during the past year or so, we have seen instead very reverent "Songs of Praise", or "Hallelujah Choruses". However, an attempt to get the Bible back at all costs has resulted in a lecture on the New Testament. The two we heard were given by eminent professors who did their utmost to expound the gospels to us without, strange to say, assuring us that they were inspired by Almighty God, and as such were to be implicitly believed.

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THE first speaker, Professor C. F. Evans did his utmost to prove that the gospels were authentic, and products of the first century, without producing a scrap of evidence of any kind. He appeared to rely on Justin Martyr (c. 140 AD) and his "Memoirs of the Apostles" which were "perhaps" our four gospels. But our canonical gospels are not Memoirs of the Apostles at all; they were meant to be biographies of "our blessed Lord", and therefore could not possibly be whatever Justin had before him when writing his *Apologies*.

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THE second speaker, Professor D. B. Bineham, spent most of his time discussing Mark, not as inspired by God, but as having been built up on a number of religious stories, each complete in itself. We could not help wondering where Jesus and his Father came in. Still, it is better to discuss the gospels, no matter how, than to boycott them, even if the discussions leave out the miracles of Jesus altogether. After all, there are sincere Christians who do not exactly believe in miracles with the same enthusiasm as the Pope and his cardinals do.

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HIS Holiness, we are told, is to have a senate of his cardinals to help him run the Catholic Church in a way which will (or may) appeal even to convinced unbelievers. He can see, we are glad to say, that the dear old days of complete subservience have gone for ever, and that it is just as important to discuss the Pill as it is to discuss the infidel machinations of the devil—if not more so.

OBITUARY

Mrs. Amy Cross who died in hospital recently at the age of ninety-nine was a staunch Freethinker. Her husband died thirty years ago and she had no close relatives.

Mr. W. Collins, a member of the Executive Committee of the National Secular Society conducted the committal ceremony at Liverpool Crematorium on September 16th.

WINDOW ON THE WORLD

(Concluded from page 315)

cause of anti-semitism, it states that unfortunately it must be admitted that the churches themselves are doing much to spread hatred and prejudice, and the more orthodox people are, the more they show anti-semitic tendencies. In particular Communist censure of religion is not without foundation seeing that there are men willing to serve their god but not their fellow-men who are in bitter need of help. If religion is tantamount to doing good, then many atheists are better Christians than the many who eagerly observe religious rules but do not care about the suffering of mankind. This comes from 80 pages of a report drawn up by the Committee for Christian Belief, with the conclusion that in matters of belief a Christian cannot adopt Marxist unbelief, but for the rest he is free to be a Socialist, seeing that his Church is unable to answer the pure facts of economy (November, 1964).

It is not for nothing that the present Pope always stands up for his former chief Pius XII. When Pope Paul was still Monsignor Giovanni Battista Montini, a certain Don Angelo Alberti wrote a book about the Message of the Gospels (*Il Messaggio degli Evangelii*, 1956); the future Pope not only recommended this stark anti-semitic pamphlet but even wrote its introduction.

The American producer of Hochhuth's *Representative*, Herman Shumlin, wrote a letter, dated July 18th, 1964 to Pope Paul demanding a declaration whether he still subscribes to the contents of the book, and quoting paragraphs that recall the anti-Jewish outpourings of Goebbels and Co. (*The Churchman*, October, 1964).

This incident may throw some light on the Pope's attitude in rejecting the recommendation of the progressive wing of the Vatican Council to clear the Jews of the ludicrous charge of deicide.

AMERICAN FREETHOUGHT EDITOR RETIRES

The *Liberal*, a monthly freethought magazine published by the Friendship Liberal League of Philadelphia, is now in its nineteenth year, and has been edited almost since its inception by K. M. Whitten. Now Mr. Whitten regretfully—and regrettably—has announced his retirement due to ill health. He will be 80 next birthday and has been told that he must relax and avoid tensions that might aggravate high blood pressure.

Mr. Whitten's editorship of the paper has, he says, "been a labour of love for a cause". It has also been a valuable service to that cause, and we hope with him that his successors will carry on the work as heretofore". We hope too that he will enjoy a happy retirement. Perhaps *Liberal* readers will still be able to enjoy occasional contributions from its capable and well-loved editor emeritus.

