

The Freethinker

Volume LXXX—No. 14

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Sixpence

WHEN THE LATE POPE "shuffled off this mortal coil" in October, 1958, the more intelligent members of the Roman Catholic Church must have been extremely relieved. In fact, it would not be surprising if they had actually been praying for a "happy death" for his late Holiness! For Pius XII, whilst an experienced diplomat of the old school, was really a relic of a bygone age, and like his opposite number at the Kremlin, had survived into a world which he did not really understand. The accession of the present Pope was then widely hailed as signifying a change in general policy and in world outlook by the Vatican.

Rome Moves with the Times

Up to the present time, it can hardly be affirmed that the actions of his present Holiness and his entourage have precisely set the Tiber on fire. However, a recent item of news announced at the beginning of March does appear to indicate that the new post-Pacelli regime will actually do something to implement the hopes of its supporters. For Pope John has just announced the proximate creation at a Conclave in the near future of several new Cardinals who, as such, will have a vote in the election of the present Pope's successor (Pope John is 78) and may themselves be considered for election. In that, there is nothing very unusual, but there *are* several unusual features in the newly announced creation. Most surprising, one of the new Cardinals is an African, a Negro Bishop from the British-administered territory of Tanganyika. As such, he represents the first pure-blooded African to be admitted to the College of Cardinals, the supreme Senate of the worldwide Roman Catholic Church. Almost equally novel is the also intended appointment of a Japanese, the first Japanese, though not the first Asiatic Cardinal. Another Asiatic is a Filipino from what is at present the only predominantly Catholic land in Asia (the island Archipelago named after the "most Catholic" King of Spain, Philip II, the same King who sent the Spanish Armada against another island in the West) and also — as opposed to traditional Vatican practice — the majority (six out of eight) of the new Cardinals are non-Italians. Does this augur what many observers now expect: that the next Pope or the one after, will be a non-Italian? For there is now a clear non-Italian majority among the Cardinals, though not yet, I think, the two-thirds majority necessary for the valid canonical election of a Pope.

Rome and the Coloured Races

Behind this routine announcement of the creation of coloured Cardinals, there seems to be a profound change in, or development of, the international policy and world strategy of the Roman Catholic Church. For the Church of Rome, whilst it traditionally has possessed a coloured fringe in Asia, Africa and the Americas, is primarily and predominantly, a white, a European, Church. The vast majority of its past and present adherents were, or are members of one or other of the white races of European origin. So also, have been the bulk of its Popes. There

were, apart from its legendary Founder, St. Peter, a few *bona fide* Asiatics among the early Popes; whilst the famous — or infamous — Borgias are reputed to have been of Negro descent. (A Negro was once offered but declined, the See of Canterbury.) But for many centuries past at least, every Pope has been a member of one or other of the white races. However, the world changes and so, despite its allegedly immutable character, does the

Vatican as well. We are entering a phase in which the coloured races are beginning to play a much more significant role than they have played in, at least, recent centuries. In the case of Africa, a much more important role in world affairs than it has ever played be-

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

Rome and the Racial Question

By F. A. RIDLEY

fore since the days of the Pharaohs. As our contemporary, the *Daily Express*, commented in a special article on the new Cardinals about to be created by Pope John, the Vatican evidently realises what Mr. Macmillan has recently described as "the wind of change" that is now blowing through the length and breadth of the African Continent. Our contemporary also adds, no doubt correctly, that the simultaneous creation of Asiatic Cardinals from Japan and the Philippines, indicates the present intention of Rome to fortify these particular Asiatic States against the new Communist "yellow" (or red) peril which threatens to spread from China all over the Far East.

East and West

Taking a broad view of the historic process as it has unfolded throughout the centuries, one cannot fail but to notice how hitherto Asiatic and European civilisations have successively superseded each other. Human civilisation which originated in the East with Chaldea and Egypt, then swung to the West in the heyday of Greece and Rome. Whereas after the Fall of Rome (5th century) again the balance of human civilisation swung to the East, where China and the Arabic courts depicted in *The Arabian Nights*, far outshone the darkest Europe of the Dark Ages. In modern times conversely (as the Indian publicist K. M. Pannikar has recently demonstrated) European civilisation and its agents, the white races, have extended their sway over virtually the entire globe, a process that culminated in the Victorian 19th century. Now, however, we appear to be upon the eve of a new phase, one this time in which not only Asia but equally Africa, are now rising to parity with — perhaps eventually even to superiority over — the white-skinned races and civilisation of the West. In which connection it may be added that the racist theories of inherent and inalienable white superiority held by Hitler and his present would-be imitators (including, alas, the American *Truth Seeker*) date from the past era. Nor, incidentally, are they peculiar to the white races, for Chinese and Arabic annals indicate superiority on the part of these coloured races in bygone ages.

Rome and the Racial Question

We are disposed to agree (for once!) with the *Daily Express* that Pope John's decision to create more coloured

Cardinals, indicates his awareness of the growing importance of the non-European races, particularly perhaps in Africa. Rome has one immense advantage over "national" Churches like the Established Churches of England and Scotland or the Lutheran and Orthodox Churches: as a cosmopolitan institution, she can shift her emphasis from age to age. For after all, neither her "divine founder," Christ, nor her human founder, Peter, were pure-blooded Aryans. No doubt if circumstances continue to evolve upon their present course, the Jew(?) St. Peter, will eventually number Chinese, Indians, and Africans among his "infallible" successors. We may even have a Russian in due course! Furthermore, we may expect Heaven to register the current practice of the Vatican; for in a future

African, or Japanese Church, what more natural than a black Christ or a yellow Virgin? Certainly no one will ever be able to prove that either of these so dubiously historical characters was really a *bona fide* Aryan. But let us end on a more serious note: behind all the ceaseless process of adaptation which has accompanied the evolution of the Roman Catholic Church since it first emerged from the Roman catacombs 19 centuries ago, lies a single persistent and consistent word — strategy. The Vatican stoops only that it may conquer. Behind all its theological and political changes, a single purpose remains constant: the pursuit, attainment and perpetual preservation of world power.

