

The Freethinker

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THERE IS NO DOUBT that the question of reunion is at present the major preoccupation of all the larger and more (shall we say?) respectable Christian Churches, Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox (i.e. Eastern) alike. Since this is indubitably so, it may be of interest to review briefly the current situation with regard to this overriding question as it appears in this year of grace 1962.

The Holy Spirit—or Atheism?

It is scarcely necessary, at least when writing in a paper like THE FREETHINKER, to dwell at any length on the effective causes for this sudden kindling of the Spirit (to use the appropriate theological terminology) in the direction of Christian unity, which is so marked a feature of ecclesiastical life and organisation today. When viewed from the standpoint of this paper, its motivating cause is not so much to be found in the action of the Holy Spirit as in certain sociological and intellectual forces operative in the contemporary world. These, as frequently noted before in these columns, are to be found in the social and intellectual crisis in present-day society, and in particular, in the remarkable spread of such allied phenomena as Atheism, Materialism and intellectual scepticism. As we have had occasion to remark before, the present-day "united-front" of the Christian Churches, represents in the final analysis, a united front against the spread of Atheism and Materialism, the universal acceptance of which would inevitably spell disaster to them all. Nor is this at all surprising, since most united fronts, to be effective, are against some definite enemy: e.g., if, as some ingenious science-fiction (*sic*) authors have imaginatively suggested, this planet were invaded from outer space, it would probably be the swiftest and most effective way of effecting world unity in *this* world.

Roads to Reunion

At present a simultaneous movement is witnessed in the Christian world, in order to close its ranks against the current spectacular advance of Atheism upon both sides of the Iron Curtain, the effective ideological equator of our era. This movement towards reunion, includes virtually all the major Christian Churches, excluding only such contemporary unorthodox sects upon the fringe of orthodox Christianity as the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christadelphians *et al.* One can say that at least the preliminary stages of Christian reunion outside the professedly infallible Church of Rome, are already in being in the World Council of Churches, which includes virtually all the more important Protestant Churches, and to which the (Greek) Orthodox Church has recently acceded, to be followed presumably in due course by the other (non-Russian) federated Orthodox Churches. Even the Church of Rome, the most exclusive and—both numerically and politically—by far the most powerful of the present-day Christian Churches has, since the inauguration of the pontificate of Pope John XXIII (certainly a more liberal Pope than his die-hard predecessors,

Pius XI and Pius XII) taken an active interest in the proceedings of the World Council of Churches; e.g. Papal "observers" were present at the recent Congress of the World Council at Delhi. It goes without saying to anyone at all acquainted with the *modus operandi* of the Vatican, that the infallible Papacy would never ultimately countenance any reunion of Christendom and of Christianity that started anywhere except at Rome. However, the Vatican is also anxious for reunion—naturally on its own terms—consequently Pope John has already announced his intention to recall in the near future (it will have to be soon presumably, since the old gentleman is already eighty!) the Vatican Council of 1870 which was

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

Christian Reunion

By F. A. RIDLEY

hastily prorogued in September 1870 when the Italian army then forcibly occupied Rome and finally extinguished the temporal power of the Papal States. Officially the Vatican Council which proclaimed the (personal) infallibility of the Pope has never been dissolved, only "adjourned". Pope John now proposes to reassemble this Ecumenical Council for the express purpose of effecting Christian reunion on, presumably, terms suitable to Rome. At any rate the Churches adhering to the World Council take this Papal project seriously enough also to send observers.

