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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

1950—The Holy Year

THIS year occupies a distinctive place in the annals of the Roman Catholic Church, for it is an officially proclaimed "Holy Year," throughout which pilgrims of all nations and from all lands flock to the Eternal City in order to obtain those special "indulgences" reserved for this auspicious year. All of which redounds to the greater glory of God, not to mention the temporal satisfaction of the Roman hotel keepers.

The custom of holding one year at stated intervals as an officially recognised Holy Year is now of considerable antiquity and dates back to the year 1300, when the last of the great medieval Popes, Boniface VIII, proclaimed the first year of the century as a special Holy Year.*

In the recent centuries the observance of Holy Year has become more frequent, at first it was held every century, then every half-century, finally as now, every twenty-five years. Thus the last Holy Year was in 1925 under the pontificate of Pius XI (Achille Ratti), the immediate predecessor of the present Pope. Whilst the next is due for 1975, and by that date, even the "infallible" Pope might have difficulty in predicting the precise situation of the Papacy!

The combined efforts of the Catholic press, ably seconded in this respect by the secular press and the B.B.C. and its foreign colleagues, have familiarised the general public with the traditional ritual which accompanied the official opening of the Holy Door of St. Peter's Cathedral on Christmas Eve, by the Pope in person, and which marked the opening of the Holy Year. Suffice it here to observe that in its handling of the sacred ceremonies of the Holy Year, the Church of Rome displays all that flair for the effective combination of imposing pageantry and of the skilful exploitation of religious superstition, which all who have studied its history would expect.

The Vatican has learned as a result of its vast experience just how to combine exactly the attractions of a spectacular ritual with the impressive stamp of a massive historical tradition. The observance of the Holy Year forces the attention of the whole world upon the Eternal City, and as once in the Middle Ages, all roads lead to Rome.

It is to-day rather intriguing to recall that amongst the pilgrims who flocked to Rome for the Holy Year in 1500, when the ceremony of opening the Holy Door by the Pope was first introduced, was a pious young German monk, later to acquire in Catholic eyes an equivocal fame under his secular name of Martin Luther. A Borgia Pope then sat in St. Peter's Chair, and the Pagan splendours of the High Renaissance, then at its artistic zenith, did but conceal beneath a brilliant façade the deep moral corruption of the unreformed Papal Court.

* Readers of "The Divine Comedy" will recall the famous reference made by his contemporary, Dante, to the subsequent capture and maltreatment of this Pope by the French at Anagni: "Christ is mocked again in the person of His Vicar."

Luther was horrified by what he saw in the "Holy" City and returned to Germany already a potential Protestant.

To-day, the Papal Court is, at least outwardly, respectable—in 1500, with the Borgias in the Vatican, it was very far from being so! But what Luther was later to describe as "the hellish doctrine of indulgences" of the buying and selling of the Divine Grace for cash down, is still in operation in the "Year of Jubilee," 1950, even if thinly camouflaged by more decorous theological explanations: in return for his expense, time and trouble, in visiting Rome, every pilgrim receives "indulgences" which, however much they may be explained away by artful jesuitical casuistry, presumably mean that the recipient is in a better position in the eyes of the supernatural, and has a better prospect of avoiding eternal punishment and of enjoying eternal felicity, than those who lacked the time and money to make the pilgrimage.

And this is 433 years since Luther posted upon the walls of Wittenberg University that historic denunciation of Indulgences which launched the Reformation upon its epochal course in 1517.

To-day, Rome faces a menace hardly less dangerous to her power and existence than was the Reformation which so nearly destroyed her in the sixteenth century, the era of the great religious revolution that put an end to the Middle Ages, and which inaugurated modern history. To-day, the contemporary menace is no longer represented by Protestantism which actually seems more disposed to seek an alliance with her old enemy in which the latter is destined to play a preponderating rôle: at least, so it would appear from a recent correspondence in that former bulwark of British Protestantism, *The Times*.

The present mortal enemy of militant Catholicism is that congeries of atheism, materialism, and social revolt, which the Church labels collectively as "Atheistic Communism," and which derives its political power from its association with Russia, the present leading military world-power, and with China, potentially the greatest power of the future, as she was for so long in the past.

The Papacy is not unmindful of the Red menace from the East; indeed, it seems seldom absent from its thoughts. We can be sure that such experienced politicians as the Men of the Vatican, will not fail to utilise to the full the religious fanaticism engendered by the celebration of the Holy Year for their own political ends. Half empire and half religion, the Church of Rome makes its religious and political art mutually subserve each other. Holy Year will show the world what reserves of latent fanaticism it has as its disposal. After all, it may be necessary to fight a Crusade against the modern, as formerly against the medieval enemies of the Church. For the battle of Europe between Rome and Moscow is now in full blast, and if Rome loses this "spiritual" battle, the next Holy Year may not be celebrated in Rome!

This year may also be memorable for another reason. Persistent rumour, which cannot be altogether discounted predicts an early vacancy at the Vatican. Pius XII, a

career-diplomatist, who has served the Church well in a political age of stress, is an old man of 73, and the office of Pope during the decade in which he has held office, cannot have been a sinecure. For reasons which we have discussed, it seems practically certain that the Italian monopoly of the Papal Office which has lasted since the Reformation put an end to the more cosmopolitan medieval Church, is destined to end at the next Conclave of Cardinals. In 1945, rumour in Rome nominated the then Archbishop of Quebec, a French-Canadian, as the Pope's successor, but Cardinal Villeneuve predeceased Pius. Rumour now points to the American, Cardinal Spellman, as the Pope from "across the water," whom an ancient Irish prophecy foretold as the 268th Pope, in succession to the present occupant of St. Peter's Chair.

