

The Freethinker

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Editor: F. A. RIDLEY

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BY a special Decree of the Vatican the Year 1950 was proclaimed as "The Holy Year," to be religiously observed by the world-wide Roman Catholic Church everywhere. The Roman "Holy Year" was ceremonially begun by the Pope in person when he opened the golden door of St. Peter's Cathedral. Most appropriately and, no doubt, by a special interposition of Divine Providence, the bones of "The First Pope," St. Peter, were found thereabouts as a fitting climax to the ceremonies of the "Holy Year." Or were they?

The current year of Grace, 1953, is also destined to become a "Holy Year," albeit on a smaller scale, and in circles that are

likely to impinge more immediately on the lives of our readers—or, at least, of our English and Commonwealth readers. For following the recent example of her august step-sister, the Church of Rome—"step" would appear to be the operative word in this connection!—the established "Church of England," still the official representative of English Christianity, is now about to celebrate its "Holy Year." The simultaneous centre and climax of this Anglican "Holy Year" will be the forthcoming coronation of Her Most Gracious Majesty, Queen Elizabeth the Second, "Defender of the (Anglican) Faith." For, and it represents a lamentable proof of our still medieval constitution, the coronation of an English monarch is still pre-eminently an ecclesiastical ceremony: the archaic feudal panoply which surrounds the coronation of our monarchs still centres round a magical rite performed—to speak plainly—by a pontifical witch-doctor, in this case, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who rivals the Transubstantiation effected by his brother of Rome, by his own species of Transubstantiation, the effective transformation, by the agency of the Holy Oil, of the young woman, Elizabeth Windsor, into Queen Elizabeth "by Divine Right," indeed, into a virtually supernatural Being.

For such is the real purpose of the archaic ceremony to be performed in Westminster Abbey next June, a pre-historic ritual, amid which an ancient Egyptian Pharaoh would feel thoroughly at home, still performed in broad daylight in the year 1953, in what, or so we are always hearing, is the age, par excellence, of Democracy—with a capital D! The Assumption of the Virgin Mary into Heaven was first proclaimed as a religious dogma by the Church of Rome in the course of its "Holy Year" in 1950. Has His Grace of Canterbury a similar miracle to slip over on us in 1953?

One thing is, at least, certain. The coronation remains as, perhaps, the last opportunity which the Anglican Church is ever likely to get for effectively publicising itself. It has long ceased to represent the majority, or even any substantial minority of the English people, as it once did in the days of its Founder, Queen Elizabeth the First, or its "Royal Martyr," King Charles

the First. Contrarily, census after census discloses the alarming steady decline in the number of adherents who still cling to the Anglican Communion. Between the rivalry of Rome and Rationalism the Anglican Church by no means represents the "rejoicing third." It loses ground steadily to both.

Nor is the contemporary trend of secular history at all favourably inclined towards the traditional Church of the squires and their "relations." In these days of Democracy and death-duties, the outlook for a class-Church is not at all bright. For the Anglican Church has always been just that. Historically, it was the creation of the

Absolute Monarchy of the Tudors, who wanted a national Church which it could control effectively. Whilst the hey-day of Anglicanism, the 17th and 18th centuries, witnessed the exclusive political dictatorship of the landed squires, the select class of English "gentlemen," who regarded the Anglican Church as their peculiar property and staffed its "livings" with their younger sons. During its hey-day an Anglican "democrat" would have been a contradiction in terms! Whilst an Anglican bishop who had not been to Oxford—always the effective centre of Anglicanism—or Cambridge was, we believe, absolutely unknown. Historically, we repeat, if ever there was a class-Church, the "Church of England" was that Church. Neither Rome nor Nonconformity has ever been so absolutely tied up with one section of society.

To-day, such a narrow social basis is no longer a source of strength, as it was in the 18th century, when England represented the political domain of the Whig-Tory landed oligarchy. To-day, the "Church of England" must broaden its social basis or face ultimate collapse. Hence its current feverish but, or so it would seem, none too successful attempts to enlist the workers under the banner of "Christian Socialism" and other oddities; a task mainly discharged by the Anglo-Catholic section of this much-divided Church, who combine in a rather curious fashion dogmatic orthodoxy and a propensity for medieval ritual with Labour sympathies and a democratic social outlook. However, the Anglican Church does not readily speak the language of the masses—or rather, it speaks it with too pronounced an Oxford accent! Whereas the Church of Rome in England, Scotland, U.S.A. and Australia has an Irish-descended proletariat on which to draw for popular support, this is not the case with the traditional Church of "our old nobility."

The "Church of England," to put it bluntly, to-day faces extinction at no distant date, at the current rate of its decline, as illustrated by successive statistics, it can hardly survive the present century. Indeed, if the present Queen reigns as long as did Victoria (1837-1901) it can hardly hope to survive the present reign. Such a position is too anomalous to last. Eventually the political successors of those pious churchmen, Messrs. Churchill and

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

THE ENGLISH "HOLY YEAR"

—By F. A. RIDLEY—

Attlee, will probably be compelled to disestablish the Church of the pious Victoria, the creation of the not-so-pious Elizabeth the First (1558-1603).