Problems of Reunion

The problem of Christian reunion obviously involves the three major divisions of the Christian world: (Roman) Catholicism, the Orthodox (Eastern) Churches and the Reformed (Protestant) Churches. Of these, the Roman Catholic Church, even if divided internally, presents a monolithic united front to the outside (i.e. non-Catholic) world, whereas the other two are divided into separate—and in the case of the Protestants acutely divided—Churches. Between these three major divisions of Christianity, a number of theological distinctions exist, but it does not appear to be the case that these are of a sufficiently acute character to prevent an eventual reunion, assuming that there is a sufficient degree of good will upon the part of the contracting parties. Between Protestants and the Orthodox Churches, the major points at issue are primarily theological in character, and some sort of eventual reconciliation between them ought not to be beyond the ability of expert professors of theological dialectics to negotiate, once assuming the pre-existence (such as at present) of some urgent external operating factor. After all, theology has been defined as "the science of achieving logical miracles", and its evolution affords many examples of such feats of logical legerdemain: e.g. the history of Biblical criticism affords many convincing examples of this chameleon-like character. Upon the face of it there does not seem to be any convincing reason why the second and third person in the ecclesiastical trinity should not ultimately sink their sectarian differences in favour of some form of effective co-operation, or even of Christian reunion. That is the

Protestants and Orthodox Churches. The real, and seemingly insuperable, difficulty in securing any kind of universal Christian unity comes from the first (ecclesiastical) person, the Roman Catholic Church, and its leader the Papacy, by far the most powerful of the Christian Churches and one without whose equal cooperation no really ecumenical (i.e. universal) scheme of Christian reunion could ever hope for ultimate success. Here, it is the unique character ascribed to the Papacy by (Roman) Catholic theology since the Infallibility decree of July 18th, 1870, that constitutes the real and apparently insurmountable difficulty. For how can there really be any equality between the uniquely infallible Pope, Christ's only and sufficient Vicar upon Earth, and the sometimes schismatic, sometimes heretical, but always

fallible, heads of the non-Roman Catholic Churches? No unity of equals can be conceivably possible under such circumstances: only unconditional surrender on the part of the non-Roman Churches with, at most, a minimum of administrative concessions given for the sake of utility by the "One True Church" to her erring and nowadays repentant brethren.

It will be very interesting in particular, to critical students of ecclesiastical history, to observe what will actually be the result of Pope John's "infallible" Ecumenical Council. At present it rather looks as if the infallible Pope is about to be faced with inevitable failure, a theological version of this historically insoluble encounter with unpredictable results between the train which nothing can stop and the buffer that nothing can break!

Biochemical Break-through

By COLIN McCALL

"THE OUTSTANDING DISCOVERY OF 1961", wrote John Maddox (*The Guardian*, 2/1/62) "was in the field in which biochemists and biologists are trying to explain the mechanism of living processes in terms of the molecules which take part in them. The principal discovery concerned comes as a kind of grand finale to what must be one of the most exciting and perhaps the most brief periods of deepening understanding—the explanation of the mechanism of inheritance in terms of the material found at the nucleus of every living cell and which has become known as DNA".

Mr. Maddox, and science correspondents of other English papers, succeeded in conveying to interested readers, not only that—as Dr. Tom Margerison said—"This is one of the most important scientific discoveries of the century", but also a good deal of the discovery itself; in interpreting a technical article in *Nature* for the intelligent non-technical reader. And they are to be thanked for this.

Particularly should they be thanked by Materialists, who have long recognised the physico-chemical basis of living processes and opposed all attempted vitalistic explanations. The whole science of biochemistry which made possible "one of the most exciting and perhaps the most brief periods of deepening understanding" is materialistically-based. It provides a justification of that great movement of human thought from Democritus to the present day, which has asserted in face of the most violent religious opposition, that animals (including man) are not imbued with any separate spark or entity called "life", but that they behave in a manner we call "living", due to their physical and chemical composition.

Now, in Dr. Margerison's words (*The Sunday Times*, 31/12/61), "British and American scientists have cracked the code of life, the genetic recipe which decides the characteristics that are inherited by children from their parents and which ensures that a type of animal begets the same type". The British team is led by Dr. Francis Crick of the Medical Research Council's Molecular Biology Unit in Cambridge, the American team by Dr. Severo Ochoa, a Nobel Prize winner of New York University.