There is, however, a time-honoured aphorism which seems to conform with the actual practice at Papal conclaves: "Go in Pope, come out Cardinal"! Prophecy is rash, but none the less, it appears probable that Paccelli will be the last of the Italians who have reigned exclusively since 1523, and the Catholic Church is due to return to the old cosmopolitan practice of the pre-Reformation Church. It may be relevant to point out that the General of the Jesuits, popularly regarded as the Pope's *alter ego*, has only exceptionally been an Italian.

The Holy Year of 1950, therefore, promises to be a memorable year in the history of the Vatican, and in 1975, the next Holy Year, the Papacy will be—where? Whoever could answer this question would throw much light upon the future history of the world!

F. A. RIDLEY.

THE EVOLUTION OF CONTEMPORARY TURKEY

PERHAPS the greatest personality who emerged from the first World War was Mustafa Kemal, in the then Ottoman Empire. Despite the deep religious instincts of the Moslem communities, Kemal succeeded before his untimely death, in secularising the Turkish State, although according to the current *Annual Register*, there has been a slight sectarian reaction since.

In October, 1918, the truce of Mudros signalled Turkey's retirement from the War. In the former Turkish capital, Constantinople, now Istanbul, dissension prevailed, and it became clear that Turkish survival depended on Anatolia in Asia with its practically homogeneous Moslem population. During the War, the Greeks had been guilty of unspeakable atrocities in Smyrna, and the one man capable of restoring order seemed Kemal, who had gained a great reputation as a soldier. So in 1919, a proclamation was issued by the Turkish authorities demanding the independence of Anatolia and enlisting all armed bodies for its preservation.

Under Kemal's presidency, a Congress was convened, but its recommendations were rejected by Ferid Pasha, who commanded in Istanbul, and Kemal was recalled. When he ignored this order he was declared a rebel, but he had so strengthened his authority throughout Anatolia that he was able to sever all relations with Istanbul and Ferid Pasha was compelled to resign. But Turkish reactionaries were still supported by the Entente Powers and Ferid returned to Istanbul, where he sentenced Kemal and his leading adherents to death by court martial. France and Britain still dictated terms to the Istanbul authorities and seemed determined on

the destruction of Turkish autonomy. As Dr. Carl Brockman observes in his *History of the Islamic Peoples* (Routledge, 25s.): "Although this ignominious act of violence called forth indignant declarations from the entire Islamic world, in particular the Indian Muslims, whose feelings Britain had to spare, and brought the Turkish army numerous volunteers from other Islamic countries, the Ankara Government was at first prepared to accept the occupation of Smyrna by the Greeks, and also to waive claim to Adrianople."

With the aid and support of the Entente authorities, the Greeks advanced until they were defeated at Sakarya, and this Turkish victory was signalized by the bestowal of the title of Ghazi on Kemal, who commanded the Ottoman forces. France then concluded a treaty with Turkey, while Russia and the Soviet States of Asia Minor also entered into treaties with the Turkish Republic. Warfare between Greece and Turkey was later resumed, but the Greek armies were shattered beyond repair in this conflict, and Lloyd George's Near-Eastern policy became completely discredited.

Mohammed VI still reigned as Sultan in Istanbul, but after Kemal's amazing military achievements, Anatolia's National Assembly proclaimed Turkey a republic, and in 1923 Kemal became its President. For the moment, the Caliphate was retained, but Kemal soon discovered that a religious leader would rally round him all the reactionary elements in the newly-established State.

The Ghazi therefore determined to direct the Republic on modern European principles, and the Caliphate was abolished and all attempts to restore it proved futile. Naturally, such revolutionary changes met with bitter opposition, but ultimately Kemal surmounted all obstacles. Stern methods were at times adopted and the fiery fanaticism of the Kurds and other uncultured tribes induced the Government to further secularise the State. All sectarian criticism was silenced. The number of mosques was limited, and fewer paid preachers permitted. When, under Kemal's control, two of Istanbul's most famous mosques were converted: one into a museum, and the other into a depot, while the retained Moslem preachers were to include in their ministrations instruction in agricultural and other practical concerns, while religious observances in domestic life were replaced by the precepts of a civil code.

These changes necessitated the disappearance of polygamy, a privilege confined to the wealthier sections of the community. Women now obtained legal rights; they voted at elections and in 1935 seventeen were elected to the Great National Assembly. The fez was replaced by a hat, and European dress became more and more in fashion, while the Latin script was adopted and Arabic discarded. "Schools," it seems, "were erected everywhere in the country for people to learn the new script, which was naturalised in a surprisingly short time. . . . The use of Arabic type for printing Turkish works was prohibited." This widened the cleavage between Turkey and the less-enlightened Islamic States, but Kemal's reforms were acclaimed by progressive Moslems in India and elsewhere.