His Grace of Canterbury will probably be the last Archbishop of his historic See to confer Deity upon an English sovereign by the agency of the Holy Oil. (We hope that Her Majesty will keep a straight face throughout the god-making ceremony, and will not burst out laughing, as did Charles the Tenth of France, the last King of France to be anointed at Rheims with the Holy

Oil—1825.) His Grace, and the Church which he represents, may be expected to make the most of what will probably be their last opportunity. We may expect Anglicanism to go all out this year for the conversion or, rather, reconversion of England. The coronation will be the centre of a religious orgy, with the pious B.B.C. as usual, well to the fore. The year of Grace, 1953, will be our English and Anglican Holy Year, perhaps the swan song of the "Church of England," which began under the First Elizabeth and looks like ending under the Second.

Some Reflections on the Present Position of French Freethought

• By G. MICHAUD

Translated by F. A. Ridley

(Continued from page 3)

FINALLY, one must affirm, and this is our third important submission, that over and above these serious handicaps, which are themselves sufficient to compromise the Movement, Freethought is threatened with a setback because it has failed to adapt itself sufficiently and has clung too closely to mere anti-clericalism in an epoch where it can only exist by continually expanding its ideas; an aspect in which it stands in much the same position as the secular state which is, at present, obviously experiencing a set-back because it has not continually expanded its past successes. The French nation has too naively believed that the secular state and secular education had been finally and definitively established, once and for all, and that neither would ever again be called in question—without realising that the clericals, under the direction of the Papacy, had undertaken the task of undermining them indirectly and by stealth. Henceforward the task must be continued unceasingly, the struggle begun by the pioneers of secular education against the influence of the Church in the field of temporal action, until clericalism has been deprived of any opportunity of exercising control in the educational sphere. The Law of the Separation of Church and State, instead of being regarded as a final achievement, ought, contrarily, to be regarded as a stage, as a decisive turning-point. However, it is worthy of note that the only active militants of Freethought who remain firmly attached to its essential principles, are people of the elder generation, those who recall the battles fought at the beginning of the century, whilst similarly, amongst the teaching profession, the only ones to rest faithful to the secular ideal are those of the same generation and those who grew up under its influence prior to the Second World War. The younger generation are under the mistaken impression that the last word on this question has already been said, in 1905 [the date of the Law of the Separation of Church and State—Translator] and that it is no longer necessary to advance any further substantial or institutional changes. For the danger which threatens alike both the ideal of Freethought and that of secular education is precisely this: the impartiality, the very tolerance which make their strength constitute, equally, their weakness; particularly when we have to realise that their enemies are not themselves tolerant and that, as Anatole France once so aptly phrased it: "They consider themselves oppressed as long as they are unable to become the oppressors." And our great La Fontaine has already left us this memorable saying:—

"War must continually be waged against the wicked. I know that peace is an excellent thing;

But what use is it to us when we are confronted with faithless foes?"

"Faithless," that is to say "treacherous."

Our own country has actually undergone the costly experience of this secularist toleration. In the name of liberty itself it has allowed the creation in its own bosom of subversive elements which now menace even the very continuation of the republican régime. The younger generation get very astonished if anyone tells them that this is so. Nonetheless, we repeat, and our comrade, Lorulot, strongly underlined this point at the Brussels Congress: the most important task before us is to enlist the youth (the Church already knows this fact only too well), and it is a most disquieting fact that it is precisely the youth who keep away from all Freethought functions. This would seem to represent a confession of failure on the part of our secular education after existing for three-quarters of a century. People are so timid, so apprehensive, that the teachers themselves who ought to struggle ardently in order to protect an institution which forms an essential bulwark of a political system which inspires their existence, are either afraid openly to become protagonists of Freethought or else do not see any reason for doing so. There actually exist in some towns whole Freethought sections where one does not find a single teacher or professor—and the task of educating their militant comrades thus devolves on small-time officials, or even on manual workers. Curiously enough, the members of the teaching profession seem unable to grasp the essential connection between the ideals of Freethought and the existence of the secular system of education (*L'Ecole laïque*). Their dislike of organisations which they describe as "sectarian," is augmented by the undeniable fact that anyone nowadays addicted to any speculative ideology is liable to be branded immediately as a "Communist," which in current parlance simply means an enemy of the social order of bourgeois society. Furthermore, even in trade union circles, to "dabble in politics" soon gets one a bad reputation—as though, in present-day society, it is possible to keep aloof from politics if one wants to effect any changes; as though, in a parliamentary system which has the support of the great majority, political action does not represent the only effective instrument. Stagnation, both in nature and in the political order, implies decay. In the evolution to which the progress of civilisation itself commits us, one inevitably goes either forward or back.

(To be concluded)

Romanist Plots in Elizabethan Times

By T. F. PALMER

THE persecution and burning alive of Protestants under the devoutly Catholic Mary was succeeded by the Church settlement in Elizabeth's reign. The general lay population accepted the changes, for the queen and her ministers made the Anglican Establishment as comprehensive as possible. Thus, the first ten years of her reign passed without serious disturbance. Certainly the more zealous Romanists incurred disabilities, notably when diplomatic relations with Catholic countries were strained. But for a decade there was no serious persecution and, as Professor J. B. Black testifies in his scholarly survey: *The Reign of Elizabeth: 1558-1603* (O.U.P. 1936): "After ten years had elapsed, however, a number of new and far-reaching influences began to affect the course of events; and the government, confronted with a possible Catholic break-away, was compelled to modify greatly its attitude to Church attendance and the exercise of the old religion."

For the Papal Bull of 1570 was directed by Pius V against the English Church settlement, with all the intolerance and bigotry of a Pontiff who, as a Dominican friar, had been nurtured in the vile methods of the Inquisition. His mind was medieval and, when he was elected Pope, he adopted a policy that would have been highly esteemed by his imperious predecessor, Innocent III, in his dealings with King John in the 13th century.