WITHOUT COMMENT

He [the Pope] said that the regimes of "atheist and totalitarian" countries were trying to supplant the Church's teachings to young people with Marxist doctrine. There the Church still lived today "in catacombs" as in ancient times.

"The object of the Church then and today in resisting is identical, to defend the truth and simultaneously to reassert the sacred right of every man to his own responsible freedom above all in the basic field of conscience and religion.

"The intention of the ancient and modern persecutors is identical. With physical violence and the weight of a legal, judicial or administrative apparatus they seek to impose 'their truth' and suffocate all contrary expressions of thought".

The Church was trying to resist Marxist suppression of individual rights "not only in defence of its own existence and rights but also in defence of human freedom and dignity".

—Daily Telegraph, (13/9/65).

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

Items for insertion in this column must reach THE FREETHINKER office at least ten days before the date of publication.

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. J. W. BARKER, L. EBURY, J. A. MILLAR and C. E. WOOD.

(Tower Hill). Every Thursday, 12-2 p.m.: L. EBURY.

Manchester Branch NSS (Platt Fields), Sunday, 3 p.m.: MESSRS. CLARE, MILLS and WOOD. (Car Park, Victoria Street), 8 p.m.: MESSRS. COLLINS, WOODCOCK, and others.

Merseyside Branch NSS (Pierhead)—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.; Sundays, 3 p.m. and 7.30 p.m.

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 (New Victoria Hotel, Corporation Street), Sunday, October 3rd, 6.45 p.m.; Open meeting.

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group (Regency House, Oriental Place), Sunday, October 3rd, 5.30 p.m.: Mr. and Mrs. Sand-ground, "Impressions of Israel and Reflections on Jewry".

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, October 3rd, 6.30 p.m.: F. J. CORINA, "God and the Politicians".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall Humanist Centre, Red Lion Square, W.C.1), Sunday, October 3rd, 11 a.m.: H. J. BLACKHAM, "The Role of the Churches Today and Tomorrow". Tuesday, October 5th, 7.30 p.m.: ERIC HILLS, "An Enquiry into Intelligence and Opinion".

Notes and News

POPE PAUL'S "vague new proposals for a synod of bishops" looks to one Roman Catholic "like a characteristic Montini compromise". With a majority in the Vatican Council in favour of sweeping changes, and a majority in the Curia for the *status quo*, the way the Pope swings should be decisive. "But he cannot make up his mind" said Paul Johnson, editor of the *New Statesman* (17/9/65). The Pope is, as his predecessor said, a Hamlet; "he seems to think that he can chat up both sides into a viable compromise". And Mr. Johnson thought it odd that "a man who claims infallibility should be so reluctant to exercise it: the hand hesitates to reach for the hot-line to the Holy Ghost". The big question to be answered was: "should the Church be controlled by a tightly-organised, self-perpetuating bureaucratic oligarchy in the Vatican . . . or by the hundreds of millions of people, of all races, who compose it?" Logically, Mr. Johnson said, the Council should end by setting up "a permanent, proportionately-elected body, to act as the parliament of a world church". Logically, perhaps!

THE conservative minority was soon active at the Council. The first week saw "a full-scale attack on the decree on religious liberty"; and it was almost certain—according to the *Observer* (19/9/65)—that the declaration absolving the Jews of the guilt of the crucifixion had been "watered down". The progressive American Cardinal Ritter might

recognise that "separated brethren" sometimes suffer in Catholic countries and urge approval of the scheme on religious liberty, and even Cardinal Heenan consider it absurd to talk of error not having rights; others were unrepentant. "Undue kindness for false religion must not be shown, said a Chilean Archbishop—speaking in the name of 45 Latin American bishops—"there is only one true religion".

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APPROPRIATELY, however, the strongest opposition came from Cardinal Ottaviani. Truth and falsehood could not be given equal value he declared. Nothing had been said here about Christ's frequent threats of eternal damnation and special care must be taken to protect the poor and unlettered from untruths. The decree on religious liberty was "a controversial document and it seemed to have been understood that controversial themes were to be avoided in this Council" (*The Guardian*, 18/9/65). This prompted Father John Courtney Murray to exclaim that progress had been made. A year ago Cardinal Ottaviani "would not have admitted that the theme was even controversial". And when the vote came on September 22nd, it showed 1,997 for the decree and only 224 against.

