

Notes and Comments

IGNORANCE AS WHITE DEVIL: A BUNYAN DEBT TO THOMAS ADAMS?

THE CASE for considering Bunyan's Mr. Ignorance a counterpart to the hypocritical caviller Antilegon of Arthur Dent's immensely popular *Plaine Mans Path-Way to Heaven* has been well put by Maurice Hussey, but it has not been suggested so far that Ignorance, in allegorical presentation, may also perhaps owe something to a certain stimulating sermon of the period.¹ Thomas Adams, whom Southey nominated "Shakespeare of the Puritans," was closely connected with Bunyan's Bedfordshire, and on March 7, 1612, he preached at Paul's Cross a sermon later published under the title, *The White Devil, or The Hypocrite Uncased*, the content of which has such a number of correspondences with Bunyan's allegory that it seems entirely possible Bunyan both knew and exploited it; at any rate, Adams's theatrical touches, his taste for the sensational, and his flair for lurid eye-catching titles must have appealed to Bunyan, who characteristically held Luther's vivid metaphor of the white devil as one of his own favourite emblems of the Pharisaical professor.

In his sermon Adams lists six respects in which the vileness of the white devil is apparent. Hypocrisy, he remarks, is the worst of sins, because it keeps all sins; they are made sure and secure by hypocrisy. It is the worst of sins, too, because it counterfeits all virtues. It is indeed the only vice that feeds on virtue: "Vice is made Vertue's Ape in an hypocrite's practise."² Adams proceeds in this section to elaborate an idea that takes us straight to the heart of Bunyan's allegory: "The hypocrite followes the religious man a farre off, as Peter did Christ, but when he comes to the Crosse, he will deny him."³ Bunyan adopts this notion, transforming it imaginatively into the graphic portrayal of Ignorance on the road following some distance behind Christian and Hopeful and afterwards in conversation with the pilgrims denying his full need of Christ. Adams goes on: "An hypocrite is a kinde of honest atheist: for his own Good is his God: his heauen is vpon earth."³ Surely it is not without significance that Atheist is the person with whom Christian next meets after his encounter with the shadowy Flatterer, another whited sepulchre; in any event, Bunyan's attitude to Atheist is precisely that of Adams. "Take heed," cautions Hopeful, "he is one of the Flatterers." "As for this man," Christian rejoins, "I know that he is blinded by the god of this

1. Maurice Hussey, "Bunyan's 'Mr. Ignorance,'" *Modern Language Review*, Vol. 44 (1949), pp. 483-489, and "Arthur Dent's 'Plaine Mans Path-Way to Heaven,'" *ibid.*, pp. 26-34.

2. Thomas Adams, *Works* (London, 1630), p. 45.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 46.

World."⁴ The other three detestable aspects of the hypocrite's specious nature that Adams distinguishes may be summarized briefly: a hypocrite is hated by all, both God and man; hypocrisy is like the devil, for he is a very hypocrite; a hypocrite is in greatest difficulty to be cured. Each of these points finds concrete expression in the eventual dismissal of Ignorance by the genuine pilgrims, by the representation of the Flatterer as the devil incarnate, "a man black of flesh, but covered with a very light Robe," and by Ignorance's ultimate rejection.⁵

Although Bunyan's allegory is thus very much of a piece with Adams's sermon, it would, of course, be quite wrong to assume a conscious borrowing. All we may safely aver is that this parallel in Adams uncovers a further strand in the popular Puritan moral theology that lay to Bunyan's hand and provided him with the raw material from which to fashion his unique and unforgettable drama of the sinner damned.

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4. John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, edited by J. B. Wharey, 2nd ed., rev. Roger Sharrock (London, 1960), pp. 135-136.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 133.

"NATIONAL APOSTASY":

A CONTEMPORARY VIEW OF THE IRISH CHURCH'S DUTY

I

IN 1833 the Parliament of the United Kingdom passed the Church Temporalities Bill. The essence of this legislation was a drastic reorganization of the Irish branch of the United Church of England and Ireland. Two of the four Irish provinces were suppressed, Tuam being united to Armagh and Cashel to Dublin, and by means of a union of dioceses the twenty-two Irish bishoprics were reduced to twelve.¹ It seems clear that the Archbishop of Armagh (Lord John George Beresford) had been consulted by the Chief Secretary for Ireland (E. G. Stanley, later Lord Stanley and Earl of Derby), and that he had, albeit with some reluctance, named at least five sees that might be suppressed.² The Irish Convocations, however, like the English, had been in abeyance since the second decade of the eighteenth century, so that no synodical action could be proposed, let alone taken. Consequently, the suppression of provinces and sees was formally an act of the State alone, without the consent of the Church.

It is evident that Earl Grey's Whig administration had originally meant the Church Temporalities Act to be part of their solution of the Irish

1. For a full list, cf. W. A. Phillips (ed.), *History of the Church of Ireland from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, Vol. III (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), pp. 304f.

2. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 302ff.

question—the problem, that is, of pacifying the native Irish population, overwhelmingly Roman Catholic in religion and on the whole unscrupulously exploited by their Protestant landlords. On paper, at least, the income of the Irish Church was very large, and in fact it was very unevenly distributed.³ Thus there might well have seemed to be good reason both for the application of a portion of the Irish episcopal endowments to purposes other than the support of a minority (and in part alien) religion and for the redistribution of the Church's remaining revenues. In reality, however, owing to the persistent opposition of the House of Lords, no alienation of Church property was feasible, and all that the government could accomplish was a partial rationalization of the Irish Church's internal finances.⁴

At first glance, at any rate, the Church Temporalities Bill, as finally enacted, might seem harmless enough—or even an act of economic justice. In fact, however, it precipitated a large-scale controversy from which there emerged (among other things) one of the most aggressive and influential religious movements of the nineteenth century. Moved by the horrendous vision of a drastic reduction of the Anglican episcopate by the sole volition of an ecclesiastically dubious Parliament, John Keble mounted the University pulpit at St. Mary's, Oxford, on 14 July 1833, and there delivered to the Judges of Assize the sermon that was soon to be published under the title of "National Apostasy."⁵ "I have ever," Newman tells us,⁶ "considered and kept the day, as the start of the religious movement of 1833." Newman himself followed up Keble's sermon with *Tract One* (issued on 9 September 1833), in which the supernatural authority of the apostolic episcopate was forcefully asserted, and the Oxford Movement was well away.

Judgments of the Tractarian reaction to the Church Temporalities Bill have differed widely. To one eminent and judicious historian it seems almost hysterical.

There was something feverish, a touch of absurdity, about the language of these Oxford attacks upon the religious indifference of the time. The occasion of Keble's sermon . . . was the proposal to secularize a portion of the revenues of the Irish bishoprics. The appropriation clause was withdrawn, and the government merely followed Tudor or Stuart or even medieval precedents in uniting a number of sees; yet Newman described the situation as "critical," while Keble accused parliament of a "direct disavowal of the sovereignty of God," and denounced the country, in its support of parliament, as guilty of apostasy.⁷

On the other hand, a number of observers, including some of their own contemporaries, have spoken at least as sharply as the Tractarian leaders. The latter could hardly have painted the situation more darkly than the

3. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 302.

4. British governments, of course, continued to wrestle with the problem until disestablishment was accomplished in 1869.

5. John Keble, *Sermons, Academical and Occasional* (Oxford, 1847), pp. 127–148.

6. J. H. Newman, *Apologia pro Vita Sua* (Garden City, N.Y.: Image Books, 1956), p. 152.

7. E. L. Woodward, *The Age of Reform, 1815–1870* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), pp. 493f.

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I contend [he wrote], that the Irish Church was not bound to comply with the provisions of this unrighteous Bill. If the clergy of the diocese of Waterford⁸ had elected a Bishop according to the forms of the primitive Church, and if the Primate of Ireland had thought fit to consecrate him, he would have been as much a Bishop of the United Church of England and Ireland, as any of the Bishops appointed by the Crown. But Roman Catholics and Dissenters have decided it to be convenient that the Irish Church should henceforth have fewer Bishops: and thus the Church . . . is 'bound and fettered and enslaved.' But will she not burst her bonds?⁹

At a slightly later point in the story, the vigorous Dr. Hook could refer in a sermon to "the extinction of ten Bishoprics by a simple act of the Civil legislature—a usurpation almost as great as any of which the Pope has been guilty."¹⁰ Obviously the Tractarian leaders were not alone in their assessment of the danger.

There were at least two cogent reasons for pessimism on the part of English churchmen. First, by the Union of the Kingdoms on 1 January 1801 the destinies of the English and Irish Churches seemed to have been inextricably bound together, and it was natural to see an attack on the position of the Irish Church as the harbinger of an assault on the whole Anglican Establishment. It is true that the Church Temporalities Bill did not confiscate Church property, but the ultimate intentions of the administration had been made plain enough, and it was no secret that a good many of the agitators for "reform," in England as well as in Ireland, really aimed at undermining the outward fabric of the Church. Secondly and (especially in High Church eyes) more seriously, the legislative suppression of ten sees was a direct affront to the spiritual authority of the Church and her bishops, and it inevitably suggested that the integrity of the Anglican Church as part of the Catholic Church of Christ was in grave danger.

Under the circumstances, it is hardly surprising that responsible churchmen were alarmed. What has surprised many observers is the fact that the Tractarians and other High Churchmen so largely contented themselves with protests and petitions and other defensive actions, rather than boldly defying the State and actively asserting the spiritual liberty of the Church, whatever the risks. More than one critic has unfavourably compared the Tractarians, protesting in word but acquiescing in deed and clinging to their positions in the Establishment, with the Scottish seceders of 1843, who courageously faced the disruption of their Church and their own impoverishment as the price of freedom from intolerable compromise.¹¹

8. The see of Waterford and Lismore, vacant through the death of Richard Bourke in 1832, was united to Cashel by the Church Temporalities Act.