In 1934 the title of Ataturk—the Father of the Turks—was bestowed on Kemal in acknowledgment of his priceless services to his country. But now, as a substitute for the spiritual illusions he had dispelled, Ataturk's advisers fabricated a captivating pedigree of the Turkish nation. Recently excavated memorials of a long past culture—that of the Hittites—were said to prove that the Turks had created the earliest civilisation on our planet. It was also alleged that both the Indo-European and Semitic languages were the offspring of

the prehistoric Turkish tongue spoken by the ancient Hittites. This pretentious story was, however, soon repudiated, and as our historian observes: "These manifestations of an exaggerated national self-consciousness soon yielded again to more sober considerations, the Turks, after all, even though they felt compelled to surrender the traditions of their Islamic past, are still so rich in their national heritage that they have no need to prop up their self-consciousness by borrowed tinsel." Moreover, Turkish antiquaries have been, and still are, successfully unveiling the truly old-time culture of their people.

Not only has Turkish replaced Arabic in the call to prayers, and in the pages of the Quran (Koran) but religious liberty has also been established. Apart from architecture in Turkey, the arts were sadly neglected, but thanks to Ataturk, the capital city of Anatolia, Ankara, was rapidly developed by native and foreign architects from a forlorn village to a modern metropolis. Despite the age-long antagonism of Islam to graven images, Ankara is now adorned by statues in its public squares. The pictorial as well as the plastic arts have been introduced and developed, while music now plays a greater part among the people of Turkey than ever before. Indeed, in 1928, an Austrian composer brought his music to Istanbul, while in 1934 a modern academy of music was erected at Ankara and directed by two Teutonic composers.

In letters, likewise, there has been a noteworthy revival. Poets, novelists, and historiographers, have given literary and artistic expression not merely to the past, but to the present conditions of Turkish life, for stress is laid on the experiences of the people who have arisen on Anatolian soil.

With all these changes there was, for a time, considerable unrest among the less enlightened sections of the population. A Kurdish insurrection had to be suppressed and an attempt to assassinate Ataturk, ended in the execution of the leading conspirators. Agriculture remains the chief occupation of Anatolia, but industry, apart from carpet weaving, previously non-existent, has now made marked progress. Treaties have been made with Soviet Russia, Bulgaria, Yugo Slavia, Greece, and Roumania. Thus, when Ataturk died in 1938, after a long illness, he left Turkey a sovereign and prosperous State, and was succeeded as its President by Ismet Inonu, his collaborator in his country's emancipation.

T. F. PALMER.

"MATERIALISM" CONFUSION

"MODERN Materialism is the assumption that mechanistic science can in principle achieve a complete and satisfactory account of the world and of man, his nature origin and destiny."—Prof. W. MacDougal, *The Freethinker*, 4th September, 1949. This quotation is the text of Mr. H. H. Preece's article "Misconceptions of Materialism," 8th January, 1950, which begins with the slashing retort, "all this is sheer nonsense. Indeed, to accept such claptrap is to give up the case—for each of the different branches of science have different principles and they would not be accounted for by mechanistic science." The notion of assumption is metaphysic and "destiny" is fatalistic belief in contrast to science; and restricting scientific method to mechanistic science implies the theological argument that science cannot be applied in psychology and morality because these involve the question "why." To accept this is to support the theologians' case he assures us, and asks how such balderdash arises and why "modern materialism."

Then follows a display of much learning concerning the scholastics and Greek philosophical opinion, which impresses me as much learning ill-digested that Mr. H. H. Preece's failure to rightly understand the precise meaning here of the term "Mechanistic" renders his argument and all that follows, a palpable *non-sequitur*; I venture to suggest that if Mr. Preece had given as much time to Spinoza as he somewhat pedantically would convince us he has to the illustrious names he parades, he would have spared himself much fallacious thinking. The hall mark of all science—organised knowledge concerning a subject matter—is infallible prediction. This necessitates "sameness," invariable uniformity, repetition of present conditions. This would be impossible but for the principle of rigid necessity. Now it is obvious that "mechanistic" in practice is invariable as opposed to the indefinite variations of mind in activity. Ergo, it is quite correct to refer to science as "mechanistic." Spinoza conclusively demonstrates that mind properly understood is itself "mechanistic" with sufficient knowledge of any individual mind we could predict with absolute certitude what the reaction in any given circumstances would be. Spinoza tells us that the mind is a "spiritual automaton"; that its apparent capricious or arbitrary perturbations are assignable to as definite causes as the resultant of any chemical formula.

So far as theologic implications are concerned in contradiction as supposed by Mr. Preece, this doctrine is consistent with and confirms theological teaching, Jonathan Edwards, to wit, pre-destination; what choice is there "where many are called but few are chosen"? "Many shall seek the narrow way, but few shall find it."

It is only by "mechanistic" materialism that morality is possible and organised society, the sameness always of causes and effects. "Modern" materialism that Mr. Preece is so captious about is merely the explanation of the way this principle applies at any time to present conditions of a more complex character, for clarity restatement is essential. It is now a commonplace that science does now give a rational history of the origin and evolutionary development of the universe from fire mist to man by rigid necessity in the form of cause and effect, essentially mechanistic as opposed to the conception of individual directing mind: it is destiny alone that is again consistent with this principle for man's actions are determined. If man could repeat his life once lived again it must follow event by event from babyhood to the grave or it would not be the same previous life with rigid necessity and if this is so in the second instance it must be so originally, as action succeeds action. Othello says, "Alas vain boast; who can control his fate." The witches foretold Macbeth's destiny. It is a subtle point for consideration whether consciousness does influence action or whether man is more than a creature as one under the drug curare, when the victim is conscious but not able to act by his volition.

Is it now permissible to suggest that the appropriate epitaph on Mr. H. H. Preece's article is his own summary term "balderdash" he applies to Prof. MacDougal?