The reports of resident and refugee English Romanists persuaded the Pope that if the Apostolic See acted promptly the Catholic population in England would rise in rebellion and overthrow the heretical authorities. So, his Holiness not only excommunicated, but deposed the hated Elizabeth without consulting any Catholic sovereign as to the expediency of his act.

A Romanist rising had previously occurred in Northern England, but was soon suppressed, but its failure was unknown in Rome when the Pope's dramatic action was taken, for in the 16th century authentic information sometimes required months to travel to foreign lands.

For various reasons Pius V's pronouncement is very important, and it proved the last instance of a Papal attempt to check the Reformation by medieval methods alone. Curiously enough, Elizabeth's right to the throne the Pope denied, despite the fact that his immediate predecessors, Paul IV and Pius IV had acknowledged her sovereignty. Pius V also accused the queen of assuming the headship of the Anglican Church, a title she repudiated, while she was also denounced as a Calvinist, a form of faith she most heartily detested. Also, the Bull released all her subjects from allegiance and left her unprotected from the dagger of the assassin. As Professor Black avers: "Thus to everyone who in his heart respected the authority of the Holy See, the bull must have come as an ultimatum, ordering him to choose between his conscience and his political obligation. The dual obedience and the tacit compromise of conscience on which the vast majority of Catholics in England had hitherto acted, was for ever destroyed, and in its place was restored the duty of unqualified allegiance to the Church of Rome." Moreover, the realm was placed at the mercy of any Romanist Power that chose to invade it.

But times had changed, and no Catholic ruler attempted to assail it. Political and economic considerations usually decided the policy of foreign princes. Indeed, the Emperor Maximilian and Philip II of Spain, both Papist

potentates, expressed their surprise and indignation at the Pope's fulmination without their knowledge and consent. Indeed, both these rulers assured Elizabeth that the Bull came to them as a complete surprise. The queen herself treated the Pope's threat with contempt and said that no bark of Peter would enter her ports. Public opinion varied, but many Protestants viewed the matter with deep concern, while their preachers appealed to the patriotism of everyone to rally to the cause of the Crown, which alone would prevent their becoming slaves in Spanish galleys. If the Spanish ambassador is to be trusted, even Cecil meditated flight. Bishop Jewel, however, ridiculed the Pope as an asinine Balaam "whose curses could not harm the people of God." Satires on Papal arrogance and folly were extensively circulated, and confidence was soon restored.

Yet, the government was still concerned and every precaution was taken against possible insurrection, or the open display of disloyalty. The ports were constantly watched to prevent the landing of Popish plotters. The Spanish navy was kept under observation and all suspected Catholic malcontents were placed under control. And in 1571, a Law was passed which described all those who asserted that the queen was not the legitimate ruler of the realm as guilty of high treason. Other provisions of the Act made it a crime to describe Elizabeth as a usurper, heretic, tyrant or infidel, while a subsequent measure decreed that the confiscation of property was the penalty of all those who, since the queen's accession, had fled abroad without permission and refused to return within twelve months.

For some time most English Catholics were law-abiding. But refugees abroad had established a college at Douai where missionaries were trained in theological principles, to be returned to their native land to reawaken Romanist zealotry among backsliders and indifferents among earlier Catholic devotees. William Allen was the moving spirit at Douai and from that centre propagandists of the ancient faith arrived to restore England to Roman obedience. These priests were prepared to die, if need be, in inculcating their faith. Naturally, many secretly re-entered the fold, for outside it, according to the Church, there was no hope of salvation. And, despite legal restrictions, it is fairly estimated that in 1580 there were at least one hundred seminary priests operating in England.

In 1572, Gregory XIII had succeeded Pius V as Pontiff and his reign proved the most critical in the struggle between Elizabeth's administration and the counter-reformation. Gregory was even more antagonistic to the English government than his predecessor. As Black notes: "The destruction of Elizabeth and all her works was the master principle of his life." He convinced himself that he was divinely commissioned to rescue England from perdition. But the political problems of Europe were beyond his grasp. Religion eclipsed all, and he was instrumental in sending the Jesuits to England. They were not to act as politicians, but discretionary hints were allowed. But their original instructions were discovered which enabled Cecil "to brand the enterprise as a disingenuous attempt to destroy the queen's government under the guise of saving souls."

(To be concluded)

This Believing World

The most fatal obstacle to a happy marriage is if the two people concerned are of different brands of Christianity; for, though marriage is a "sacrament," there is nothing like religion to breed hate. Very young people of different brands may not feel this at first, but the Roman Church knows quite well how and why the partner who is not a Roman Catholic must be roped in. That is why it insists on the children being brought up as Catholics. In a recent case reported in the *Daily Herald* the other week, the young man did his best to become one, but after listening to the priest, he found it impossible to accept "its principles," and he also refused to sign an undertaking about the children. This is very rare, and must have been a shattering blow to the priests concerned.

All the same he is going to marry his Catholic fiancée—in spite of the most strenuous opposition of her parents. There was a court case which ended in the magistrates supporting the marriage on the grounds that they "were not in a position to discuss religion." We wonder what they would say if one of the parties was an out-and-out Atheist?