After Stalin

By P. G. ROY

CERTAIN PEOPLE still like to ridicule our activities as "flogging a dead horse." However, thanks to the ceaseless boosting of religion on radio and television, the horse is still very much alive and kicking.

In Lenin's Soviet Union the struggle against the "Opium of the People" was the specialised task of the League of Militant Atheists (Bezbozhniki) whose leader, Yaroslavski, in 1939, stated that it had proved "much more difficult to uproot religion from the consciousness of the people than to liberate them from capitalist exploitation." The logical conclusion would have been an intensification of the efforts in what Marx, in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme* called, "our duty to cleanse the minds of the religious obsession."

What did happen? Seven years after Mussolini had concluded his Lateran Treaties with the Pope, the "Stalin Constitution" was adopted. Article 124 ordained that "in order to ensure to citizens freedom of conscience, the Church in the USSR is separated from the State and the school from the State," whilst freedom of religious worship is guaranteed. Freethought bodies as such were disbanded, and it was planned to *persuade* people to drop the ideas they had had instilled for centuries. In 1943, the regime was forced to retreat still further; it not only "discouraged Party men from using the tactics of persuasion but, in 1943, it came to a political arrangement by which it recognised the existence of certain religious creeds and organisations. For the churches, this was a considerable victory and one which the church leaders were quick to consolidate" (John Long, *Modern Russia*, p.44/5).

In 1947 the Government felt the necessity to erect a dam against the religious floods. A society for the propagation of materialist knowledge was set up and leading scientists were brought to the microphone to present the knowledge of modern science in opposition to religious ideas. Considering that quite a few past and present scientists — and some of them of quite outstanding repute (Jeans, Wernher von Braun, etc.) — are theists who succeed in keeping their specific science and religious beliefs apart in airtight compartments, it is not surprising that the result was negligible.

After Stalin's death, Khrushchev* directed the Party to "stop insulting the religious susceptibilities of believers" and to concentrate instead on "persuasion." The book quoted above, whose author himself strongly sides with religion, admits that "too few books and pamphlets on atheistical topics are being published" and those available are on pure science and beyond the grasp of the ordinary citizen.

When it became sufficiently clear that a collection of my freethought articles could not be published in this country (let alone in the States), I considered that the only possibility might be in one of the "People's Republics." An enquiry to this effect in Czechoslovakia drew no answer at all; then I wrote to half a dozen East German publishers whom I considered possibilities, among them the old-established publishing house of Dietz (on whom the Order of Karl Marx was conferred, as their letterheadings boast). Those who answered wrote that they were assigned other tasks than science, for which to cater the Dietz Verlag has solely been authorised.

My letter to Dietz had been dated November 20th, 1959. On January 5th, 1960 — probably after consultation with the Central Committee of the Party — Dietz deigned to reply (I had sent my synopsis in English and mentioned I was sure their "Lector" was sufficiently able to read the manuscript in English prior to a decision whether it would pay to have the whole translated). Their letter is worth translating literally: —

Our series of freethought publications, to which you refer in your letter, represents an experiment at propagating and popularising among our population the scientific conception of the world.

In this attempt we refrain both from combating the churches and declaring war on religion, but strictly keep within the limits of a matter-of-fact presentation of the proper and scientific conception of the world to be implanted in the minds of the people. Your manuscript does not conform to this outline and therefore you will understand that we cannot but decline your offer to consider your book.

We freethinkers, therefore, are in a queer position. Capitalists and Communists alike are afraid of our propaganda, for the fight against God, the fountainhead of absolute power, is the fight against absolute authority. And the result behind the Iron Curtain?

I have just received word from a friend who frequently visits those parts of the Eastern world that in Catholic Austria the Roman Catholic Church remains a State within a State with extraterritorial rights; only a continuation of what it ever has been there. However, in Hungary, Croatia and Poland, this very Church has grown so strong again, that in the words of my friend, "People are afraid of her more than of the State Police."

For the rest, I quote without comment from John Gunther's *Inside Russia Today*: —

It is clear that something akin to a religious revival is going on in the USSR. One authority states that the number of baptisms has doubled since Stalin's death in 1953. There were 46,000 churches and 50,000 priests in Russia before the October revolution. By 1935 only 4,000 churches and 5,000 priests were functioning, but the figure for 1956 was 20,000 churches and 35,000 priests.

* Be it noted in passing that in this name Kh denotes Cyrillic X which is a guttural sound like the Scottish ch.

God Is No Gentleman!

By ROBERT H. SCOTT
(U.S.A.)

AMONG THE BEST OF REASONS for the disbelief of the atheist in the existence of God — any kind of God — are the facts that human beings are partly carnivorous; that they must endure, in common with all other animals, certain repellant physiological functions; and that, in the normal course of things, the human body undergoes a revolting decomposition when it has ceased to live.

I say that every aesthetically sensitive man or woman knows that these three particular conditions and necessities of human life would have no place in the cosmic scheme of a God (assuming his possibility). These are things to which the clergyman never directly refers, and to which he rarely or never alludes, and which, if he does, he never wholeheartedly excuses. This shocking triumvirate even the clergyman does not willingly attempt to justify.

The vegetarian believes that men do wrong, except for self-preservation, to kill cows or sheep or pigs or deer or certain other lower animals for the purpose of eating their flesh. He is repelled, and justifiably, by the virtual cannibalism involved in the eating of beef or mutton or pork or venison by a human being. If he believes that there is a God, he is all the more convinced, despite the contrary testimony of human teeth and human digestive organs, that human beings are not, by nature, partly carnivorous. He cannot help seeing that the lion, the tiger, and the shark have a need for flesh as food; but this gruesome necessity, he says, does not hold true of man. This he will say even if, as did the vegetarian George Bernard Shaw, he live in a temperate zone and take liver extract for his self-induced anaemia! !

Pope Pius XII, speaking to a gathering of sports writers in Rome in September of 1945, said: "The human body is a masterpiece of God's work." This statement is not consistent with the belief that a God, presumably all-wise and almighty, devised the human body. Nor is the statement consistent with the facts. To believe that a deity, presumably omniscient and omnipotent, devised the human body is to ascribe to that supposed being a lamentable lack of good taste.