M. BARNARD.

THE PLACID NUN'S COMPLAINT

I've learnt to bear the loss
Of bold Content;
But now, Gray Life, I cannot find
Terror, even Terror!

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

ACID DROPS

It is much too early to assess the benefit (?) to the world by the opening of the Holy Door by the Pope on Christmas Eve, but the priests of St. Peter's will no doubt be wishing that the Holy Father would hurry to close it, for, according to Press reports, the draught is so keen from the open door that they are suffering from, of all things—chilblains! We would like to report that the clergy were suffering from "cold feet" because of the Congress of Freethinkers in September last, but must in fairness attribute the clerical chilblains to God. In any case we will give Him the benefit of the doubt.

Backed up by all the power of the Italian-inspired Vatican, Catholics are now made to ask Parliamentary candidates to support, and get the country to pay for, teaching Roman Catholicism in what are certainly not State schools. And so frightened are the candidates that they will lose some votes, that already a few have admitted the justice of the Roman claims. In some cases, the Catholics are supported by non-Catholics, particularly women who believe in religious education—any religion is better than none is their view. All that those who believe in Secular Education can now hope for is that these religious squabbles will become increasingly bitter. Only in this way can the Educational Authorities come to the sole solution of the problem. If the various religious sects were made to pay for teaching their fancy brands of stupid supernaturalism out of school hours, there would be no religious problem for the schools.

So at last we have a typical pronouncement from a Bishop on the now much discussed question of "unity." Says the Bishop of Monmouth: "I see no hope whatever of reunion between the Church of Wales and the Roman Church until Rome changes its doctrinal position very drastically." We think that Rome should also express great "contrition" when it approaches Wales "to join up" together.

However, there is one great way of getting "unity" according to Fr. H. Keldany. It is that, led by the "Vicar of Christ," all non-Catholics should embark on an intensive period of prayer—a kind of 8-day non-stop—and he gives some dates when this intensive effort should be supported to the death by all good Catholics. Not only must all the "separated" Christians be prayed for, but as a final spurt, prayer pressure should be put on Jews, Mahommedans, and heathens. God will thus be bombarded with prayers, collects, benedictions, sermons, and conferences, as well as Mass, and numerous broadcasts; and if the Almighty does not do the trick forthwith, or rather, if he fails to bring about the required "unity," we suggest he should be sacked and a more powerful Almighty be asked to take on the job. We would dearly like to see Mahommedans and Buddhists salaaming the Pope, or Jews grovelling in the mud to kiss the ring on his finger.

So long as other religions are shown to be based on myths and legends, the *Church Times* is ready to chortle with joy and agree; but when it comes to Christianity that is quite another story. A *C.T.* reviewer finds the sections in which Sir Richard Gregory deals with the religion of Jesus in his book, *Gods and Men*, "the least cause for satisfaction." Sir Richard does not consider Christianity as "the world's final revelation from God," nor even the "desire of all nations." And it is simply

bestly of the author to reject all these supernatural claims. We feel that the reviewer is bound to get more unpleasant shocks of the same kind in the future.

Religious teaching in our schools seems to have had very unfortunate results if the recent Gallup Poll can be taken as a guide. It appears that only three people out of five, could name the correct titles of the first four books of the New Testament, one in seven could name only one to three of the Gospels, and one in four could not name any Gospel at all. Most of the people who got the questions right were over sixty-five, while about 80 per cent. of the younger age groups were almost completely ignorant on questions relating to the Gospels. And, of course, women gave more correct answers than men. Yet it this kind of appalling ignorance that costs the nation millions of pounds as well as terrific propaganda in favour of still more religious education.

In any case, what it does it matter if people do not know the New Testament or the complete Bible? Are they any worse off? A knowledge of the myths and legends enshrined in the Holy Book makes no one either happier or wiser. We say quite seriously that the *Pickwick Papers* is worth perhaps every scrap of theological literature so far published. People have been tortured and murdered because of the Bible—has anybody killed somebody else because he knows or does not know dear old Pickwick?

"The Universe" thinks it would be unsafe to base precise conclusions on the results of this candid Poll on the Bible, but we wonder whether the Editor would have considered it safe had the result been otherwise? Although Roman Catholics show up very badly (36 per cent. could not name the four Gospels), we ought in fairness to point out that they have always insisted that the Bible is not the sole authority on the Word of God, as is the Protestant claim. To the Catholic, it is the Church (i.e., the Vatican) which is the true interpreter of God's will, and Bible study is not encouraged in Catholic schools. The words of the Holy Father are much more important, to Catholics, and certainly more effective.

The final results of this now famous Poll on "What do you know about the Bible?" appears to indicate that Freethinkers are the only people who do know God's Holy Word, which is, of course, precisely the reason that they are Freethinkers.

It was to be expected that our medicine men would see in the disaster to the submarine, *Truculent* an opportunity for advertising their God. If Christianity be true the disaster was willed by the Christian God, but after the lapse of a week intelligent people are invited to congregate and offer God advice by way of prayer. The sympathy of the whole country is with the relatives of those who lost their lives in the submarine, and those relatives should be spared the nonsense of a religious parade to influence God on his treatment of their dead.

THINGS WE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW—

Will the Royal Commission on Capital Punishment consider the *Handbook on Hanging*, by Charles Duff, before reporting their findings?

Was it Sir Stafford Cripps or his Christian message that attracted over 3,600 "worshippers" to St. Paul's, as reported by the *Holborn Recorder*?