Free Church leaders in Wigan had planned a rousing mission for Christ by invading factories and telling the workers "about the claims of the Church." Unfortunately, the pious missionaries were turned down, which should have disconcerted them but did not. So they intend invading private houses, clubs, and cinemas, with thousands of leaflets, 100 missionaries and—they hope—dozens of "fireside chats." As most people in Wigan are Christians—a Wigan Sunday can beat a Sunday anywhere else for Sabbatarian horrors—we don't see why they should complain. In fact, we don't see why the factories turned them down. Christians should be prepared for plenty of Christianity—and like it. Why not?

The Bishop of Croydon thinks that "survival" has been completely proved by "psychical research"—though he claimed that the "supreme proof" of immortality "was to be found in the Resurrection." If that is the case, surely further proof is unnecessary? Did not the Bishop really and truly believe that after death he would be safe in the arms of Jesus without any proof from Spiritualism? Death, contended the Bishop, "was merely a door from one room to another," but we have an idea that nobody hates making the journey more than Christian Bishops. And that, in spite of the glorious happiness of meeting Jesus himself in the next room.

Whether Jesus Christ was or was not a Pacifist is a matter for argument, but it is obvious that most Christians do not like Pacifists. There is quite a holy row over the appointment of the Rev. C. Newell as Rector of Holbrook, Suffolk, as the parish church council declare that he is not "acceptable." They don't seem to be influenced by the hosannas sung by the angels at the birth of Jesus: "Peace on earth and goodwill towards men."

Mr. Newell, however, has been appointed and won't stand down, much to the disgust of his Bishop, Dr. Brook. Under such leadership in the village, Dr. Brook sees no "spirit of Christian unity"—nothing, indeed, but discord. In fact, he adds, "Sometimes I think that if our Lord were to return to earth to preside over a parish, he would have a very rough handling."

This certainly opens up possibilities for speculation as to what would happen if "our Lord" were really to return. For example, as the founder of the first Christian Communists, he would not be allowed to land in the U.S.A., for he would have to pass a "screening" test, and even an out-and-out believer like General Eisenhower would have to give in to the laws passed by the Senate.

Then what would happen if "our Lord" were constantly to preach the near end of the world with only 144,000 believers allowed to accompany him to Heaven? What would the Pope say if he were not one of the chosen? What would the 300 millions of Roman Catholics say if their fate was exactly that of any blatant Materialist? But there, we cannot pile up more of such horrors; they won't bear thinking about.

According to a spirit medium, Beatrice Russell, "Death should be welcomed with joy." This makes us wonder why so many sick Spiritualists not only call in the services of a healer, but if (as is the case in at least 99 per cent. of them) no benefit results, they resort at once to the free treatment by orthodox doctors the Welfare State allows them? The truth is that all Spiritualists hate the idea of joining their friends in Summerland, just as all Christians prefer the woes of this life to all the joy promised by Jesus in Heaven.

Labels

He does a little thinking;
Wears rather funny hats;
He's obviously spying
For the Western Democrats.
He's our foreman, and he fancies
That our work might be improved;
It's Right-Wing Deviation,
And it's time that he was moved.
He doesn't like the wireless,
He doesn't care for dogs;
He must be a Diversionist—
He's entered in our logs.
He advocates a little discipline
For youth, at least;
Which proves he's nothing
Better than another Fascist Beast.
He thinks Free Speech is good,
And it deserves another go—
Which shows he wouldn't suit the book
Of Mister Gromyko.
He wears a set of whiskers,
When no one else will do it—
He must be acting for the Pentagon—
And so, he'll rue it.
He works as well as well can be,
He never turns up late;
He's obviously out to sabotage
The Total State.
He votes, and pays his taxes quickly;
Never hides the swag.
It proves he's nothing better
Than a Dialectic Drag.
He says he cannot make out
Why the world is in this fix;
It shows he's propagating
Foreign foemen's politics.

ARTHUR E. CARPENTER.

We are not going to take wives and children into consideration.
—Lord Chief Justice Goddard.

THE FREETHINKER

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Telephone: Holborn 2601.

To Correspondents

The Editor wishes to thank all those who have so kindly sent him messages of goodwill during Christmas.

REV. J. MIZZI (Malta).—Your letter received and will be published in due course. We must point out that we have very little leisure for research into the technical theological problems raised in your letters.

DR. N. FINN (South Africa).—Thank you for your kind message. We will try to get hold of the *B.M.J.*, p. 1045.

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (*Home and Abroad*): *One year*, £1 4s. (*in U.S.A.*, \$3.50); *half-year*, 12s.; *three months*, 6s.

Correspondents are requested to write on one side of the paper only and to make their letters as brief as possible.

Lecture Notices should reach the Secretary of the N.S.S. at this 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.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Kingston-on-Thames Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: J. W. BARKER and E. MILLS.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Plattfields).—Every Sunday, 3 p.m.; (St. Mary's Gate, Blitzed Site), every Sunday, 8 p.m.; (Alexandra Park Gate), every Wednesday, 8 p.m.; (Deansgate Bomb Site), every weekday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK and BARNES.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, 12 noon: A Lecture.

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

INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-45 p.m.: H. L. SEARLE, "The Vatican and Politics."

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, January 13, 7 p.m.: LANCELOT L. WHYTE, "A Scientific View of the Creative Imagination."

Manchester Humanist Fellowship (Library of Cross St. Chapel).—Saturday, January 10, 3 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY (President of the N.S.S.), "Freethought and the Social Revolution of our Time."

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Chorlton Town Hall).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY, "The Social Origins of Christianity."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Large Lecture Theatre, Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: P. JENKIN-JONES, "Conservatives and the Welfare State."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: Dr. HELEN ROSENAU, "What is Truth?"