9. Edward Burton, *Thoughts on the Separation of Church and State* (London, 1834), p. 62.

10. W. F. Hook, *The Catholic Clergy of Ireland: Their Cause Defended, in a Sermon, Preached in the Parish Church of Buckingham, on Thursday, January VII, MDCCCXXXVI* (London, 1836), p. 36. Coming from such a doughty foe of "popery," these were harsh words indeed.

11. Cf. Woodward, *The Age of Reform*, p. 506.

One may fairly ask why Keble and his friends did not try to organize a counterattack along the lines suggested by Edward Burton. If they suspected that their own Crown-appointed bishops would fail to rise to the occasion, they might well have hoped to find some sympathy and support in the non-established Churches in Scotland and America, neither of which can have felt any strong obligation to the Anglican Establishment as such. It is certainly hard to see how, with their high "Apostolical" principles, the Oxford Movement party could be satisfied with anything less than a genuinely "free" Church.

It is not my purpose in these notes to attempt a full analysis of the Tractarian response to the complex challenge which I have summarily sketched. I simply want to draw attention to one line of argument, advanced by a respected friend of the Tractarian group, Hugh James Rose,¹² to Arthur Philip Perceval, a close associate and former pupil of John Keble. Rose's view, which must inevitably have carried weight with his Oxford admirers, is clearly stated in two letters which, to the best of my knowledge, have never appeared in print. As we shall see, he is conscientiously opposed to a radical reaction against "National Apostasy."

II

Rose's letters are contained, in transcription, in a manuscript letter-book, *Rev. H. J. Rose to the Hon. & Rev. A. P. Perceval, 1832-1836*. This letter-book is part of the large collection of manuscripts and pamphlets preserved at Pusey House, Oxford.¹³

(i) The first letter (No. 14, fol. 56-59 in the letter-book) is dated 7 October 1833. The relevant passage reads as follows:

I have received your two papers,¹⁴ wh: have struck & interested me very much. But remember my Cambridge education, & be assured that I am not making excuses when I say that on a point of such importance the *strictest* proof is necessary. If the law of the land is to be broken, we must see *clearly* that it is against the law of GOD. Now put the case of Lismore. They have no Bishop, & will have none in the usual way at least.¹⁵ Now Bishop Hobart¹⁶ always held that in such a case Clergy w^d be bound to yield obedience to the nearest real Bishop, tho' not *in Law* strictly their Bishop. Thus he said, that on *primitive* principles he thought any English Clergyman residing in France must obey B^p Luscombe.¹⁷ Consider this point well, & see if the Clergy of Lismore may not make a good case for receiving the ArchB^p of Cashel *on this ground*, rather than resorting to an *election* wh: is certainly against the law of the land, *as allowed by Clergy* for centuries. If we are to fight, we must have the surest ground; for

12. On H. J. Rose (1795-1838), cf. J. W. Burgon, *Lives of Twelve Good Men* (London, 1889), vol. I, pp. 116-283.

13. I am indebted to the Rev. F. H. Maycock, Principal of Pusey House, for free access to this remarkable collection.

14. Rose does not identify these papers.

15. In fact, they had not had one of their own since 1363, when the see was united to Waterford.

16. John Henry Hobart (1775-1830), Bishop of New York. He was greatly admired by contemporary English High Churchmen.

17. Michael Henry Thornhill Luscombe (1776-1846), consecrated bishop in Scotland in 1825, was English chaplain in Paris for the rest of his life.

the harm wh: w^d be done to the Church by a very few respectable men going out, and *not being joined*, is not to be told. It w^d possess the laity at large with the feeling that we really do not know our own principles, or that they are very doubtful, & w^d rather throw ridicule on the whole matter. Of course this must be braved or endured, if principle requires it. But *let that be clear*.

(ii) The second letter (No. 69, fol. 222–231) is dated 17 September 1836. The following are the relevant sentences:

Altho' the Irish Clergy truly stated that the measure¹⁸ w^d be injurious in a spiritual view, yet it is to be remembered that neither articles nor Liturgy nor form of Ch: Gov^t are changed by the Irish Bill. Can you then, altho' indirectly spiritual evil may arise, make out a case for *separation* in Church, & *resistance* to the Powers that be? Unless you rely on the sinfulness of the Secular Legislation thus interfering without the Church, wh: seems to me to be the strong point, have you case enough? . . . It w^d be hard to tie the Irish Clergy to their words. They might fairly say that injury to Spiritual interests w^d arise & yet not so much spiritual evil as to justify *rebellion* against the King, denial of his power, & resistance to the Law: all wh: w^d be involved in chusing a B. of Waterford.¹⁹

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18. The reference is apparently to one of the several proposals on the title question.

19. Newman himself suggests views akin to Rose's in a letter to Keble, dated 5 August 1833 (Anne Mozley [ed.], *Letters and Correspondence of John Henry Newman* [New York: Longmans, 1911], Vol. I, pp. 386f.). After asking what the Waterford clergy should do according to ecclesiastical law, and whether they and the bishops should be stirred up, he adds: "We shall lose all our influence when times are worse, if we are prematurely violent." On 3 April 1834, however (*ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 30f.), he doubts Rose's commitment to his own view (undefined) "as regards the Irish Sees." It would be interesting to know if he had seen Rose's earlier letter to Perceval.