They worked on DNA, deoxyribonucleic acid, which is present in the nuclei of all cells and is, in fact, the genetic material of the cell—the substance which carries the genetic "code" from generation to generation and determines the genetic "make-up".

DNA is a nucleic acid containing pentose sugar (i.e. sugar with five oxygen atoms), phosphoric acid and four different "bases". These four are adenine and guanine (which are known as purines) and cytosine and thymine (known as pyrimidines). Dr. Margerison described the arrangement of atoms as rather like a spiral staircase (technically the structure is helical) in which the banister rails are made of a continuous chain of sugar and phosphate, while each tread is made up of a pair of bases. "To make treads which fit between the banister rails the pair of bases can be chosen only in a certain way", Dr. Margerison explained. "Adenine and thymine fit together to make a tread of the correct width, so do guanine and cytosine. No other treads are the right size".

DNA molecules have two functions: to make protein and to replicate themselves. What Dr. Crick and his team have shown is that (to quote Mr. Maddox): "A sequence of three consecutive units in a DNA chain molecule is needed to determine one item in the detailed structure of a protein molecule". (The chain molecule is the "spiral staircase" and the units are the "treads" of Dr. Margerison's illustration.) They have, said Mr. Maddox "shown in more or less complete generality how the genetic code works in determining the structures of chemicals made in living things" and "pointed the way to knowing in the most detailed terms exactly how the genetic inheritance of individuals is embodied in the DNA which makes up their chromosomes".

Moreover, as Dr. Margerison pointed out, "the same rules for decoding are likely to apply to other living things" in addition to the bacteriophage or virus on which the team worked. And Dr. Ochoa's team has in fact identified fourteen sequences of three units and "the links they correspond to in the protein". We now have, said Dr. Margerison, "a new insight into the processes of life".

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY

WE ARE pleased to report that Mr. H. E. Weston, the well-liked and respected Treasurer of Leicester Secular Society has been appointed steward of the Society's hall in Humberstone Gate. And will correspondents of Mr. C. H. Hammersley, Secretary of the Society, note his change of address from January 17th. It will be, 58 Huntingdon Road, Leicester.

The Crucifixion of Jesus—Fact or Myth?

By MARC STEPHANE

(Translated and Abridged by H. Cutner from the *Bulletin of the Cercle de Ernest Renan*)

THE GERMAN PHILOSOPHER, Paul Deussen, wrote in 1913 that only a lunatic could doubt the historical existence of Jesus. The Protestant pastor, Maurice Goguel, who quotes this judgment does not exactly support it, for he sincerely professes a Christian charity and a liberal spirit. But did he know that among these lunatics there were Goethe and Napoleon and, sometimes, even Renan was troubled by similar ideas? Without any hesitation, however, Goguel declared himself entirely for an historic Jesus, particularly because he thought the mythical theories do not rest on any genuine examination of the texts.

Very well then, we hope to show, without having recourse to any mythical theory, but only through an examination of the texts, that the Crucifixion of Jesus, that tragic episode of his terrestrial career, must be excluded as an historical event.

It is vouched for by only one Christian document, namely the Gospel of Mark, written in Greek at the earliest about 75 AD, that is, some 40 years after the events described therein. All the other Christian writings reporting the Crucifixion directly or indirectly depend on the account in Mark.

Let us consider first the Gospel of John, written later than the other three. It differs entirely from them. It concerns itself from the beginning to the end with mysticism and theology. We cannot regard it as an historical document.

The other three Gospels resemble each other so much that if put side by side in columns, they give almost the same facts. Of course they do contradict each other as well, but authorities agree that the oldest of them is Mark, and that he furnished Matthew and Luke with a kind of framework which they adopted, sometimes literally. Mark therefore is the only witness for the Crucifixion.