Notes and News

Manchester readers will be pleased to note that on Sunday, January 11, at the Chorlton Town Hall, at 7 p.m., Mr. F. A. Ridley will speak on "The Social Origins of Christianity." We hope that the Manchester Branch will enjoy a successful meeting and discussion.

We note with pleasure that Mr. Avro Manhattan has replied, in our opinion very effectively, to Mr. Hugh Delargy, M.P., in the columns of our contemporary, *The Tribune*. With his vast knowledge of the contemporary political intrigues of the Vatican, which Mr. Manhattan has dealt with so exhaustively in his magnum opus, *The Catholic Church Against the Twentieth Century*, he had little difficulty in refuting Mr. Delargy's superficial claim that Catholicism was a progressive creed. Incidentally, if M.P.s do not know more about politics than they

"The Freethinker" Fund

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Total to date: £32 17s. 6d.

do about other matters upon which they discourse so glibly in public, we can quite understand the refusal of the "Mother of Parliaments" to permit the broadcasting of debates in which ill-informed M.P.s would merely broadcast their ignorance in public.

In the same issue of *The Tribune* in which Mr. Manhattan's article appeared, a "Catholic Socialist" (*sic*) announced that the Pope, whilst condemning Socialism, had never condemned the British Labour Party. If that is so, all it would seem to prove is that "extremes meet": the Vatican, like, its antithesis, Communism, does not regard the Labour Party as a bona fide Socialist party. But surely *The Tribune*, the editor of which is a member of the Executive Committee of the Labour Party, and which is always demanding "Socialism in our time," does not agree with this. In a book written some years back by the present editor of *The Freethinker*, *The Papacy and Fascism*, Mr. Delargy and his "Catholic Socialist" colleagues will find a list of papal decrees condemning explicitly all forms of Socialism, and the present Pope (Pius the 12th) has added to this list since Mr. Ridley's aforementioned book first saw the light. Of two things, one! Either the Labour Party is *not* a Socialist party in reality, or it is under the ban of the Church, and Delargy and Co. are heretics. For "no one can be, simultaneously, a Catholic and a Socialist" (Pius the 11th—Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, May 15, 1931).

As we recently announced, *The Freethinker* has penetrated the "Iron Curtain." It has now penetrated the "Dollar Curtain" and is included in the library of Congress, U.S.A. We go everywhere.

We hope readers will make a special effort not only to procure a copy of next week's issue but to buy one for a friend. We are inserting a brightly written "Quiz on a Vital Topic," specially written for public circulation, which we are sure will be found particularly interesting in every number.

Book now for a memorable evening

N.S.S. 47th

ANNUAL DINNER

Saturday, 24th January, 1953

at the

Charing Cross Hotel, Strand
LONDON, W.C. 2

In the Chair:

MR. F. A. RIDLEY

Guest of Honour:

MR. JOSEPH MCCABE

Come and enjoy a feast of good fare, lively talk, bright entertainment and congenial company. Send for tickets, 16s. each, to the Secretary, N.S.S., 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1

All Freethinkers are Welcome

"A Little Philosophy is . . ."

By H. CUTNER

ONE hundred and thirty-one years ago appeared a little book by Frances Wright entitled *A Few Days in Athens*, a very remarkable work by a girl of 18, an exposition of the philosophy of Epicurus; and I doubt very much whether any girl of 18 living these days could write anything similar even remotely approaching it either in writing or exposition. She had soaked herself, so to speak, in Epicurean philosophy and was able to teach it, that is, was able to discuss it from all angles. Whether it was ever "refuted," I do not know. I feel that most Christians would shy away from it at top speed.

I thought—a little sadly—of *A Few Days in Athens* when reading Miss Freda Peckman's article in this journal, "What is Nature?" and wondered why some kind friend of hers did not gently suggest to her that she was not exactly Frances Wright. Miss Peckman charged scientists and Freethinkers with using the word "Nature" exactly as Christians use the word "God." I did my best in reply to let her off lightly, but she insists she is still "unenlightened"—which is not at all surprising. By "unenlightened," she still believes, of course, that scientists and Freethinkers use the word "Nature" as Christians use the word "God"—and this signifies that we are convinced that "Nature" created the world in six days., that "Nature" created male and female, that "Nature" made Eve out of one of Adam's ribs, that "Nature" sent a serpent speaking perfect Hebrew to the Garden of Eden to tempt the only living lady to sin, so that later, "Nature" could send his Son (that is, himself—or is it, herself?) down to the Earth (which "Nature" had created out of nothing) to save Mankind. If this is not what Miss Peckman means she should have made her meaning clearer.

Miss Peckman asks, "Who, or what, is Nature?" with the same nonchalant ease as if she asked, "Who, or what, is relativity?" or, "Who, or what, is a dozen?" Let me assure her that I haven't the ghost of an idea "who" is "Nature." I shed such anthropomorphic questions when I shed Christianity. The fact that she could put the question in such a silly way shows how far she still has to go. As to "what" is Nature, before the "I'm a-telling of yer" attitude she adopts—"Nature is an abstract word, and abstract words are notoriously the very devil to define!"—she might well have gone to a good dictionary and learn what our lexicographers say about the word. Webster, for example, gives nine definitions and a clear and succinct explanation of the "ambiguity" surrounding the word. Thorndyke gives eleven definitions. Around each definition one could, no doubt, write an essay—and, in fact, such essays have been written. But, as a "mechanistic" Materialist myself, when I am discussing religion, I define the word as "Matter" or "Substance" or "the Universe." As Bradlaugh put it in his *Plea for Atheism*—"Mill defined 'nature' as 'the sum of all phenomena, together with the causes which produce them, including not only all that happens, but all that is capable of happening.'" Nature is thus a word not at all difficult to define from our philosophic standpoint.