The Honourable Culbert L. Olson, an atheist who is a former Governor of California, said in a public address in 1941 at the laying of the cornerstone of a medical clinic in San Francisco: "We no longer talk about the divine purpose of the various organs of the human body in an attempt to make it appear to be a logical and rational piece of construction." Lord Bertrand Russell, in his book entitled *Religion and Science*, says: "If I were granted omnipotence and millions of years in which to experiment, I should not think that man was much to boast about as the final result of all my efforts."

The manner and the anatomical location of human birth are enough in themselves to prove that human evolution was neither planned nor guided by a supernatural being or power, a being or power to which the name "God" could properly be applied. Augustine, that North African bishop of the fourth and fifth centuries who exercised an enormous influence throughout the Christian world, said something about human birth which I could not be persuaded to quote for publication even in the Latin. Margaret Fuller, who was a social reformer and one of the ablest American literary critics of her time, told herself when she was at the point of motherhood that "the bringing of life into the world should be an exalting experience, not this nauseating, oppressive, disgusting thing." (See her

biography by Margaret Bell, chapter seven, published by Charles Boni in 1930).

Jonathan Swift was a dean of a cathedral as well as the famous satirist who wrote *Gulliver's Travels*; yet Swift, having in mind certain unaesthetic features which are inseparably part of human life, said of man that he is the only animal that is offensive to himself.

Clearly neither Dean Swift nor Margaret Fuller nor Augustine looked upon the human body as a "masterpiece."

Genetic variation and natural selection, during the course of several hundred thousand years, have raised man far above all other animals as respects intelligence, self-awareness, and aesthetic sensitivity; nevertheless, genetic variation being demonstrably haphazard and natural selection being ever ready to preserve whatever adequately serves an animal for survival, the human infant, whether it be born in a hovel, a mansion, or a palace, must come into the world in the revolting manner of the horse, the dog, and the pig. This fact as to human birth was one of the things that distressed the aesthetic and sensitive atheist Friedrich Nietzsche.

I could easily believe that a God (assuming his possibility) in order to place on human egotism a wholesome restraint, might have arranged that man, as Charles Darwin wrote as the closing sentence of his book *The Descent of Man* "still bears in his bodily frame the indelible stamp of his lowly origin"; but I could never believe that a God would, for this purpose, resort to the irksome, the embarrassing, and the repugnant. I could never believe that such a being would be as insensitive to aesthetic considerations as is the merchant who, solely for monetary gain, prominently displays certain articles and commodities that should, out of delicacy, be kept out of sight. The facts that human beings are partly carnivorous, that they must endure, in common with all other animals, certain repellant physiological functions, and that, in the normal sense of things, the human body undergoes a revolting decomposition when it has ceased to live — these are among the chief reasons why I am an atheist.

Alfred Tennyson, in his poem entitled "To an Evolutionist," wrote: —

The Lord let the house of a brute to the soul of a man.
And the man said, "Am I your debtor?"
And the Lord — "Not yet; but make it as clean as you can,
And then will I let you a better."

But even if we had a complete assurance (we have none at all) of a future life for human beings in a better form, the kind of post-mortem existence that Tennyson had in mind but of which he a "pantheist," was sceptical, the obtrusively disagreeable features of human bodies that constantly remind us of our kinship with the brute would not be for us more tolerable nor less unreasonable. Were I to be told that a God did, nevertheless, cause or permit human beings to evolve, I would answer: "Very well; but you must admit that, whatever else your 'God' may be, he is certainly no gentleman!"

—NEXT WEEK—

SCIENCE NEWS

By JACK GORDON

This Believing World

Although we are always told that the Bible is the world's Best Seller, our religious contemporary, the *Daily Express*, has discovered that six out of every ten people in England have never read it, though "very few claim to be non-believers." No doubt this is the reason. Were they really to read the Bible with *understanding*, they would certainly nearly all be non-believers. Out of every 100 people in England, nine do admit to non-belief, but most of the others call themselves Church of England, and only nine in 100 call themselves Roman Catholics.

★

In any case, only one in seven goes to church or chapel in England, and most of these are completely ignorant of the Bible. Very few indeed would be able intelligently to explain the Epistles of Paul — or indeed any of the boring speeches made by Jesus "according to John." Yet both the BBC and ITV are doing their utmost to make this hopeless conglomeration of ancient Oriental myths in the Bible believed in again, and are spending thousands of pounds doing so. Neither the Roman nor the English Church is going to give up its enormous wealth and power without a struggle.

★

And of course these powerful Churches do not like rivals. The Rev. F. Martin of the *Sunday Graphic* dislikes "Hot Gospellers" most heartily — including even our old friend, Billy Graham. He admits their "super-productions," but hesitates to call what they shell out "religion"? Why? All the Hot Gospellers take their cues from those other Hot Gospellers, Peter and Paul, in the Book of Acts and they easily outshone all their followers, ancient and modern; if they did not teach religion — even at its silliest — what did they teach? The figures of converts at the Graham revivals tot up no doubt to millions — but how many have that "deep, spiritual faith" the Rev. Billy inspired them with now? No wonder Mr. Martin is sadly disillusioned.

★

We note — not with horror — that another scion of a famous Roman Catholic family, Miss Elwes, has married a man who has a divorced wife living. The family were not allowed of course a church wedding, they all had to go to a prosaic register office, just like any ordinary citizen without religious affinities; and the happy couple were made man and wife according to the State and not according to a foreign religion. They do not appear to be a penny the worse for it. On the contrary indeed. But what are they doing in Rome about it?

★

An awful religious row is brewing in Sweden where the State Lutheran Church wants to ordain women as full-blown priests. Opponents want to boycott everything which might help some ladies to step into the sacred pulpit and take over the right to teach delinquent males to sin no more, or put their heavy sins on to the ample shoulders of Jesus — or perhaps now on to Mary. Well, our only comment is that no man can stop women these days from doing what they set out to do; and if they want to be priests they will be. But from the Freethought standpoint it may mean a longer perpetuation of silly beliefs, for women are notoriously far more prone to the "supernatural" than men.