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JOHN GRIGG is almost always stimulating, whether one agrees with him or not, and he is never afraid of a delicate subject. His *Guardian* article on September 20th, rightly called the Government's White Paper on immigration the "product of funk". Labour politicians are—as he said—"much less worried about the number of new inhabitants the country is gaining than about the number of votes they (the politicians) have been losing". And Protestant Christians from the West Indies and elsewhere must feel rather bitter, he continued, when they hear it said that coloured immigrants are changing the traditional character of our society. "Little attention seems to be paid to the change in traditional English values resulting from the uncontrolled immigration of Roman Catholics from the Republic of Ireland. Englishmen, it appears, are keener to defend their pigmentation than their principles".

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"How Heathen is England?" asked the *Sunday Times* (19/9/65) and set out to answer on the basis of a Gallup Poll. It found the survey full of paradoxes; attitudes confused and inconsistent. All but 6 per cent hung denominational labels on themselves: 67 per cent said they were Church of England, 13 per cent Non-conformist and 9 per cent Roman Catholic. But church "membership" doesn't mean church attendance, and only 10 per cent go to church on an average Sunday. Roman Catholics are, of course, the most frequent churchgoers, and 50 per cent of them claimed to go to church "most Sundays"—defined by Gallup as two or more Sundays a month. "Yet when interviewers asked people to list what they in fact did *last* Sunday, only 23 per cent of Catholics mentioned going to church, and the figures for Anglicans (7 per cent) and Non-conformists (20 per cent) were also cut".

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To judge from the present Humanist campaign, said the *Sunday Times*, "one would imagine there was significant opposition to religious teaching in state schools". But there was not. Only 4 per cent of those interviewed in the Gallup Poll believe that schools should not give any religious or scripture instruction to children. Even among "the very small minority of people in England" (the 6 per cent) "who say they belong to no Christian denomination, no more than one in five is against all religious education in schools".

The Superman

By PETER BULLOUGH

A "committee meeting" is to be held in Heaven, and the background to the "room" is a "void" with the exception of a large clock marked in centuries from zero to sixty, the single clock finger being set at the twenty-first century.

The Chairman, dressed in a white coat buttoned up at the neck is quietly dozing in his chair, giving a slight shiver from time to time. At his right hand Lucretius is sitting and snoring gently. Next to Lucretius is Socrates, bending over a manuscript, and with a blanket wrapped closely round his shoulders.

At the Chairman's left hand sits Adam, young and beardless and wearing an animal skin. He is idly whittling away at a piece of wood, the splinters of which are scattering over the table. Next to Adam is his wife Eve, dressed in modern (20th century) style, smoking a cigarette with obvious enjoyment, and reading a magazine.

The only sound that is heard for a period of ten seconds or so is the intermittent snoring, and the ticking of the clock. Suddenly an alarm bell rings and the Chairman awakes with a start, looks at the clock, jumps up and rushes to the "void", into which he shouts as loudly as his lungs will allow. "One moment if you please, I'm afraid we're not quite ready for you: I'll give you a call when we are. Sorry to keep you waiting". So saying, the Chairman hurries back to his seat.

"Gentlemen! I beg your pardon, lady and gentlemen".

"Thanks for the compliment", says Eve, glancing at Adam reminiscently.

"I don't consider being called a gentleman is much of a compliment", says Adam. "In fact I've spent the last fifty centuries trying to find out what a gentleman really is, without much success I'm afraid. I don't know if any of the products of my 'wild oats' sitting here with me have anything further to add to the subject matter".

"A gentleman is like a superman. He's a delusion that exists only in the mind of the person who professes to be one", says Socrates, carrying on with writing, and drawing his blanket closer around his shoulders. "I wish to hell someone would turn on some heat in this place. I've half a mind to go back 'downstairs', it was at least warm enough to work down there. . . Where did I put that application form?"

"Delusion! Did you say delusion?", says Lucretius, talking in his sleep. "Complete and utter balderdash old chap. How can a judgment be a delusion if it really and truly *exists*, if only in the mind of the person concerned. Haven't you been following young Kant lately? Just common and very elementary logic you old ignoramous!"

"Who the hell are you calling old! I'm a darn sight younger than you are", replies Socrates, throwing down his quill.

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen! Enough of this aggression; please remember where you are", says the Chairman. "Let us not argue among ourselves. We are here to conduct the interview of a new applicant, not to destroy each other".