What then is their value as documents? Nearly all historians admit that not only John, but the Synoptists occupied themselves above all with theological problems; and even ecclesiastic authorities here agree. Either therefore the Gospels give us "facts" difficult to prove; or the "facts" merely give us illustrations of a myth.

Historicists like Loisy and Guignebert and, in some measure also Goguel, follow the first conclusion, as does Paul Winter in a work entitled *The Trial of Jesus* published in 1961 in Berlin, though written in English. Jesus was condemned to death on the cross for the crime of rebellion by Pontius Pilate, but we know little else. Loisy, Guignebert, and Goguel, refuse to isolate Jesus from his religion, admitting at the same time (Guignebert particularly) the absence of anything of value in the writings of non-Christian authors like Pliny, Tacitus, Philo, Josephus, and Justus of Tiberius. Guignebert's conclusion is that Jesus was some obscure prophet, and it is only the devotion of his followers which accounts for the origin of Christianity.

Guignebert and, at the same time, Loisy as well, substitute the problem of the disciples for the problem of Jesus on the question of the origins of Christianity. And for this, they have unfortunately to go to the Acts of the Apostles, the historical value of which is very small indeed. The picture they give is full of difficulties; but we shall examine here the principal one, the conversion of the Apostle Paul which, according to the usual chronology, took place about the year 29 AD.

Let us begin with the most radical theory, that of Guignebert. According to him, the disciples of Jesus at Jerusalem were dumbfounded at his ignominious death. And though the Christians at Jerusalem professed a veneration for their master, it was Paul who saw in Jesus an emanation from God. For the Jews however, no matter how great was a man, even as great as Moses, he could not become God; yet Paul, instead of trying to find out some details of the life of Jesus in Jerusalem from the people who knew him, went off for many years to preach in Arabia and Syria the religion to which he had been converted.

Goguel does not agree with Guignebert. Paul did not found a new religion, but entered a Church which had already been established. On the other hand, Guignebert and Goguel agree that Paul and the early Christians were quite indifferent to the life of Jesus and his teachings; they were interested only in his Resurrection. Not only is this most unlikely, but it is quite incompatible with the theory that Christianity was born because of the love the disciples had for their Master.

For Loisy, Paul rallied to the faith already founded by Greek Jewish Christians, though neither saw in Jesus an emanation of God—"Jesus was a Son of Israel crucified who was resurrected by God, thus making him the Christ and Lord". But in the "mystical" parts of the Pauline Epistles—which Loisy attributes to the disciples of Paul—Jesus is represented not as a man resurrected by God, but as the Son of God. Loisy does not explain this point; he shirks it.

Difficulties like these prove how opposed to each other are these authors: Jesus is a man who became God through the faith of Christians; Jesus lived and died in Palestine, though it was the Greek Jews who propagated the faith in pagan lands. Theories like these put in doubt the Mythical Theory which makes Jesus as a God, founding Christianity not in Palestine, but among the Greek Jews in Syria.

Let us recall what was the principal objection made by Loisy and Guignebert to the Mythicists of their time. That Mythicists presupposed a belief in a "suffering Messiah" anterior to Christianity. Such a notion was unknown to the Israelites, or hardly known anywhere at all. Unfortunately, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls disposes of this argument for, a century before the Christian era, we now know there was in the person of the Master of Justice (or Teacher of Righteousness) a complete theology based on the suffering Messiah or the Saviour of the World.

We can put on one side all the writings of non-Christians of the first century as these can be explained by the obscurity of the life of Jesus; we prefer to keep strictly to the examination of Christian texts.

And first, what does the Acts of the Apostles say? In it will be found (chapters 21-26) five speeches by Paul which are dated about 55 AD. The first speech is before a crowd of angry Jews; the second before a Jewish tribunal; the third before the Roman procurator Felix; the fourth before his successor Festus and the fifth before the Jewish king Agrippa and his sister Berenice.