★

The plan to make a century-old Baptist chapel into a home for a "striptease" show, with a bar packed with liquor in the vestry, is not looked upon with favour by the inhabitants of Tiger Bay in Cardiff. Even a Muslim considered it a "desecration" of a holy place, though he said the chapel

had neither his religion nor his God. As a matter of sheer fact all the same, we simply do not know the difference between Allah and El except in pronunciation. It's the same God all right. But the Rev. J. McHaffie was far more angry. He called "striptease" a disgusting display, but did not say what was actually disgusting. We have often wondered what the original "baptisms" under the expert supervision of John and Jesus were like. Were they not all "striptease"?

★

Continuing the agreeable task of making the Bible alive again, the BBC on TV took us to Glasgow where we met a parson and a number of ship-workers — though we found it difficult to disentangle their confused talk on the Precious Word. As far as we could do this, however, we discovered that one of the greatest duties man could perform before God was to keep the Sabbath Day holy. They all did this by refusing to follow the Bible here and pinning their complete faith in *Sunday* — the day devoted to the worship of the Sun, a relic no doubt from Mithras, the Sun God. How this resurrects the dead Bible we were quite unable to discover.

U.S. Students and Religion

IN A MASTER'S THESIS for Northern Illinois University, I surveyed the religious beliefs of 350 students, 216 of them Protestants. You may be interested in a few of the conclusions that I came to in the paper I wrote.

"About one-fourth of both Catholics and Protestants are undecided about a life after death. About three-fourths of both Catholics and Protestants feel that a church should have a social as well as a spiritual function. Over one-half of the Catholics and three-fourths of the Protestants feel that conversion is not the prime purpose of a missionary. And about two-fifths of the Catholics and seven-tenths of the Protestants feel that non-Christian missionaries should be invited into Christian groups even at the risk of losing some Christians to other beliefs.

"The same number of Catholics who express a belief in heaven also express a belief in hell. But within the Protestant group there is a significant conflict of ideas. Although seven-tenths of the Protestants express a belief in heaven, only two-fifths of them feel that there is also a hell.

"Less than one-half of the Catholics and two-thirds of the Protestants feel that there has been some change in their religious beliefs (since entering college) and over 90 per cent. of these people did not feel that the change had been for the worse.

"It is quite interesting to note that roughly one-fourth of the Christians feel that they have a working philosophy or code of ethics that is outside of their religious beliefs. In other words, out of the total of 350 students surveyed, 119 or one-third feel that they have developed a philosophy or code of ethics from other than religious sources. But three-fifths of the Catholics think of themselves as belonging to the only 'true' Church, while only one-seventh of the Protestants feel this way."

E. A. BERGMAN.

THE YEAR'S FREETHOUGHT

The Freethinker for 1959

NOW READY

BOUND VOLUME 32/- (Post free)

Limited number only

THE PIONEER PRESS

103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, S.E.1.

THE FREETHINKER

THE FREETHINKER

103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, S.E.1.

All articles and correspondence should be addressed to THE EDITOR at the above address and not to individuals.

THE FREETHINKER can be obtained through any newsagent or will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates: One year, £1 15s.; half-year, 17s. 6d.; three months, 8s. 9d. (In U.S.A. and Canada: One year, \$5.00; half-year, \$2.50; three months, \$1.25.)

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1.

Details of membership of the National Secular Society may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103, Borough High Street, S.E.1. Members and visitors are welcome during normal office hours.

Inquiries regarding Secular Funeral Services should also be made to the General Secretary, N.S.S.

Lecture Notices, Etc.**OUTDOOR**

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (The Mound).—Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN and MURRAY.

London (Tower Hill).—Every Thursday, 12—2 p.m.: Messrs I. W. BARKER and L. EBURY.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every week-day, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, CORSAIR, SMITH, etc. Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, MILLS, SMITH, etc.

Marble Arch Branch N.S.S. (Marble Arch).—Meetings every Sunday, from 4 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER, C. E. WOOD and D. TRIBE.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: Messrs. L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Friday, 1 p.m.: Sunday, 6.30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.) Tuesday, April 5th, 7.15 p.m.: Dr. M. BURTON, "What is the Balance of Nature?"

Leeds and District Humanist Group (Trades Hall, Fountain Street.) Sunday, April 3rd, 7 p.m.: A. DRESSLER, "Religion in Russia."

Leicester Secular Society (75 Humberstone Gate.) Sunday, April 3rd, 6.30 p.m.: T. MOSLEY, "Spinoza, the God-Intoxicated Man."

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Trades Hall, Thurland Street.) Friday, April 1st, 7.30 p.m.: T. L. PEERS, "Liberty and Responsibility."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.) Sunday, April 3rd, 11 a.m.: W. E. SWINTON, PH.D. "The Phenomenon of Man."

THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY has protested to the South African High Commissioner at the recent Sharpeville massacre. A copy of the letter is printed below.

PROTEST TO**SOUTH AFRICAN HIGH COMMISSIONER**

Sir, 23rd March, 1960.

The National Secular Society, which has among its Immediate Practical Objects, "The abolition of all privileges based on heredity, racial and colour distinction, fostering a spirit antagonistic to justice and human brotherhood," expresses its deep-felt horror at the terrible massacre of coloured South Africans at Sharpeville, and protests most strongly at this latest example of the ghastly folly of the South African Government's racial policy.

It protests, too, at the callousness of Prime Minister Dr. Verwoerd's reference to the massacre as "a periodic phenomenon," and declares the South African Government unfit to be a member of the United Nations or the British Commonwealth.

Yours faithfully,

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

(Signed) COLIN MCCALL, Secretary.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Readers are asked to note the new address of: -

THE FREETHINKER,

THE PIONEER PRESS (G. W. Foote & Co. Ltd.)

THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY and

SECULAR SOCIETY LIMITED will be

103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, S.E.1.

We regret that no telephone number will be available for several weeks.