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

BENEVOLENT FUND.—The General Secretary gratefully acknowledges a donation of 15s. from the Bolton Branch N.S.S. For "THE FREETHINKER."—In Memory of Edward Payne, 5s. F. Greene, £1.

"FAIR PLAY."—You have been misled, as no doubt have others who read the statement. Mrs. Whitefield omitted the very important point that Mr. G. H. Taylor was excluded from the Executive by the vote of the Annual Conference at Nottingham last year.

JOHN HALL.—Thanks for cuttings, a reply will follow.

W. SPENCER.—Thanks for your interest. Copies of "The Freethinker" are being sent to the addresses you have given us.

The following periodicals are being received regularly, and can be consulted at "The Freethinker" office: THE TRUTH SEEKER (U.S.A.), COMMON SENSE (U.S.A.), THE LIBERAL (U.S.A.), THE VOICE OF FREEDOM (U.S.A., German and English), PROGRESSIVE WORLD (U.S.A.), THE NEW ZEALAND RATIONALIST, THE RATIONALIST (Australia), DER FREIDENKER (Switzerland), DON BASILIO (Italy).

Lecture Notices should reach the Office by Friday morning. Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1, and not to the Editor.

SUGAR PLUMS

Professor J. C. Flugel lectures for The National Secular Society next Thursday, 2nd February, in the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, W.C.1, on "Population Policies and International Tensions," at 7-30 p.m. The subject has an international importance and should appeal to all citizens regardless of religious or non-religious belief. Admission is free and questions will be invited. London readers are asked to make the meeting known as widely as possible.

Bradford Branch N.S.S. will have Mr. F. A. Ridley as lecturer this evening (29th January) in The Mechanics Institute, Town Hall Square, at 6-45. He will speak on "Rome and Reason," which has an added importance to-day in view of the increased activity and influence of the Roman Catholic Church. Freethinkers need to be on the alert and local saints should attend, and also make the meeting well known to friends.

Dr. Norman Haire, whose reputation for plain speaking on sex matters is well known, speaks at the Conway Hall, on Tuesday next (7 p.m.), under the auspices of the Conway Discussion Circle. He is President of the Sex Education Society and Editor of that interesting and outspoken *Journal of Sex Education*. Admission is free.

Many readers will find books of letters fascinating reading. To them, and to all who can appreciate sensible argument, we can recommend a new book. Entitled *London-Bodmin* (Westaway Books, 10s. 6d.), this is made up of letters exchanged between Mr. J. C. Trewin, a Cornish journalist living in London, and Mr. H. J. Willmott, news editor of a Cornish newspaper. The volume contains so much that is entertaining, and so much lively comment on affairs of town and countryside that it is impossible in a brief note to pick on anything which will suggest its quality. But to everyone with a feeling for style, and to all who are alert to the drama, literature or the pleasant gossip of Hampstead and Corwall, the book can be recommended.

TO OLD AND NEW READERS

FOR very nearly seventy years, this journal has been an open forum for many lost and hostile causes—and it still is. Primarily, its function was to oppose supernaturalism in all its forms, but Freethinkers, while agreeing among themselves in their opposition to religion, are often at loggerheads on many other things, and even on the way religion should be attacked. Thus no better journal than *The Freethinker* for them could be devised, for they are allowed to express their views freely, as they ought to be.

All the same, those of our readers who hold strong views on such questions as Communism, Spiritualism, Vaccination, the Shakespeare problem, and many other controversial subjects, sometimes write as if *The Freethinker* was their own journal, and as if any opposition to their views was a crime. We gladly invite comments and discussion on any subject treated by our contributors, but we want it to be clearly understood that this journal's main purpose is to attack religion—superstition—and that *The Freethinker* is not a Communist, Socialist, Tory, Spiritualist, etc., organ, or that, because some of our readers believe in these things so fervently, they must be allowed to launch virulent attacks on non-believers.

The very essence of Freethought is—Freethought. Any reasoned article or letter on almost any subject which has some bearing on Freethought or Free Speech can share the hospitality of these columns. At the moment, it is almost, if not quite, impossible to keep economics out of any discussion, and we realise that quite a number of our readers are far more fervently Communist, or Socialist, or Tory, for example, than anti-religion. They no doubt feel that religion has had its day, and is hardly worth seriously discussing, and with the burning fervour of Crusaders they want other people to share their views. We cannot exclude their contributions in fairness if we allow other readers, who share with Ingersoll and Bradlaugh a loathing for all forms of totalitarianism, to express their views. Our columns are therefore open to both sides on the one condition—that they realise that *The Freethinker* is not, for instance, a Communist or an anti-Communist journal. It is an open platform.

For this reason we sometimes give space to Anti-Vaccinationists and Anti-Vivisectionists, in spite of the fact that some of our medical readers hate any opposition to Vaccination, Immunisation, or Vivisection.

Even such a purely literary and academic problem as that concerned with the authorship of the plays of Shakespeare often rouses the fiercest passion. The Anti-Stradfordian case is rarely allowed space in our popular literary journals, and therefore *The Freethinker* feels it a duty sometimes to open its columns even on this subject, though it has little to do with religion, as one of the most interesting problems in the history of literature.

The one open Forum in this country should be the B.B.C., and no doubt in time it will be. At the moment, however, it appears to be too frightened to allow free and open discussion of unpopular subjects before its enormous public. *The Freethinker* is not afraid to give its columns to this free and open discussion, and we only wish that its readers would help to make this known. A bigger circulation would not only help its own cause, but several other lost—or nearly lost—and hostile causes.