"Why don't you shut up and sit down, you old wind-bag" replies Socrates. "You ought to know us well enough by now to know that we're only teasing each other in order to help break the monotony of this place. That's the trouble with being philosophers; everybody expects us to be the very essence of sobriety and completely devoid of human characteristics of any kind. We're just flesh

and blood like everybody else; no more supermen than the next bloke".

"Yes! Yes! Quite so! declares the Chairman pompously. "I do so agree with you. I think that you will agree to us having far more important matters to deal with at this moment however".

"Agree be damned!" says Lucretius, waking up.

"Tch! Tch! Remember where you are dear child. Please have a little consideration for our poor chairman's ulcers", breaks in Eve, still reading.

Lucretius, ignoring the interruption: "As I was saying before being rudely interrupted by my 'very great Mater' here: Agree be damned! I don't agree with you any more than Socrates does. In fact I can't for the life of me see any point in this 'selection procedure' (or whatever it is you call it). Why can't we just let the new applicants decide for themselves instead of trying to judge them. Human beings aren't meant to be prodded, probed, and 'pigeon-holed' any more than a base animal".

Socrates, mischievously: "But the human being *is* an animal, old fruit! You remember cousin Aristotle, and the foundations of 'natural selective evolution' surely, don't you: you ought you know: you yourself added an important point or two".

"Why don't you take a little fly around outside", retorts Lucretius. "Do you good to get some of that surplus fat off you". Turning to the Chairman. "As I was saying: a human being is far too complex a creature to be subjected to judgment by anyone here: we are not equal to the task. The only person among us who enjoys these inane proceedings is you yourself so far as I can see. Wouldn't be so bad if we could have someone to interview *us* for a change. I could do with a bit of wind in my ego. Perhaps we shall really have the pleasure of meeting a real superman one day; who knows?" (reflects) "Come to think of it, I don't believe it's possible to improve on the old chairman we had before you took over. Pity he had to leave so suddenly. Never mind!" Bored with the proceedings, Lucretius nods off.

Socrates, also bored, returns to his writing. Adam starts on a new piece of wood.

The Chairman again, rises to his feet, takes a deep breath, and announces: "The superman for whom you have been waiting so patiently has arrived lady and gentlemen. He is here this very minute, waiting in the void. Let me read his qualifications: James Solobaid, world citizen No. 2, philosopher. All honours and degrees available to mankind. Parentage: — product of Artificial Insemination. Gentlemen, the great day has arrived. Let us waste no more time before we summon this superman into our presence".

"I'm not in the least impressed", says Socrates cynically. "We've had such individuals here before and not one of them has turned out to be much different to the rest".

"But don't you see that this man *is* different from the rest. He has the paramount advantage of not having inherited the emotional characteristics that are an essential part of the process of 'direct insemination'; he must be free of all emotions, and in consequence, possess the very highest of intellects. In such a man as this, whose thought is the product of pure reason without emotional bias of any description, surely lies the qualities of a superman".

"Can't see what difference emotion makes", says Adam. "Whoever he is, he's still only one of my sons when all's

said an done; and although each of them is different I wouldn't go so far as to say that *one* is *so* much more intelligent than the others. To the extent of my experience—for what it's worth—I would agree with young Socrates that the idea of a superman is a delusion. To me the question is concerned only with 'human relativity' and we shouldn't be concerned here with mortal business. Perhaps my dear wife will agree with me in this?" (turning to Eve).

"The whole idea of artificial insemination is repugnant to the mind of any woman. Good God! What next! The most important thing in a woman's life is emotion: take that away from her and the only thing she will produce is a moron not a superman. A woman wants a child she can love and possess, not a computing machine that will make her rack her brains in order to try to understand its every thought and word".

"Well said, old girl! I agree with you", shouts Socrates.

"Who wants a perfect human calculating machine anyway?"

Lucretius, jumping up and thumping the table violently: "Nonsense! Whoever heard of a *perfect* calculating machine of any day or age, human or otherwise? The idea is as ludicrous as Grandma Eve's perfect emotional man. I vote we ask our esteemed Chairman to request the presence of our friend out there".

The Chairman breathing a huge sigh of relief, leaps to the void and shouts "Mr. Solobaid! You may come in now if you will".

To the roll of drums and clash of cymbals enters the devil with a flourish, complete with horns and black cape.