Notes and News

WE HAVE NOTHING BUT PRAISE for those clergymen who stand up for the rights of coloured people in South Africa and the Southern States of America, and the National Secular Society contributed to the Christian Action Treason Trial Fund. But we have had occasion in the past to show that the courage and humanity of a few clerics can not always be taken as representative of their Church. The Rev. D. C. Thompson, a Methodist minister, is one of the accused in the Treason Trial, and we read in *The Guardian* (23/3/60) that the Methodist Church in South Africa had refused to give him a church "since his arrest, and accordingly his family were in financial difficulties."

ALL PRAISE TO MR. MERRICK WINN and the *Daily Express* (19/3/60) for their exposure of the Salford (Lancashire) poltergeist and those connected with it. And for not pulling their punches when exorcist clergymen, E. W. Dimond and F. W. Osborn (rector of St. James's, Higher Broughton, and St. Clement's, Longsight) who still believe "a poltergeist or spirit . . . unbeknown to the boy, was using his body as an instrument or medium," claimed in a letter (23/3/60) that there was "a cessation of the noises for a period of five days" after their service to cast out "unclean spirits." Mr. Winn agreed that "the noises quietened (but did not stop altogether) after the exorcism service," but he suggested this was because Mr. Dimond and Mr. Osborn "urged, with earthly insight" that the boy who has since admitted responsibility for the noises "should sleep in his parents' room for a while." "If these priests still prefer their belief in a 'spirit,' as apparently they do," said Mr. Winn, "there is no more to be said. Argument is impossible, reason cannot count." Which just about sums it up.

IT HAS NEVER BEEN OUR PRACTICE to make capital out of the misfortunes of our opponents, and we don't intend to start now. But it is part of our task to persuade Christians of the folly of their faith. We quote, therefore, from *The Trinity Light*, bulletin of The Assumption of Our Lady, Depiford (20/3/60). "We had a letter from Father C— last week," it says, "written for him by one of the nursing sisters at the convalescent home at St. Leonards. He expresses deepest gratitude to the Men's Guild for their great kindness in having the Mass said for him last Sunday week. Owing to two very serious strokes and a bad heart, he is practically unable to speak nor (sic) to read and cannot smoke. He is completely dependent on the devotion of the good nuns caring for him. Apart from this great cross, his condition is considered to be generally good. We hope you will keep him in your prayers."

THE TRAGIC ABSURDITY of Theism in the face of human suffering was, of course, dealt with by Mr. F. A. Ridley in his article, "Agadir — and God" (18/3/60). A copy of this was sent to the Catholic Truth Society with an offer of space in THE FREETHINKER for a reply. The C.T.S. replied that "After careful consideration we have decided that it is not possible for us to take advantage of your offer."

Where Stands the Old Testament?

By H. CUTNER

WHENEVER A CHRISTIAN has to explain the wars of Joshua (which are legendary) or some of the terrible examples of the ferocity of Jehovah, he does his best to throw them overboard if he can, and pin his faith and hope for "salvation" on "our Lord." Jesus, in fact, came to substitute peace, love, justice — indeed, all the known virtues — for everything in the Old Testament *he* does not like. And why does he not like these things? Because modern scepticism and modern ethical values have shown that Oriental ideas, particularly those which flourished over 2,000 years ago, are mostly quite *uncivilised*. But you cannot get people who have been taught that the Bible as it stands is God's Precious Word to throw it overboard by a mere wave of the hand, so to speak. And therefore from time to time we get publications called "Studies in Theology"; and it is one of these I have been reading. As it was first published only last year, we can confidently claim it to be the best by a Christian that can be done on the subject. It is by G. K. Anderson, Professor of Old Testament Studies in the University of Durham, and is entitled *A Critical Introduction to the Old Testament*.

Prof. Anderson at the outset considers Old Testament study "is far more difficult to assess today" than it was, say, in 1912, when the late Dr. G. B. Gray published his *Critical Introduction to the Old Testament*. Personally, after a very careful reading of Prof. Anderson's book, I can only express surprise at the way in which he has *shirked* many important problems.

It is true that he has done his best to describe the various books in the Old Testament, and show where possible something of their structure, and assess when they were written. On this, the key word is "speculation" for *nobody* knows who wrote any of the books, and most critics have to fall back upon the theories that the various books were written by Jehovistic or Elohist or Priestly writers, or put together by various editors including Ezra or Nehemiah or both (if they lived at all). Prof. Anderson, it is true, goes far more into detail than this, but when we have boiled down all his speculations, he produces no, or very little, evidence for anything he says.

For example, who wrote the Pentateuch? *Nobody* knows, though the idea, fostered of course by Jewish rabbis and scholars that it was written by Moses was exploded centuries ago by Spinoza, and probably also by many Jewish commentators who knew the truth. As far as I have been able to get behind many of Prof. Anderson's very guarded statements, I should say that he really believes there was a Moses, and that he did write something; but I am quite sure either he himself or some of his readers could produce something from his book to contradict this.

Now, however important it must appear that speculations as to which part of the Old Testament was written by E or J or M (for Monarchy) are to Prof. Anderson, it is a pity that some kind friend did not tell him that in actual fact it does not matter two hoots.

The only thing that matters is whether the various narratives are *true*, that the events described really happened, and that the Old Testament is really and truly God's Word. If it isn't, then the Bible is a book of what can be described as fairy tales, myths, or attempted "personifications" of heavenly phenomena.

Prof. Anderson merely takes at first the point of view that the Bible is a literary work, and speculates as to who wrote it and when. Nothing else. His book therefore is

not a "critical" introduction at all, for the Bible is packed with supernatural events which should either have been defended or discarded.

For example, does he believe the Creation Story? I do not mean, does he merely believe that it was written by E, J, P, or M — I mean, does the Creation Story tell us exactly how the Universe was "created"? Does he believe in the Flood, or in the "Exodus" of the Israelites? Does he believe and give us "critical" reasons for so believing?

And what about the language most of the Old Testament is written in? Does he believe that Moses wrote the Pentateuch in the Hebrew which is read out in Jewish synagogues at this day? The word "Hebrew" is so unimportant with him that it does not occur in his Index. He has in this Index 17 references to the *Greek* Bible, but not one to the *Hebrew* Bible. He has no reference to the Masoretic text which is considered by the Jews to be the "sacred" one, and details about which would or should have been of the greatest interest to students of a "critical" Introduction to the Old Testament.