Are we seriously asked to believe that in these speeches, Paul, so courageous in propagating the Christian faith,
(Concluded on next page)

This Believing World

There was a time when a pronouncement by the Archbishop of Canterbury would be front page news. Alas, in these troublous times, what happens in the Congo, or what Mao says in China, seems to make a far better "story" than almost anything any Archbishop can say—which no doubt accounts for Dr. Ramsey's prophecy going nearly unheeded. He prophesied that it might take 100 years before the Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches are reunited. Incidentally, they were *never* united; so it is difficult to see how they could ever be "reunited".

Dr. Ramsey also said that the West had "always regarded the Christian Church as wearing Western or European dress" (*Daily Express*, 13/12/61), but from now on "it will wear dress that is Oriental". But surely Christianity was always "Oriental"? Jesus and his Apostles were dark-skinned, like Arabs, and what they taught was based on Oriental thought, with a good God and a bad Devil—an adaptation of the old Persian religion.

But what was "the most important outcome" of the gathering of so many fervent followers of Jesus at the World Council of Churches in Delhi? It was that the European and American Churches "got to know the Churches of Asia better—in fact intimately", declared the Archbishop. And that was something after 1900 years of constant evangelising!

That Christmas as we have it today got a very strong impulse from Charles Dickens must be admitted by all who have read his famous *Christmas Carol*. All the same, it is not a work which has found much favour with either parson or priest. And Mr. Peter Forster gives us the reason in his article on Scrooge in the *Daily Express* (23/12/61). He tells us that "Dickens treats Christmas on a purely secular basis—in the whole story there is only one reference to the festival's religious origin".

There it is—in religious eyes the great fault of Dickens was that he rarely thought of any other solution to social problems than the purely *secular* one—he rarely said that you must put all your troubles on the back of Jesus, but instead, you must solve them here and now in *this* world. And any work on Christmas which makes a Scrooge its hero rather than the Babe of Bethlehem and his crib and adoring and pious animals, to say nothing of Angels singing Hosannahs around him, rouses quite angry feelings in our religious hierarchy.

"In Truth for Christians" (*Daily Mail*, 7/12/61) we are told that "the early Church was very successful at grafting Christmas feasts on to pagan rites". The truth is virtually the reverse. What happened was that "pagan rites" were borrowed wholesale and made into Christian feasts. For example, the Lord's Day is the day pagans devoted to the worship of the Sun hence it is called *Sunday*. Easter used to be celebrated by the worship of Ishtar or Astarte, and was taken over by the early Christians when they gave up the Jewish Passover. And so on. In any case, in the "person" of Jesus we have a relic of Sun-Worship, for he proclaimed himself "The Light of the World"—that is, the Sun.

NEXT WEEK

SUGGESTIO FALSI

By MARGARET KNIGHT

THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS—FACT OR MYTH?

(Continued from page 11)

never even mentions the Crucifixion? Would he not have said to Felix and Festus that it was under their predecessor, Pontius Pilate, that Jesus was crucified?

The quarrel between Paul and the Jews appeared to the procurator to be merely a theological question not a political one; no other explanation is possible as the absence of any allusion to such a drama as the Crucifixion as an historical event proves. All this may be a "negative" proof, but it does establish a negative fact.

In *Philippians* (2, 6-14), written either by Paul himself or one of his mystical followers, will be found some verses of great beauty on the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus Christ. At the name of Jesus "every knee should bow": he was "equal with God". In Hebrew, the name Jesus means "Jahve saves", Jahve being God himself. And therefore the name Jesus is "above every name". Thus, a being emanating from God takes the form of a man, submits to death and resurrection, and receives as a recompense from God the name of Jesus. It must be obvious that here Jesus is the name of a cult, that Jesus Christ is a religious conception, not an historical personage.