But, of course, directly one gets into the kind of Platonic discussion familiar to all who have read Plato's *Dialogues*, that is, into the atmosphere in which all Idealists love to inveigle the unwary beginner, one can get so hopelessly confused that any meaning can be put into words, and a tyro will soon find that he cannot even prove that he is

alive. Whenever anybody starts talking to me about "the God idea, Pantheism, and Plato's Forms" I know at once what I am in for. Confusion gets worse and worse—as, for instance, when Miss Peckman, chiding our scientists for using the word "Nature" rather than "God," confidently tells us "The argument is simple. A universe which made itself is far more reasonable than a power, i.e., God, which made itself, and then made another power, i.e., Nature, which runs the Universe in co-partnership, more or less, yet always liable to sudden interference from the capricious elder partner."

I cannot, of course, answer this gibberish, capital letters and all, even when we are asked to reconcile Nature with "the good, the true, and the beautiful"; but it does make one think, doesn't it?—as a B.B.C. humorist used to say.

If I am allowed a little advice it is this: If a scientist or a Freethinker is charged with anything, always quote his exact words with chapter and verse. We are none of us infallible and sometimes our meaning may not be as clear as it should. Bradlaugh had several philosophic debates and discussions, and he took immense pains to be clear. The exposition of his Atheism and his Atheistic philosophy given by John M. Robertson in Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner's *Life* of her father is a marvel of clear writing; and once it is mastered there can be no excuse for the muddled nonsense we get from people like Miss Peckman. But let me add this—she and all young people are heartily welcome to Freethought. Even if they cannot go all the way with us, they may easily force us to make our position clearer—and that at least is worth while.

Book Review

By P. C. KING

"**Eritrea on the Eve.**" By E. Sylvia Pankhurst. (New Times and Ethiopian News Books, 7s. 6d.)

Miss Pankhurst has written an interesting book on a little-publicised subject, namely, the State of Abyssinia and its Eritrean coastboard. It is a pity she has spoiled it by a blatant partisanship which detracts from her subject and turns what might be an historical survey into a piece of political pamphleteering. Nowhere in the whole book is there the slightest criticism of the Abyssinians, nor any attempt at objective approach to their case, while the Ethiopian monarchy is treated to a fulsomeness of praise, which depicts them as the angels of God waging battle with Satan and his cohorts. The description of the march of Italian imperialism against Ethiopia in 1935 as "symbolising in most striking fashion the powers of good and evil," can hardly be regarded seriously by the general reader. The history of Abyssinia is no more free from cruel dynastic struggles and acts of aggression against neighbouring tribes than any other national unit; and the description of this conglomeration of mountain tribes as one uniform nation is incorrect.

It is a pity, because the author has, in fact, a good case. The treatment of Abyssinia, the wanton destruction of property and the private racketeering that went on in Massawa and Eritrea, under British "protection," is as foul an example of imperialist corruption as this post-war period has to show.

Of special interest to readers of *The Freethinker* are

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Brussels Congress

"Relation between Organised Religion and the State"

By J. G. RAUSCH (Netherlands)

STATES can be divided into three categories:—

(1) *Theocracies where Religion is supreme.* The Papal States before 1870 are not really an example of this class. The Government there was bad and almost entirely clerical, it is true, but the legislation was not based solely on religion. Paraguay under the Jesuits is nearer the case; it was a sort of republic governed by the Jesuit missions and disappeared with the dissolution of this order. Another example is Geneva under Calvin.

(2) *In which the State rules the Church, the opposite of Theocracy.* This was to be found in Czarist Russia and is met with in Soviet Russia to-day. The Tzar was Head of the Church, which submitted completely to his authority; similarly, after a brief period of revolt, the purged Orthodox Church is now a servant of the Republic. The Church is cast for a similar role in the subordinate States of Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia. The Church can thus exist and even extend its power as long as it subserves the rulers.

(3) *States in which there is a balance of power between Church and State.*

(a) *Where there is an established cult.* In R.C. countries the agreement between the Roman Church and the State by which there is a division of power termed a Concordat; this usually places the schools, the youth services and the social services under ecclesiastical domination. In Spain, opposing sects are almost suppressed. In Sweden, the Lutheran Church, although claiming 97 per cent. of the population, is more tolerant. In May, 1951, registration as "without religion" became legal, and the balance of

power has perhaps been disturbed. In the United Kingdom the Established Churches now lack stability, as a large proportion of the population is indifferent to religion. An element in the Anglican clergy is desirous of disestablishment in order to free the Church of State control—e.g., the Prime Minister, even though a Jew or an Atheist, appoints the bishops. The majority of the clergy fear the material loss probable on disestablishment. The situation in the United Kingdom is complicated by the existence of powerful rival sects.