Who began writing this part of the Holy Bible? Does Prof. Anderson know? Does he know — and can of course prove — that it was written in Hebrew, the same Hebrew throughout, with no change for nearly 2,000 years? How came the Jews to lose the art of writing and speaking it if, as both Jews and Christians assert, Aramaic took its place? Why and when did this happen? Did the Jews speak pure Hebrew while they were slaves in Egypt and, if they did this for hundreds of years without losing it, why did they lose it when they had their own country, and when all their literature was written in it? To none of these important questions Prof. Anderson has an answer. He prefers to tell us that later hands "arranged" this portion, and he leaves out what anybody who wants genuine information on the way the Old Testament was composed should know.

Prof. Anderson is naturally not afraid of pointing out many contradictions and inconsistencies in the various books, but then almost all students are fully aware of them. They are commonplaces of the textual criticism of the Bible as a whole. And there must be a large number of Jewish and Christian theologians who are prepared to show that there are no contradictions whatever in God's Holy Word. In any case, where does the Professor stand? Does he believe that the Old Testament is inspired — like the New?

In his final chapter, he deals with "the Old Testament as Christian Scripture" and he insists that we must not look upon it as "a literary anthology" but, if it has any meaning, "as a religious meaning." That is, to devout students, even his speculations on the way it was written might easily be taken as sheer infidelity. But he notes that in spite of "Marcion's onslaught" upon the Old Testament, it was the "original Bible of the Christian Church," though he does not make it clear that it was *not* the Hebrew Bible, but the *Greek* one — and the Greek and Hebrew differ often profoundly in hundreds of places. Even Paul, who is supposed to have been a Jew — he wasn't — never quoted the Hebrew but the Greek Bible, as did Jesus. (I am referring of course to what is said in the New Testament.)

Prof. Anderson gives a most interesting but very "select Bibliography." It is notable that it omits Jewish scholars on their own Bible, and of course it omits any Freethought work. This need not surprise us. The one thing necessary to prevent any genuine criticism of the Old Testament as well as the New is never to provide students with details

of "infidel" works. These must always be boycotted. No responsible bookseller would dare, even in 1960, to expose for sale a work, say, like Ingersoll's *Mistakes of Moses*, or Bradlaugh's scholarly criticism of Genesis. I have spoken with dozens of Christian students, and never found any who had ever heard of Ingersoll or Bradlaugh, or knew that a journal like THE FREETHINKER even existed.

Prof. Anderson's book, erudite and scholarly as it is, will continue to perpetuate the myth that the Old Testament is a "Holy" work with "God" as its great Hero. "Jesus Himself," joyously says Prof. Anderson, "used the Old Testament Scriptures with sovereign freedom," and "his use remains the supreme sanction of their place in the Christian Bible." I can fancy nothing more fatuous than this. It proves how far we still have to go in our fight for Freethought. And how little of *genuine* value is Prof. Anderson's book though packed with "scholarship."

No Rose Queen

ACCORDING TO THE BLACKPOOL *Evening Gazette* (7/3/60) the new Vicar of St. Mark's, the Rev. Harold J. Parks, says that for the first time in 32 years there will be no Rose Queen festival because it is "founded in paganism." The Vicar explained that there was no Christian basis, historically speaking, to the Rose Queen celebrations; that they were a form of nature worship which obviously had no place in the Christian Church.

Let me draw his attention to a few more practices "founded in paganism" which have found their way into Christianity and the Church. Angelolatry is a Platonic belief that only through angels could there be any mediation or intercourse between God and man. The Christian belief in angels differed in no degree whatever from the Pagan theory of gods or demons. Pagans used the term "angels" as a synonym for the gods long before there were Christians to use it at all.

Baptism is associated with Mithraism. It preceded initiation into the mysteries. Infant baptism, or lustration, was an ordinary Roman rite. If I may quote from the *Church Times*, "Baptism as a symbolic ceremony was known centuries before the Christian era."

The idea of the Trinity, of an incarnate Saviour, of the Virgin birth, the Second Advent, and the Sacrament, are of pagan origin, and the study of primitive religions shows that every one of these beliefs has been held in the pagan world quite independently of Christianity. To term them exclusively Christian is no longer possible.

F.S.H.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16TH, 1960. Present: Messrs. F. A. Ridley (Chair), Barker, Cleaver, Corstorphine, Ebury, Johnson, Mrs. Ebury, Mrs. Trask, Mrs. Venton, the Treasurer (Mr. Griffiths) and the Secretary. Apologies from Mr. Hornibrook. Mrs. Venton reported favourable development in setting up a society for protecting Irish horses. Mr. Moore had thanked members who had visited him or written to him in hospital. Mr. Douglas Johnson had declined the challenge printed in THE FREETHINKER to demonstrate his spirit powers under NSS scrutiny. National Council for Civil Liberties' support of Sir Leslie Plummer's Racial and Religious Insults Bill was regretted. A letter giving NSS reasons for opposing the Bill was authorised for distribution to MPs, etc. Reports and financial reports were available from Birmingham and Blackpool Branches. These Branches were congratulated and thanked. Mr. F. O'Dempsey had translated chapter headings of the Russian *Book of the Museum of the History of Religion and Atheism II*, and was thanked for his pains. Reprints of two FREETHINKER articles were authorised. The next meeting was fixed for Wednesday, April 6th, 1960.

Spiritualists at Humanist Meeting

On March 3rd, I attended a meeting arranged by the Humanist Group of South West London, at which two Spiritualists had been invited to explain some aspects of spiritualism and to give a demonstration of mediumistic powers.

Mrs. Paxton (one of the mediums) described her experiences over a good many years. Her "guide," whom she had met in a dream, was named Lon Chan, and she told us of the occasion when he gave her an injection to ward off the shock she was going to receive the next day. Sure enough she met with an accident in which she received serious injuries.