A Christian poem, *The Ascension of Isaiah*, written originally in Greek, probably before the end of the first century, corroborates these details from *Philippians*. The prophet Isaiah, who lived about the seventh century before the Christian era, tells us about his vision in which he ascends to the seventh heaven, while the angel who accompanies him tells him about the Son of God, "thy Saviour"; he will be called Christ in the world to the end of time; and people will recognise in him "flesh and blood". Having been made into an angel himself, Isaiah relates, "I heard the voice of the Highest, the Father of my Lord telling him that he would be called Jesus, descend, and leave the Heavens". God then explains to his Son his Mission on earth, and only because of this is the name of Jesus mentioned in this part of the poem. In the following chapter, not once is the name of Jesus given. When the poem describes the supernatural birth of the Son of God, the name bestowed on him by Joseph and Mary is not mentioned.

There is still the verse in *Acts* (5, 31), "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness". Thus, it is after his terrestrial mission that God made Jesus, "Prince and Saviour"; now these two notions of authority and of salvation are contained in the name of Jesus. We find therefore in *Acts* traces of the same ideas we find in *Philippians*. (To be concluded)

GET OFF YOUR KNEES

Get off your knees. Act like a man.
There is nothing up there for you
Except some stars and the Milky Way
And they'll not heed what you've to say.
So get off your knees; you can.

Get off your knees. Take up a stand
More dignified and natural.
Neither blatantly aggressive
Nor so cringingly submissive;
Just get off your knees—here's my hand.

Get off your knees. It will surprise
The strength that comes with unbelief.
"Everlasting torment" has lost its power
To intimidate and cower,
So get off your knees: Arise!

—S.B.

THE FREETHINKER

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

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

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

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Midland Institute, Paradise Street), Sunday, January 14th, 6.45 p.m.: S. M. CAINES, "The Negro and Nationalism".

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Tuesday, January 16th, 7.30 p.m.: RONALD M. BELL, M.P., "Migration and Population".

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, January 14th, 6.30 p.m.: F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT, M.A., "Havelock Ellis as a Pioneer Humanist".

Marble Arch Branch N.S.S. (The Carpenter's Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1), Sunday, January 14th, 7.15 p.m.: DR. J. CABRAL (Conference of Nationalist Organisations of Portuguese Colonies), "The Truth about Our Oldest Ally".

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Education Centre, Broad Street), Sunday, January 14th, 2.30 p.m.: J. M. CUTHBERTSON, "Can Humanity Survive?"

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, January 14th, 11 a.m.: O. R. MCGREGOR, B.Sc., "The Social Costs of Broken Homes".

Notes and News

"THE LUCKY BUYER." That is how the *Evening Standard* (28/12/61) described the Roman Catholic Diocese of Northampton, which bought an acre of building land from Bury St. Edmunds Corporation for one pound. A condition of the sale is that a church must be built in five years, and the local Catholic parish intends to comply. The church will face the Mildenhall Road estate's main shopping centre and "will dominate the main square". "We are most grateful to the borough council for letting us have such a superb site", said the Rev. Bryan Houghton, "and we shall have to supply a superb building that is worthy of it". "Lucky buyer" is right, and we suggest it would be right for some less lucky buyers to stage a protest against the Bury St. Edmunds Corporation.

★

CAN IT BE THAT with the death of Frank Buchman, Moral Re-Armament is changing its line? Formerly virulently anti-Communist, in its latest full-page advertisement (*Daily Express*, 11/12/61) it offered an "ideology . . . which both Mr. Kennedy of Washington and Mr.

Khrushchev of Moscow need". And, though there were still traces of the old antagonism, Mr. Peter Howard (Dr. Buchman's apparent successor) emphasised that the offer was "a great ideology to the Communist and non-Communist world".