Socrates: "Well, blow me down if it isn't the old chairman back again. Welcome home old chap! Good to have you back!" (turning to Adam) "Get the cards out Granddad, I've thought of a new game: its called "Find the superman".

The Tale of the Terrapins

By D. L. HUMPHRIES
(Australia)

A FEW years ago my brother decided to keep terrapins as pets. But this proved to be easier said than done, for the long-necked variety chosen turned out to be quite energetic creatures, and were continually trying to escape from their enclosed garden pool. It was a common occurrence for members of the family to enter the side gate and encounter an escaping terrapin face to foot. The anger of the reptile at thus having its escape thwarted was only too apparent.

Since it appeared that the wooden wall surrounding the pool was inadequate, we substituted one of a diamond wire mesh 2ft. 6in. high. However, the terrapins still managed to escape, although how they did so is a mystery. Our address was painted on the shell of each animal, and one was subsequently returned by a neighbour.

But this story does not concern the terrapins which escaped, but the ones that did not. My brother usually had only one terrapin at a time, replacing it with another when it escaped. Between escape attempts the terrapin would refuse to eat, and lie sluggishly near the surface of the water. In the case of two successive terrapins there came a time when they appeared quite dead, and even began to smell. So they were buried. Now the queer part is, that although they were buried in the same spot, and about a foot or so from the surface, when my brother went to dig them up again—"to get the shell"—he found that both had completely disappeared! He is certain that both animals were dead on burial, that this was the exact spot of interment, that the ground showed no signs of disturbance due to escape or removal, and that it was unlikely that anyone saw him bury them. We have all sworn that we did not remove the bodies and that no one else could have done so. The only possible explanation is that the two terrapins have risen from the dead! The evidence is so clear and overwhelming. Consequently it behoves us to go forth into the world and teach what the terrapin taught us to all the other terrapins in order that they might achieve salvation. Terra firma shall become terrapin, and all the world turn turtle! Possibly, other reptiles such as snakes, lizards and crocodiles might be beneficiaries of the gospel also. We can but try!

PS: It has subsequently come to my attention that certain presumptuous Christians have cast doubts upon my interpretation of the events. They have a

different version. Wretched creatures! They claim that there is a perfectly "natural" explanation—yet they are unwilling to attribute the same to their own resurrection story! They assert that terrapins can hibernate, and that under these circumstances the vital processes slow down, so that one could easily think the creatures were dead. Also, that this species is capable of giving off an offensive smell which my brother had mistakenly attributed to decaying of the flesh.

Hence, when they were buried, they awoke, struggled to the surface, and made off. A few showers of rain smoothed over the ground so that all appeared to be as before. What nonsense this is!

How could two terrapins, so obviously dead, weakened through lack of food, and buried a foot or so from the surface, how could they possibly struggle out and walk away?

No, it is a great mystery, and such feeble suggestions are quite absurd.

CORRESPONDENCE

CHRISTMAS CARDS

Christmas, as the traders will very soon be telling us, is not very far off, and the annual problem of the Freethinker will arise—how to reciprocate the greetings that cascade in from one's friends, without recognising the religious ingredient of the holiday! True, cards are on sale in plenty which don't carry variations on the "Star, three Kings, luminous mother and child" theme. But every card that I received last year had the word "Christmas" in it somewhere, thus seeming to recognise the Christian festival with which the holiday coincides. Is there, then, anywhere in Britain where one may buy cards which simply exhort one's family and friends to have a good holiday—for its own sake! Such cards, especially if the proceeds were donated to the appeal for Spanish political prisoners, would be greatly in demand by Freethinkers, and nobody could accuse "even us" of cashing in on Christmas.

R. G. CALDWELL.

[While not sharing Mr. Caldwell's abhorrence of the word *Christmas* (does he worry about using the pagan-derived *Easter*?) we know that he expresses a common feeling among Freethinkers. Can readers help him?—ED.]

RIDICULE AND LOGIC

"God on the Doorstep" (THE FREETHINKER 10/9/65) was an excellent piece of gentle humour replete with spiky barbs. More of this style together with a positive promotion of secular thought in scientific and sociological matters is needed.