And in the meantime those who have its direction are by no means convinced that religion is a spent force. We feel that it is still a formidable enemy. Our own solution lies in the work of science and not in wholesale "liquidation." That is why we still prefer to call this journal *The Freethinker* and why we believe in Freethought.

INTERNATIONAL FREETHOUGHT CONGRESS AT ROME, 1949

Report of the Proceedings

III.

MONSIEUR COTEREAU was followed by Professor Giorgio Conforto who contrasted the aims of freethinking humanism with the obscurantism preached from Italian pulpits; and he could conclude that whatever there was of nobility in the modern conception of life it had been gained through the emancipation of man from clerical dogma. In Italy all the progress of two centuries had been inspired by freedom of thought, whereas the present Government is cancelling these achievements and endeavouring to reinstate the social structure of the 18th century. In Italy there was no contest between freethought and humanism, and there could be only one aim—that of more freedom from clerical domination. It was unfortunate that all the power of the new world has been thrown in the balance against intellectual progress, and that a Vatican policy which aimed at keeping nations divided threatened to make a new war inevitable.

A very vigorous tribute was then paid to Monsieur Cotereau's speech by the 80-year-old Dr. Polidori, who recalled the hopeful days of the 1904 International Congress at which he had been present, and asserted the humanism of Giordano Bruno.

The reference to Soviet treatment of geneticists brought in Mr. Charles Smith (U.S.A.), who in a brief speech claimed that Catholics and Communists were equally opposed to the true spirit of liberty and that the Communists in condemning mendelian geneticists were only following in the steps of the Church which condemned Galilean astronomy and denounced Darwinian evolution. Wherever these compulsionists were in supreme political power their actions were equally repressive and he invited the Congress to pass a resolution condemning the oppression of scientists in favour of political dogma. This resolution as worded by Mr. Smith was lost, but a similar resolution on more general lines, proposed by Monsieur Cotereau, was passed unanimously.

In reply to Mr. Smith, Senator Boulanger hotly accused the United States of behaving as oppressively as Soviet Russia and claimed that Messrs. Cotereau and Smith were ill-informed as to what had happened in the latter country.

On Monday, speaking on the third subject, "Religions, the Churches and International Relations," Monsieur Lorulot (France) showed how religions, such as Christianity and Mohammedanism, derived from tribal creeds, worshipping tribal gods who were largely gods of war. Though Christianity expanded beyond tribal territory and has claimed for long to be universal, it has never lost this character. Thomas Aquinas, much revered by moderns, declared, "In obedience to God, it is permitted to kill a man, whether he be guilty or innocent." These religions might teach a brotherhood within the tribe, but the stranger was an object of hatred. In the course of the great wars which have racked mankind in the past 35 years, we have heard the leaders on either side, whether Hitler, Churchill or Truman, invoke the help of the Lord. The Nazi soldiers bore inscribed on their belts "God is with us," and the bishops blessed the armies of Mussolini. Throughout history the bulk of the priesthood has been a bulwark of privilege, preaching submission to the powers that be, with a keen eye to material profits for the spiritual fathers of the people. Three thousand years of history have exploded the pretensions of religions to be peace-makers, for in not one

year in every hundred has there been peace. The history of France alone indicts the Church, and the speaker fancied that in other countries the records offered similar evidence. Times were when the Church found itself able to arbitrate between nations. For example, Canon Desgranges submitted the case of the arbitration of Pope Leo XIII between Spain and Germany, anent the Caroline Islands: Spain, Catholic *par excellence*, retained political dominion; Germany exploited the islands commercially, and (the Canon was unaware, apparently, of this last development) the inhabitants revolted, fighting desperately and vainly for two years without a word of peace-making from any dignitary of the Church.

Seventeen centuries of a diplomacy aimed at the extension or retention of power in face of rapidly changing circumstances have evolved a Papal technique of the greatest subtlety and suppleness unequalled by that of any temporal power. If silence may gain the ends of Christ's Vicar, so be it, but there come times when the power claiming supreme moral authority is forced to speak.

Diplomacy is the art of cutting knots and hiding the frayed ends, of smoothing over quarrels without healing, of condemning aggression while sympathising with the aggressors. The lightnings of the Church are reserved for those who would reduce its power, such as Emile Combes, President Callas or Clemenceau.

We have even seen one and the same pontifical declaration used by both parties to war, as in 1939 between Germany and Poland.

The way of religions and Churches is the path of separation, division and war.

Here the speaker begged his Italian hearers not to look upon all Frenchmen as the Bonaparte, Oudinot and Falleax who betrayed the Italian democrats of a century ago. The day before, facing the monument of Garibaldi, he had asked that the calumnies and injustices which certain Frenchman had wrought against that noble hero might be forgiven and forgotten in order that the countrymen of Voltaire and Victor Hugo might labour together with those of Garibaldi and Mazzini, for since those black days France had been bitterly punished.

Salvation for mankind will come, not from heaven, but from earth; not from gods, nor from popes, but from the men and women of the world when they have purged their minds from error and illusion.

Monsieur Lorulot was followed by Professor Ciglio (Italy).

C. BRADLAUGH BONNER.

(To be continued.)

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

Parson says that a God must be;

I say: but what does that matter to *me*?

That God is praised by the Seraphim;

Perhaps; but what does that matter to *him*?