★

EVEN THOSE who have regarded Lord Russell as a "bad influence" since the 1920s "cannot but rejoice that so lively a mind has been so brilliantly captured for posterity", says *The Gramophone* (January, 1962) in reviewing the first of a "Speaking Personally" series of Pye Nonesuch long-playing records (two 12-inch, PPLD209, 75s., including Purchase Tax). There is "much enchanting reminiscence", "a good deal about nuclear war, free love and the state of the world today", a "wounding" story about Shaw, while "As an infidel, Lord Russell naturally does not spare the Church . . .".

★

JUST BEFORE Christmas the *Daily Herald* (22/12/61) devoted half a page to an explanation of the traditions of the festival, and must have surprised some of its readers. It referred to the Roman Saturnalia being taken over by the Church, and admitted that the choice of December 25th as Christ's birthday was "a convenience". "Every month of the year has been put forward as Christ's nativity", it said. "Yet we cannot be sure even in which year He was born, far less the exact date".

★

SHORTLY AFTER Christmas, the *Daily Herald* (29/12/61), along with other newspapers, carried a photo of Greek Orthodox priests, armed with bottles, trying "to prevent Roman Catholic Franciscans from holding Christmas Eve services on the flat roof" of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. The Orthodox sect regards the roof as its own.

★

STILL IN THE *Herald*, also on December 29th, Leslie Childe reported from Rome a new denunciation of the belief in horoscopes. It is a heresy, declared Dominican Father Reginaldo Francisco in *Osservatore della Domenica*, contrary to the second commandment which condemns false worship. According to the Authorised Version, of course, the Roman Catholic Church constantly breaks the second commandment by making "graven images".

★

"DAY AFTER DAY", writes our Canadian correspondent, Quebec Province's "three French dailies are printing disguised and undisguised attacks against Rome". The English press is much less outspoken because "the Roman Catholic Church, the Crown and capital, have always protected one another's interests since 1760 when England took over", but it can't remain completely indifferent when Premier Lesage announces that the government "fully intends to transform into reality the new spirit which is now breathing over Quebec" (*Montreal Star*, 12/12/61). The "new spirit" is laicism, particularly in education, and "several thousand freethinking journals are distributed every month".

★

A FOOTNOTE to Adrian Pigott's Views and Opinions last week on the John Birch Society. Senator Russell Olsen of Wisconsin, criticising a definition of "McCarthyism" in the new Webster's International Dictionary, said (*Daily Express*, 1/1/62): "I'm no McCarthyite and I don't agree with his methods, but I think we should admit that he accomplished some good". Should we? According to the *Express*, Senator Olson wants Webster's to describe McCarthy as "an American patriot".

Pope John and the Cold War

By ADRIAN PIGOTT

Pope John and the Cold War by F. A. Ridley. (Frank Maitland, London, 5s.)

THIS LITTLE BOOK by F. A. Ridley is highly recommended for anyone who desires to keep in touch with a very important influence on current events, viz. the activities of the Vatican. Within its 79 pages there is a mine of valuable information as well as an acute analysis of Papal manoeuvres and misbehaviour in the past.

We all have some superficial knowledge of the principal political villains who have played their parts on the stage of the 20th century (e.g. Hitler, Mussolini, Franco, Chamberlain, Halifax, Laval and Petain). These men were odious enough, but there were others—inside the Vatican! Since 1922, the world scene may be compared to the stage of a tragic puppet theatre. Looking upon this stage, millions of ordinary citizens gazed at the antics performed by the politicians mentioned. We watched their absurdities—often with amazement, indignation and despair. Helplessly, we just had to await the natural harvest of their follies—World War Two.

Mr. Ridley takes us behind the scenes of this puppet theatre and exposes for us the wirepullers in the Vatican who did a great deal to bring on the tragedy of World War Two and who, if not prevented might easily bring about World War Three. In lucid and undeniable sentences, he traces how Hitler, Mussolini and Franco were hoisted to power by the crafty popes Pius XI and XII. In the 1930s, the Vatican had decided that the best way to preserve its interests was to preach a "crusade" against Russia. By 1939, the Papal fortunes were firmly fixed upon hopes of an Axis victory. When this ignoble plan was shattered in 1945, Pius XII had to pick up the threads of his defeat as best he could. He turned a diplomatic somersault, and tried to pretend that he was democratic—which is certainly not in keeping with Papal character! However, thanks to Romanist influence in Britain and USA, he "got away with it".