(b) *The State protects all sects without differentiation.* This is the position in the Netherlands. The Reformed Church, once the State Church, was disestablished consequent on the French Revolution. Formerly nearly all the Dutch belonged to this Church, but to-day it is numerically inferior to the Roman Catholics. The most striking increase has been in the ranks of those rejecting the official cults. The last census showed their proportion of the population to be 17 per cent., and probably half the population north of the Rhine is indifferent to religion. The State pays all clergy holding office, to the extent of several million guilders. Religious instruction in the schools costs about 50 million guilders annually. Although the State is in theory neutral, the law is so applied as to favour the sectarian schools at the expense of the State's own institutions. There still exist laws for Sunday rest (which is now a dead letter in many provinces), against blasphemy, and requiring religious burial, so that cremation is illegal and is only possible through legal trickery.

(c) *The Church is separate from the State.* Here the sects are equal before the law and receive no financial support from the State. This is the situation in U.S.A., in France, in Mexico and in Uruguay. In France the Catholic Church has profited by the two great wars and by the division of the country under governments (Vichy and Nazis) which both favoured her, to win back much she had lost in the first decade of the century. In U.S.A. the Catholics are making great efforts to get round the law, and the principal sects are endeavouring to capture the schools.

Since each religion and each sect claims to possess the sole key to ultimate Truth, each endeavours, out of sheer philanthropy, to impose itself universally. This is particularly true of the Roman Catholic sect and was the *raison d'être* of the Inquisition, established in 1542 and still existing. It was an answer to the attack of science on religion which was then beginning to take shape. As science developed and as the State freed itself more and more from entanglement with the Churches, so the Churches sought the aid of the State. The latter tends to make a tool of the Churches for its own ends.

The Churches' first and foremost aim is to exist. Stagnation for a Church means its more or less rapid fading away. Hence the efforts to explain away the opposition of science, the belated attempts to enlist the favour of the workers, and the modernisation of dogma.

The initiative remains with scientific thought—i.e., Rationalism, and its application to the needs of society, particularly to the development of the social services. Scientific social advance will be best served by the complete separation of the Church and State, so that neither can utilise the other to its own advantage and to the hindrance of human progress.

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the numerous intrigues of the Christian Churches, fishing in these troubled waters. Way back in 1829, French Catholic priests, hastening to dish their Protestant competitors, supplied arms and funds to insurgents against the Imperial Court, with the joint purpose of furthering the interests of the Napoleonists and of the Catholic Church. The Abyssinians Copts had, *inter alia*, an appreciable vested interest in the Holy Sepulchre: the Armenian Christians, backed by the Turkish authorities, whose subjects they were, pushed the Copts out of the sacred places. The Copts appealed to the Bishop of Jerusalem (Church of England persuasion), but the British Government was at the time pursuing a pro-Turkish policy and told the Church in abrupt terms to lay off. British ships had also been prominent in the slave trade going on in Abyssinia and Sudan, and which was one of the chief causes of the rise of the Sudanese Mahdi and the decade of fighting that followed. With the defeat of Napoleon III at Sedan, the French fade from the picture, but imperialism (Italian brand, this time!) and Christianity found another devoted servant in Father Sapeto. Sapeto seems to have been quite a little Italian Rhodes. Following the precedent of his forerunners, he contacted the rebel leader of his day, and in 1859 drew up a treaty between him as "King of Ethiopia," and the King of Sardinia, subsequently to become King of Italy. From this modest beginning grew the Italian colony of Eritrea.

There is little information available on this corner of the world, and Miss Pankhurst's book is a useful contribution to a subject that certainly needs airing.

Correspondence

FREETHOUGHT AND PROGRESS

SIR,—I hesitate to start another hare in your columns—I have started enough and to spare in recent years, I think—but I really cannot refrain from comment on a remark in a letter by Mr. Jim Flanders, published in your issue of December 28. He says: "Does any Freethinker believe it would have been possible, if the Church had not its enormous power, for the world to have engaged in two world wars in a few years and then to prepare again, at once, for another world war?" I wonder if it has ever occurred to Mr. Flanders that the years in which those two wars (and the preparation for the third) have taken place are the very years in which the power of the Churches has not been increasing but declining? I wonder if it ever occurs to him and to others who think like him that the actual course of events is the exact opposite to what he has said? This is the age, after all, when people as a whole have ceased to go to Church, when religion appears to have ceased to play any part at all in the lives of millions in all lands. This is the age when, according to the Freethinkers and Rationalists of fifty or sixty years back, we should be approaching Utopia. And see what a mess the world is in! I know that the propagandists of many religions fifty years ago said that as the world became secularised it would become worse. But a man who can claim that the way in which the world has worsened in the past fifty years is due to religion, when this is a period of religious decline, seems to me to be standing truth on its head.—Yours, etc.,

JOHN ROWLAND.

THE MEANING OF NATURE

SIR,—Recent discussion in *The Freethinker* between Miss Peckman and others on this subject and the use of the word "nature" as an alternative to "god" arouses speculation on the derivation of the word.

I am convinced the word "nature," whatever its transient phases via the Latin "natura," ultimately derives from the ancient Egyptian *neter*, *neteru*.

This word in the inscriptions always symbolises "god," "powerful" or "sacred," and is the determinative sign used whenever any of the Egyptian gods are named.

The symbol is like a flag on a pole, and some Egyptologists have read this sign as originally being an axe, as a sign of power; others are not happy with this origin, as the symbol of power is usually the mace.

I believe this sign, which is very ancient, being one of the earliest hieroglyphs known, was originally a pictograph of the placenta, always sacred in Egypt, to be carefully preserved, thus ensuring "life" in the afterworld. The placenta of the Pharaoh, mounted on a pole, was carried in religious processions, and at the head of the army in battle, thus ensuring "life" and "power."