The ridiculing of religion and the propagation of secularism in various fields should be the twin pillars of THE FREETHINKER'S policy. Gentle (and not so gentle) humour, deflating barbs and pointed bantering of religionists' cherished beliefs, tenets and dogmas would serve more our purpose of disposing with the atrophying remnants of religion than does the rabid ranting

and fulminating confrontation of which we read so much in the columns of THE FREETHINKER. Nothing belittles so much as ridicule, especially ridicule of age-old beliefs. And if in so doing we run the risk of falling foul of anarchistic blasphemy laws so much the better. It is high time they were challenged, as they are being in Sweden, in West Germany, in Denmark by our counterparts.

There is still this tendency to polemicise with religionists which finds favour with THE FREETHINKER and this predilection for writing on religion and all its concomitants, so absurd and meaningless to sane and rational readers.

Secularism in the fields of education, sociology, psychology, medicine and cosmology (a welcome step from F. A. Ridley's review in THE FREETHINKER 10/9/65 is perhaps an augur?) should fill the pages coupled with the satirical send-up and the ludicrous let-down of religion and religionists.

After all, we will never convince foolish fancifiers of the unreality of their supernatural delusions by logical controversy, any more than reasoning with a psychopath will cure him.

B. J. CLIFTON.

[Not all believers are impervious to logic; it leads some of them to freethought. The role of ridicule in combating religion is real but, we suggest, limited. And there has only been one Voltaire—Ed].

CATHOLIC-HUMANIST DIALOGUE

"Dismay" (Notes and News, 10/9/65) was exactly the right word to use in connection with the proposed so-called "Dialogue" between representatives of the IHEU and the Roman Catholic Secretariat for Unbelievers. It is indeed a sad thought that British Humanists should, in effect, lend themselves to the assistance of this arrogant power which has been the bane of Europe and a persistent bar to progress for centuries.

This latest move on the part of the Vatican is of course an effort to stifle criticism, silence the enemy, and emerge triumphant. The old game of "divide and rule". It is a matter of life and death to them, because Freethought and Secular Humanism constitute the most deadly danger which the Roman Church faces today, and it is an effort to arrest the defections and lapses consequent upon the flow of enlightened propaganda away from the supernatural which has really caused the Vatican approach to the International Humanist and Ethical Union.

The Pope's latest encyclical proclaims that these people, who still persist in the ancient cannibalistic practice of eating their god, are not far removed from the magician-priests of the very oldest civilisations, and have nothing in common with Humanism and Freethought. Besides, the hierarchy has been consistently outspoken in its condemnation of Atheists, Rationalists and Humanists, well realising that in a world of increasing scientific knowledge and educational facilities it is on the losing side in the battle for men's minds. The only possible way to deal with Rome is to keep up the momentum of secular propaganda and continuous pressure at every point. This is what it fears most.

Just when the tide is turning in favour of Secularism it ill becomes Humanists to rock the boat. One begins to wonder if the late Victor Purcell's speculations had some foundation in fact. Or are members of the IHEU just nice simple people who believe all the Catholic advertisements?

ELIZABETH COLLINS.

AN AGNOSTIC APOLOGY

In his article "Reply to an Agnostic" (THE FREETHINKER 10/9/65) Mr. Gonzalo Quiogue takes upon himself to pour the usual dirty water upon the heads of those Freethinkers who call themselves Agnostics—as they have every right to do, and as the great and courageous T. H. Huxley did before them. Mr. Quiogue may take note of this fact in any future criticism he may fling at the "sheep-like" Agnostic, to use his own abusive phrase. After the usual Atheistic platitudes he informs his readers that the Atheist is not required to give reasons for his atheism—which is not reason as he imagines, but sheer conceit. The Theist is perfectly justified in requiring from the Atheist a logical reason for his atheism, but this is a point that intellectual conceit cannot swallow.

In his arrogance Mr. Quiogue creates his own cloud-cuckoo land, where reason and words have no meaning. For if he is exempted from giving reasons for his atheism then how can he reason at all.

Then he belabours the poor Agnostic in such beautiful language such as "sheep-like", "fence sitters" and "shirkers" and so on, in a tone only worthy of a certain type of Christian who can only answer his opponent with abuse. His freethought appears to have "improved" his bad manners but not his reason of which he is so proud. Like himself the Agnostic does not accept the

Christian concept of a benevolent Deity, but outside this, he neither denies nor affirms the existence of a non-human super power outside the universe. After thirty years of reading and thinking on these topics I say with the great nineteenth-century philosopher Herbert Spencer we do not know—because we cannot know. This is within human limits and therefore reasonable. And may I remind Mr. Quiogue that freethought is an attitude towards life where both the Atheist and the Agnostic can find room for each other's respective view points, for both seek for truth—if truth can be found.