It appeared to me at this point in her story, that it would have been much more helpful if Lon Chan had told her the details of the accident, and thus warned her of what was going to happen. Or perhaps events just *have* to happen and there is just nothing anyone can do about it. This medium did mention that the wonderful events in Cyprus had been foretold by the spirit "guides," but again I could not help but wonder why the terrible disaster in Agadir had not been foretold and the people warned. What a wonderful saving of life and suffering could have been brought about! This is a question that spiritualists will perhaps answer one day.

Mrs. Paxton told us that we all have spirit "guides" if we will only allow them to come through to us. Life is all vibrations she said; it swirls out in ever-increasing spirals, reaching to the utmost heights. We were told of the great healing power latent in all of us, and of the growths of which she herself had been cured. She said how dangerous it was to use spiritualistic powers for material gain, and how evil spirits were set free when this was done. But there is one thing that evil spirits can just *not* stand and that is the "Sign of the Cross." Prayer is also a great defence against such spirits, she said.

Mr. Roy Morgan, the other medium, then gave a demonstration of his "powers". And this was the first time, during my visits to spiritualist meetings that a medium had ever attempted to give me messages from the spirit world. A lady was the first "victim" though, and Mr. Morgan had a fair success with her, in that he told her that she had a sister named Lily, that she lived by the river; had done some house decorating; that her mother had "passed over"; and that she had put a flower in the coffin. A lot of the things he said were quite wrong, however.

Then came my turn, and in all fairness to this medium, it is quite fair to say that he did not have much luck. He certainly told me that I had a car and had done a few miles in it, that I had been to or came from the north of England(!). He said that I had been to Devon and told me one or two other such items. The majority of the items he picked up from the spirit world though were wrong. And so it was with others.

We were then invited to give our impressions of what had transpired, and I could not do anything else but disgrace myself by saying that I had not heard such a lot of twaddle and rubbish for a long time. I may be wrong, but a medium does not give messages; he subjects the person to a cross-examination. In my case for instance, there were really important things that could have been told to me, things known only to myself, but in *every* case the "messages" were of a paltry nature. So with one gentleman for instance, who was told that he had a scar on his body, and he pointed out that when a lead was given, the medium was quick to take it up, but when there was no lead the particular point was quickly left. This gentleman said in a polite manner and with respect that his impression was one of disgust. He said that he would have been more impressed if the medium had told him where the scar was.

Now the outcome of all this was not very good for spiritualism. What a chance they had really to show us something! Instead it was "messages" about bits of red glass, a scar on the body, stamps in the pocket, having a car and so on. Not *one* useful bit of information was forthcoming the whole of the evening. I am certain it is quite true to say that not one person at the meeting of some 40 people was at all impressed. I would have thought that the medium, for instance, would have been able to tell me that I was an atheist, especially as he knew the kind of meeting at which he was demonstrating.

However, I would like to express our thanks to both mediums for letting us see what they could do. Spiritualists usually fight shy of operating where they can be criticised, especially where such criticism is forthright. It is surely significant that Mr Morgan, the medium, failed to get over to such an audience. The Sign of the Cross may keep evil spirits away, but a rationalist meeting will keep *all* spirits at bay. There was certainly none there that evening.

Our Humanist friends are doing good work in organising such meetings, a really enjoyable evening was had by all.

E. MILLS, *Secretary*, Kingston Branch,
National Secular Society.

REPLY TO A CATHOLIC CORRESPONDENT

Thank you for your excerpt from the *Catholic Times*. I have read in the Catholic Press letters from Catholics who are in sympathy with the campaign against the trade in horses for meat.

With reference to your personal comment, I did not "put the Pope in" to my article (THE FREETHINKER, February 12th); it was the *Daily Mirror* which, understanding the immense power the support of the Pope would give to the campaigners, thought fit to ask him for help. It was the answer given by the Pope's spokesman, "The Holy Father could not possibly intervene," to which I referred in my article.

I did not expect the answer to be otherwise. The Pope speaks with the voice of the Church and *in loco*, the God of the Old and New Testament. To neither is the prevention of suffering a matter for consideration apparently. The Pope is traditionally correct in his attitude and has the warranty of Scripture for his attention to the length of garments, the size of candles, decoration and attire of priests and people, and his use of anathemas to control them. He has also the warranty of Scripture and the tradition of the Church for the keeping of slaves, for bloodshed and murder in the name of religion, for the killing of heretics and the utter extermination of unbelieving peoples.

Had the Pope spoken in the name of Humanity and the common heritage of man and animals, he would have given to the Blue Cross Society the support of millions of Catholics.

The crew of the "City of Waterford" are sailors, we hope for choice. Their safety and health are matters of concern to all. Life-boats and life-belts are provided; they are not thrown overboard with fettered legs; all the services of radio and shipping are accorded to them, irrespective of nationality, in times of trouble. Your comparison with the horses is ridiculous. EVA EBURY.

CORRESPONDENCE

DEBATE-SHY?

Your challenge to Mr. Douglas Johnson (26/2/60) prompts me to write of an experience which befell me last September.

In response to a large poster advertising a special meeting of the Birmingham Christadelphians where questions were invited, another secularist and myself attended—ready with our questions. After hymns, prayers and bible reading, Brother A, Brother B and Brother C stood up and made spoken contribution from the audience. No question had been put and, as the advertised closing time was approaching, I interrupted with: "May I ask a question?" "Are you a member?" asked the Chairman. "If not, write your question on paper and hand it in at the end of this meeting."

That is how the local Christadelphians deal with questions invited from the public.

At a later meeting of this same body, I contacted a Central Ecclesia member with a view to arranging a public debate. He was delighted and remarked "We shall need a larger hall for all our people will wish to come." Within a week I received a letter from their Secretary informing me that they appreciated my offer but the Committee had decided to decline it. I enclose a copy.

THOS. H. R. JAMES.