That up above He hears each prayer.

Colossal! But what does that matter to *her*?

He says, God's Mother was born a Jew;

Indeed, but what does that matter to *you*?

That sick folk touched His garment's hem;

Funny, but what did that matter to *them*?

The Church of His cruel death doth fuss;

'Tis sad; but what does that matter to *us*?

What does it matter, this much ado?

Nothing at all to me . . . How about *YOU*?

BAYARD SIMMONS.

CORRESPONDENCE

JAMES JOYCE

Sir,—With reference to Mr. Cutner's article, apparently I must provide quotational proof if I am to satisfy him that Joyce repudiated Catholicism. Well, here it is.

Of course we must not forget that the great Irish writer had a "Jesuit Education," further, that he spent a considerable part of his childhood and youth amid the high-powered religious and political animosities of "Dear, dirty Dublin." Mr. Cutner might have aided sound criticism better if he had given a moment's thought to Joyce's: "When the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets," for those words are undoubtedly one of the keys to Joyce and his work.

The youthful Stephen Dedalus of "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man"—for Stephen Dedalus is generally accepted as the novelist's idea of himself—while "Fearful of the malevolent reality of the symbols behind which are massed twenty centuries of authority and veneration," boldly declares that he does not believe in the Eucharist and will not remain obedient to the Church. "I will not," he says, "serve that in which I no longer believe, whether it call itself my home, my Fatherland or my Church: and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defence the only weapons I allow myself to use, silence, exile and cunning." Which declaration, to my mind, can hardly be regarded as smacking of orthodoxy!

The theme of apostasy is subtly conveyed throughout "Ulysses." In the opening pages, Malachi Mulligan, one of Stephen's companions, taunts him with having the: "Jesuit strain in you, only it's injected the wrong way." We learn that Stephen, in line with his earlier rejection of religion, had refused his dying mother her last wish that he should kneel down and pray for her. The bitterness of so sincere a decision is reflected in the remorse—"the agenbite of inwit"—which invariably accompanies Stephen's recollections of his mother's hard death. For with Stephen, with his iron logic, his passionate love of truth, there can be no half-measures. The "Brood of mockers," with their easy yea or nay, may find such an attitude hard to appreciate, its quality, however, is unmistakable.

Joyce's concern with Catholic thought and ritual seems to have knocked Mr. Cutner off his balance. But what else could be expected of an ultra-sensitive artist who was a product of the mighty and colourful Catholic Church? Can we blame anyone for being intrigued by the artistic potentialities of the Catholic scene, contrasting so strongly with the drabness of everyday life? Besides, surely even "The Freethinker" is aware of the life-long associations which are bound to impregnate the consciousness of the ex-Catholic. Did not Joyce himself admit that, "History is the nightmare from which I am trying to escape?"

The prose of "Ulysses," let Mr. Cutner believe what he will, is incomparable. Here is prose with a difference! Many episodes from the book can only be set beside the best in Shakespeare. Joyce's habit of coining new words, by the way, should hold no terrors for those acquainted with the similar inventiveness of the Swan of Avon. As a matter of fact, Mr. Cutner could have done worse than peruse the word-curiosities of, say, Cymbeline, before condemning the innovations of "Ulysses" and "Finnegan's Wake."

I would like to close by expressing the wish that interested readers will, putting aside the doubts that may have been roused by the inadequacies of Mr. Cutner and myself, tackle the work of James Joyce for themselves. Perseverance in that direction will pay many a rich reward.—Yours, etc.,

RICHARD KEAN.

CONVERSION

Sir,—I am afraid that I do not agree with Mr. W. H. Powell in his discussion of my recent article on this subject. His attitude is a hopeless over-simplification. That there are people who are converted from one point of view to another because of possible material or social advances is, of course, undeniable. But at the same time it cannot be denied, by anyone who studies the matter with any care, that there are many who derive considerable emotional and mental satisfaction from an authoritarian belief, political or theological.

Typical of Mr. Powell's biased point of view is his suggestion that the International Communist Party is no more authoritarian than the Conservative or the Labour Party. When Mr.

Zilliacus was expelled from the Labour Party, or when Mr. Churchill opposed his Party on India, they were not tried for treason. If this had been a Communist Country they probably would have been—that is, if one can argue from what happened in recent times in various countries in Eastern Europe.

But that is a side issue. The main point I want to make is to say that I am not at all in agreement with the idea that every convert is inspired by self-interest. This is typical of the more hidebound Freethinker, who will never admit that there is any good on the other side. I have considerable respect for Mr. Evelyn Waugh as a novelist; he is a Catholic. I have considerable respect for Prof. J. B. S. Haldane as a scientist; he is a Communist. But I no more suggest that Mr. Waugh's Catholicism is insincere than I suggest Prof. Haldane's Communism is so. In fact, I am prepared to admit that there are various lines of thought which suit various people. That, it seems, is something that Mr. Powell has not realised.—Yours, etc

JOHN ROWLAND.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-45 p.m.: "Rome and Reason," F. A. RIDLEY (London).

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Sati's Cafe, 40, Cannon Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "The Law and a Victim," Mr. J. R. AVERNE.

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Tuesday, January 31, 7 p.m.: "A Rational Attitude to Sex," Dr. NORMAN HAIRD, Ch.M., M.B. (President, Sex Education Society).

Glasgow Secular Society (McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "Freewill, Freethought, Determinism," Mr. T. M. MOSLEY (Nottingham).