This was the origin of every banner, battle standard, and flag that has ever flown, and was undoubtedly identified with the resurrecting powers of nature, later became the symbol for the eternal gods as "givers of life" and later still came to mean approximately the same as we mean by "nature" and has come down to us almost unchanged in form and meaning.—Yours, etc.,

J. MARTIN ALEXANDER.

CHRISTIANITY ?

SIR,—If, as Mr. Humphris suggests in the December 28 issue of *The Freethinker* that Christ was only a man, what happens to the Christian religion? With its angels, devils, blood-sacrifice, heaven, hell, etc., one could hardly call it Christianity without these. As for the brotherhood of man, this has been preached by many in all ages and countries and has nothing to do with religion, which has always brought disunity and strife.—Yours, etc.,

L. STARLEY.

GOD AND MAMMON

SIR,—To deprive the Church from its almighty weapon, religious propaganda, it is necessary to deprive the Church from its wealth. Such wealth was "manufactured" years ago by very far-sighted clergy, superstitious people, slave-work, and the biggest crimes committed by the Church in the name of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Superstition decreased, and there is no chance to "manufacture" such wealth and power again. No chance to-day to use the sword and fire to make new converts.—Yours, etc.,

K. LIDAKS.

ABOLISH THE OATH

SIR,—Mr. Du Cann differs slightly from the quotation of the formula of affirmation given in McCabe's "Rational Encyclopædia" and, in particular, the latter includes the same phrase "The truth, etc." as the usual oath.

Since the phrase "The whole truth" is obviously short for "all the relevant facts" his criticism of it is pointless.—Yours, etc.,

E. G. H. CROUCH.

Fresh Light on Evolution

From the *Sunday Express*, January 4, 1953:—

"Another link in the chain of man's development has been discovered in Durban.

The new find includes some of the jawbones and teeth of a 'Euhominid' or 'almost man' unearthed in a cave at Swartkrans, Transvaal.

The remains, already christened 'Telanthropus of Swartkrans,' are believed to be those of a near-human animal, 'an intermediate between ape-man and true man,' which lived at least 1,000,000 years ago.

'Telanthropus' was discovered by Mr. John Talbot Robinson, a world-famous paleontologist.

He said: 'Anti-Evolutionists will soon have to eat their statements with tomato ketchup. The gaps in the chain of man's development are being filled up.'

An Anarchist Knight!

The New Year's Honours List for 1953 included the award of a Knighthood to Dr. Herbert Read, the eminent art-critic. As a reward for literary and artistic merit it was, no doubt, well deserved, but, particularly as coming from a Tory Government, the Knighthood had its comic side. For Dr. Read has been for many years past a leading exponent of philosophical anarchism and a frequent contributor to our anarchist contemporary, *Freedom*. The spectacle of an anarchist being knighted by the Head of the State is surely calculated to add to the gaiety of nations! Shall we live to see the General Secretary, N.S.S., offered a Bishopric? It is true that the famous anarchist, Peter Kropotkin, was a prince, but he inherited, and did not use the title. As G. B. S. would, no doubt, have said: "Anarchism would be all right if it were not for the anarchists."

Obituary

We very much regret to hear of the death of Mrs. E. J. Murrill, Holloway, London, N. Mrs. Murrill was the mother of Mr. Frank Murrill, for twelve years a member of the North London Branch, N.S.S., and a regular attender and literature seller at its meetings. Despite his heavy loss, Mr. Murrill was present as usual to sell *The Freethinker* on Sunday last at White Stone Pond, Hampstead: a fine example of selfless devotion. We tender our sincere regrets and sympathy to Mr. Murrill and to his family upon their sad bereavement. Mrs. Murrill was 68 years of age. F.A.R.

AUCTION

By direction of the Executors of the late Dr. Norman Haire, Ch.M., M.B., 127, Harley Street, W.1. The Valuable Contents of the Residence comprising Chinese Lacquer and Hardwood Furniture including Wardrobes, Bedsteads, Cabinets, Desk, Tables, Settees and Sets of Chairs. English and Other Appointments consisting of Oak Dressers, Chests, Bureaux, Settees and Easy Chairs, etc., also Fine Chinese Carpets and Rugs, Steinway Boudoir Grand Pianoforte. A Collection of Oriental Art, Silver and Plated Ware, Linen, China, and Glass, Gestetner Duplicator, Typewriters, Wire Recorders, 2 Stenotype Machines, 2 Refrigerators and Miscellanea. 1950 Ford Pilot and 1949 Ford Prefect Motor Cars which Phillips, Son & Neale are instructed to sell On The Premises, on Wednesday and Thursday, January 21 and 22, 1953, at 11 o'clock each day. On View Saturday and Monday prior to the sale from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day. Catalogues (Price 6d.) may be obtained from the Auctioneers: Blenstock House, 7, Blenheim Street, New Bond Street, W.1 (Tel.: MAYfair 2424). In conjunction with Messrs. G. D. Robertson & Partners, 5, High Holborn, W.C.1 (Tel.: HOLborn 4234).

LIFT UP YOUR HEADS, An Anthology for Freethinkers—By William Kent. Price, cloth 6s.; paper 4s. 3d.; postage, 3d.

MATERIALISM RESTATED. Fourth edition. By Chapman Cohen. Price 5s. 3d.; postage 3d.

THE HISTORICAL JESUS AND THE MYTHICAL CHRIST. By Gerald Massey. What Christianity owes to Ancient Egypt. Price 1s.; postage 2d.