E. MARKLEY.

OBITUARY

Gerda Fehl who died in Paddington General Hospital, London, on September 14th, was born in Austria and came to this country in 1938. She read widely, like her companion the late Walter Carlton, with whom she regularly attended Freethought meetings until her health broke down several years ago.

Members of the National Secular Society (of which Gerda Fehl was an Honorary Life Member) and other friends attended the committal ceremony conducted by Mr. W. McIlroy, General Secretary of the Society, at West London Crematorium on September 18th.

Books of Interest

- Ten Non-Commandments *Ronald Fletcher* 2s. 6d. postage 5d.
 The Thinkers Handbook *Hector Hawton* 5s. postage 8d.
 The Humanist Revolution *Hector Hawton* 10s. 6d. postage 8d.
 Pioneers of Social Change *Royston Pike* 15s. postage 10d.
 The Origins of Religion *Lord Raglan* 2s. 6d. postage 6d.
 Man and His Gods *Homer Smith* 13s. 6d. postage 10d.
 Evolution of The Idea of God *Grant Allen* 3s. 6d. postage 6d.
 The Age of Reason *Thomas Paine* 3s. 6d. postage 5d.
 The Rights of Man *Thomas Paine* 9s. 6d. postage 1s.
 Thomas Paine *Chapman Cohen* 1s. postage 3d.
 Primitive Survivals in Modern Thought *Chapman Cohen* 3s. postage 6d.
 Freethought and Humanism in Shakespeare *David Tribe* 2s. postage 5d.
 Why Are We Here? (a poem) *David Tribe* 10s. postage 5d.
 An Analysis of Christian Origins *Georges Ory* 2s. 6d. postage 5d.
 Rome or Reason? *R. G. Ingersoll* 1s. postage 5d.
 The Realm of Ghosts *Eric Maple* 21s. postage 1s. 3d.
 Evolution of the Papacy *F. A. Ridley* 1s. postage 5d.
 Freedom's Foe—The Vatican *Adrian Pigott* 3s. postage 6d.
 The Vatican versus Mankind *Adrian Pigott* 4s. postage 6d.
 Catholic Action *Adrian Pigott* 6d. postage 3d.
 The Bible Handbook *G. W. Foote & W. P. Ball* 5s. postage 8d.
 The Dark World of Witches *Eric Maple* 3s. 6d. postage 5d.
 Morals Without Religion *Margaret Knight* 10s. 6d. postage 8d.
 Honest to God *John T. Robinson* 5s. postage 6d.
 The New Reformation *John T. Robinson* 6s. postage 6d.
 The Honest to God Debate *John T. Robinson & David C. Edwards* 6s. postage 8d.
 Objections to Christian Belief *Various authors* 12s. 6d. postage 8d.
 Objections to Humanism *Various authors* 16s. postage 8d.
 The Bradlaugh Case *Walter L. Arnstein* 50s. postage 1s. 6d.
 Bertrand Russell The Passionate Sceptic *Alan Wood* 8s. 6d. postage 8d.
 Sceptical Essays *Bertrand Russell* 6s. postage 6d.
 Humanist Essays *Gilbert Murray* 7s. 6d. postage 8d.
 Life of Jesus *Ernest Renan* 2s. 6d. postage 5d.
 The Freethinker bound volume 1964 30s. postage 2s.
 All Things New *Ann Biezanek* 3s. 6d. postage 5d.
 The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists *Robert Tressell* 7s. 6d. postage 10d.
 The World's Living Religions *Geoffrey Parrinder* 2s. 6d. postage 6d.
 117 Days *Ruth First* 3s. 6d. postage 5d.
 Has Man a Future? *Bertrand Russell* 2s. 6d. postage 5d.
 Crimes of the Popes 6d. postage 3d.
 Frauds, Forgeries and Relics 9d. postage 3d.
 Handbook of Citizens Rights *N.C.C.L.* 2s. 6d. postage 5d.
 from THE FREETHINKER Bookshop
 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1.

Details of membership of the National Secular Society and inquiries regarding bequests and secular funeral services may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1. Telephone: HOP 2717.