THE BENEDICTINES AND CULTURE

The following extract from pp. 203-4 of Dr. H. George Farmer's *Historical Facts for the Arabian Musical Influence*, 1930, hardly seems to bear out Mr. Ridley's view of the cultural role of the Benedictines:—

"Under the early Benedictine rule, there were but slender chances of classical studies being pursued. Cuthbert Butler, in his *Benedictine Monasticism*, written primarily for the Benedictines, says: 'The idea of a universally learned Benedictine body is a myth . . . At no time have the general mass of Benedictines been learned.'¹ St. Benedict himself names only the Holy Scriptures and exposition thereon by the Catholic Fathers and orthodox doctors to be read.² That was only natural, since the monastery was but 'a school for the service of the Lord,' the concern of the liberal arts come from the very bosom of the Church? Tertullian (d.c.240) had decried Pagan literature,³ and the authoritative Apostolic Constitutions had said: 'Hold aloof from Pagan books entirely.'⁴ Eusebius (d.340) was against the study of the Greek sciences. In the next century St. Jerome (d.420) was warned against reading these Pagans,⁵ and he actually laments that so few knew about Aristotle and Plato.⁶ Even St. Augustine (d.430) pandered to the crowd when he said 'Heaven is for the ignorant' (*Indocti coelum rapiunt*). Cassian (d.480), the founder of monastic institutions in the West, reveals that the fiat against classical authors was still in full force."⁷

E.N.

¹p.337. ²Reg. S. Benedict, c.8. (1843) p.32. ³Patrologia Latina, i, 750. ⁴Pat. Apost., i, 206. ⁵Pat. Lat., xxii, 416. ⁶Pat. Lat., xxvi, 428. ⁷Pat. Lat., lxxi, 161.

ISLAM AND DR. MORRELL

I have been highly amused at Dr. Morrell's letter (18/3/60) under the caption "ISLAM." If I remember correctly, someone of that name was wanting to teach Mr. F. A. Ridley — a few weeks ago — "how to suck eggs." Since the days of my own weaning I have lost all interest in sucking anything. Mental pabulum must be more solid than that which Dr. Morrell offers to suit my palate and digestion. Because I was deploring the persecution of Christians, my would-be tutor seems to have jumped to the conclusion that I must be a Christian, but had he been a real Aristotelian he would never have fallen for such an *a priori* assumption. He may not know that I was — probably — writing for THE FREETHINKER before he was born, but not under by *nom de guerre* of Padraig Krinkill. Firstly, he overlooked the fact — and "facts" are his special boasts — that my theme was "Arab Nationalism"; and proofs of its invalidity, *plus* the reasons whereby Nasser, like his predecessors, have been able to Islamise Egypt. The latter were but variations on that theme. Secondly, I am against all persecution whether by Muslims, Christians, or Atheists: that the latter are equally to blame is proved up to the hilt by the treatment of Muslims in Soviet Russia's control in Turkestan. Dr. Morrell cavils at my not quoting "authorities" for my statements. But why should I burden the readers of THE FREETHINKER with quotations from the *Arabic* works of Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam, Ibn Qutaiba, Al-Biladuri, Al-Tabari, Al-Masudi, Usama ibn Munkidh, Ibn al-Athir, Baha al-Din, Ibn Khaldun, Al-Qalqashandi, Al-Maqrisi, Al-Mahasini, Ibn Iyas and Al-Suyuti? It might show how learned the writer might be, and so prove him to be more reliable than Dr. Morrell who can only quote second-hand authorities in 'Abdallah Suhrawardi and Saiyid Amir 'Ali. After all, the editor of THE FREETHINKER will know that I am not *in statu pupillari* in Oriental studies, as evidenced by most of my books. Lastly, Dr. Morrell attempts to rebut my charges of the Muslim persecution of the Christians in Egypt during the Middle Ages by showing how nicely the Christian monks of the Near East speak of the Muslims *today*. Are we to deny the credibility of the wholesale slaughter of heretics in the *past* because of their attitude to us *today*? The only reason why they cannot take advantage of that cruel writ *de heretico comburendo* is simply because there would be too many to burn. PADRAIG KRINKILL.

IS SPIRITUALISM TRUE? By C. E. Ratcliffe.

Price 1/-; postage 2d.

(Proceeds to THE FREETHINKER Sustentation Fund) CATHOLIC IMPERIALISM AND WORLD FREEDOM. By Avro Manhattan, 528 pages, paper cover

Price 20/-; postage 1/3d.

LECTURES AND ESSAYS. BY R. G. Ingersoll.

Paper covers, 5/-; Cloth bound, 8/6; postage 10d.

FAMILY PROBLEMS AND THE LAW.

By Robert S. W. Pollard. Price 2/6; postage 6d.

FREEDOM'S FOE: THE VATICAN.

By Adrian Pigott. Price 2/6; postage 6d.

CAN MATERIALISM EXPLAIN MIND? By G. H.

Taylor. Price 3/6; postage 6d.

THE PAPACY IN POLITICS TODAY. By Joseph

McCabe. Price 2/6; postage 5d.

A SHORT HISTORY OF SEX WORSHIP. By

H. Cutner. Price 2/6; postage 6d.

THE DOLLAR AND THE VATICAN: Its Character,

Methods and Aims. By Avro Manhattan.

3rd Edition—Revised and Enlarged.

Price 21/-; postage 1/3

ESSAYS IN FREETHINKING. By Chapman Cohen.

Series 1, 2, 3, 4. Cloth bound.

Price 7/6 each series; postage 7d. each.

PRIMITIVE SURVIVALS IN MODERN THOUGHT.

By Chapman Cohen.

Price 3/- (specially reduced price); postage 5d.

MATERIALISM RESTATED (Third edition). By

Chapman Cohen. Price 5/6; postage 7d.

PAMPHLETS FOR THE PEOPLE. 18 of Chapman

Cohen's celebrated pamphlets bound in one

Volume. Indispensable for the Freethinker.

Price 5/6; postage 8d.

AGE OF REASON. Thomas Paine's masterpiece with

40-pages introduction by Chapman Cohen.

Cloth 4/-; postage 7d.

BRADLAUGH AND INGERSOLL. By Chapman

Cohen. Well illustrated. Now again available.

Price 6/-; postage 8d.

THE BIBLE HANDBOOK (10th Edition). By G. W.

Footo and W P Ball Price 4/6; postage 6d.