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "The Necessitous Re-education of J.C. Churches," Miss E. MILLARD.

Lewisham Branch N.S.S. (Hope Hotel, 73, Loampit Vale, S.E.).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: "Atheism, Freethought, and Progress," Mr. L. EBURY.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (International Club, 64, George Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: A Debate, "Christianity," Mr. Salt—*Pro.* Mr. Smith—*Con.*

National Secular Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—See advertisement.

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: "Husbands and Wives," Dr. H. C. L. HEXWOOD.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "Chief Problems of Mysticism," Dr. KARL WOLFF.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: "A World Government," Mr. STUART MORRIS (P.P.U.).

West Ham Branch N.S.S. (Loco. Men's Institute, 62, Forest Lane, Stratford, E.15).—Tuesday, January 31, 8 p.m.: A Meeting.

OUTDOOR

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. J. BARKER.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Bombed site, St. Mary's Gate).—Lectures every lunch hour, 1 p.m.: Messrs. E. BILLING and G. WOODCOCK.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, 12 noon Mr. L. EBURY.

Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barkers Pool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. A. SAMMS.

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WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE BIBLE ?

A RECENT Gallup Poll showed that one person in four of those questioned could not name any of the four Gospels. That shows that 75 per cent. of the questioned were able to name some of the four books, in fact the big majority of the 75 per cent. could name all the Gospels. That is really very good, the books had to be named and ignorance of the titles could not be hidden, and considering the primitive nature of the Bible, so hopelessly out of date to-day, it is surprising that so many of those questioned came out so well.

But the *News Chronicle*, no doubt with an eye to business, quickly pounced upon the 25 per cent. who could not name any of the Gospels, as just the material to inflate one of those newspaper controversies that usually bring increased circulations.

No time was lost in getting to work and a group of men were approached whose opinions would be of "vital interest and importance." Their opinions on the wide gulf of ignorance about the Bible was asked for. One can hardly wait to see the composition of the group of experts on Biblical ignorance whose opinions on that subject is of such "vital interest and importance," but here they are: the Bishop of Rochester, the Rev. Dr. R. F. V. Scott, the Rev. H. B. Rattenbury, General Orsborn of the Salvation Army, the Manchester agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society, the Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, and Monsignor Ronald Knox, Roman Catholic author and translator of the Bible, and others. There is, of course, nothing wrong in getting the opinions of clergymen on why one person in four of those questioned could not name any Gospel, but their opinions on that subject would be of little value.

I listened to the patter of a racing tipster in a city street recently, he had a good audience, but when he offered his tips for sale not a single purchaser appeared. Had I been sufficiently interested to find out the reason I would have inquired of the audience not the tipster. Does it then not seem more reasonable that the true reason why certain people could not name any of the four Gospels would come from those people and not from experts on biblical ignorance. Besides, a point the *News Chronicle* seems to have overlooked, the ability to name the four Gospels may not mean anything more than that. Quite a number of people could name Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, but know nothing of the contents of those books.

A knowledge of the matter is far more important than the ability to recite titles, but it seems according to the *News Chronicle* that to qualify as one possessing knowledge of the Bible, the naming of the four Gospels is sufficient test. A far more useful bit of work would have been to get hold of some who could name all the Gospels but did not believe them and publish their

reasons for non-belief. There are plenty of those people to be found without any trouble to the *News Chronicle*. We will undertake to supply the people if the *News Chronicle* will provide the column space. Freethinkers never tire of advising people, especially Christians, to read the Bible, to read it carefully, critically, and intelligently, that is where unbelief in the Bible begins.

Actually, the "What do you know about the Bible" question is an old gag that is played off upon the public from time to time in the Press. Many will remember the "Do We Believe?" stunt in a London daily some years ago. They usually run along similar lines. Religion is given a good show, with an occasional mild extract from a non-believer's letter. When the circulation indicates that the stunt is wearing thin it is dropped and the slump in religion returns.

Just the same thing happens with revivalist campaigns. Moody and Sankey, Gipsy Smith, Evan Roberts and others. They came with a banging of advertising drums and trumpets. Local churches pool their congregations to provide big audiences, and a few backsliders are attracted and excitement runs high. But as audiences begin to get less the revivalist leaves for new pastures and with his departure the pooled congregations return to their respective churches and the local religion sinks back to normal and perhaps sub-normal. And so with the *News Chronicle* adventure, it began with a boost of a group of clergymen, then the public are let in through correspondence, believers are given priority to express their belief, although not a single convert can come from that quarter, they are there already, but those who are non-believers, with a good foundation for their non-belief, will be given a very brief look-in, chiefly for giving an impression of impartiality, but whatever else happens great care must be taken not to give any impression that non-believers are a numerous body, because the clergy are watching all the time.

But a sudden change has taken place. A General Election has been fixed for February and politics will now take the stage. So the "What do you know about the Bible" controversy will come to a speedy end. The *News Chronicle* is switching over to political debates in its columns. Tories, Liberals, Labour, and Communist champions have been invited to take part. So gods, religion, and the experts on biblical ignorance will now have to give way to Herbert Morrison, Harry Pollitt, Lady Bonham Carter, Quintin Hogg, Mr. Shinwell and others. We are informed there will be a tremendous demand for the *News Chronicle*.

Still, the General Election will not last long and when it is over and the excitement has died down, and the demand for the *News Chronicle* is not so tremendous, it may be that the religious troupe can return and carry on.

R. H. ROSETTI.

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