Today, John XXIII is adapting himself to the current conditions. His prime task, as supreme pontiff, is to deal with his principal enemies, Communism and Atheism, which are making considerable advances. He is of peasant origin—and he probably is a genuinely good-natured man who has realised that the arrogance displayed by his two predecessors does not pay dividends. ("Courtesy calls" are now being paid to the Vatican by simple persons like Archbishop Fisher; they would have been out of the question under the reigns of the arrogant Pius XI and Pius XII). But despite his benign exterior, we must never forget that John XXIII is a pope; he is, therefore, primarily concerned with Vatican interests rather than the welfare of mankind as a whole.

Mr. Ridley stresses the Vatican's habit of preaching a "holy war" against any current enemy. The crusades against the Saracens in 1100; the Spanish Armada against England in 1588; the 30 years' war against the Lutherans, (1618-1648) are examples. About 1922—Mr. Ridley points out—the Vatican began to realise that new rivals had appeared—the Communists—so yet another "holy war" has been preached. Hitler having failed the Vatican in 1945, the cardinals have had recourse to Wall Street and the Pentagon, who are now being used as instruments to whip up the "holy war" against Moscow. Less colourful than his two predecessors, John XXIII has made fewer

mistakes. During his reign, the enmity between France and Germany has subsided; his two devout servants, de Gaulle and Adenauer, do not waste their energies in Franco-German opposition. A notable triumph has been the application of Britain to join the Common Market, which is largely in the control of Roman Catholics.

I do not agree with Mr. Ridley's implication that Communism necessarily involves Atheism. (This is exactly the scare-picture by which Vatican propaganda tries to whip up indignation among the simpler Westerners "The spectre of atheist Communism".) Undoubtedly, the majority of the Iron Curtain population is Atheist—but there are also millions of followers of assorted religions and they are allowed, by Constitution, full freedom. In the USSR the reliable John Gunther has estimated that there are as many as 25 million Muslims. The theory that "Religion is the opium of the people" was dominant in the early days of the Russian revolution of 1917, when there was a justifiable revulsion against the Church for its failures and scandals. However (as usually occurs in revolutions) the excesses gradually receded; especially when the practical Lenin realised that religion did make an appeal to a small fraction of the Russians.

I have been twice to Russia, and also to Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, where I saw mosques, synagogues, churches and chapels of various denominations in full working order. In Prague I saw a new church being built. I certainly believe—as does Mr. Ridley—that Atheism is on the increase, but the impact of a minority of religious people does have some influence. It is by no means negligible.

To the recent assembly in Delhi of non-Romanist Christians, the Russians sent a delegation of 16, headed by Archbishop Nikodim of the Orthodox Church. Speaking fluent English, this vigorous and affable young man of 32 certainly made his presence felt to the elderly delegates. When some of the more senile of them suggested sending good wishes to Rome for the Vatican's council to be held next year, he strongly opposed the idea. "We feel one way about Roman Catholicism", he said forcibly, "and another way about Vatican City which is an organised State, and not a religion". The five Roman Catholic "observers" sent by John XXIII, were not "amused"!

Mr. Ridley ends with a note of cautious optimism about the vital question of co-existence between East and West. Both Pius XI and Pius XII as he points out, were opposed to this, favouring a "holy war" (even if conducted by such an unholy person as Hitler!) to serve the purposes of the Vatican. But the Kremlin has modified its original designs for World Revolution (as advocated by Marx and Lenin) and today, Mr. Khrushchev fully appreciates the horrors of nuclear warfare; and this highly intelligent man has offered to discuss co-existence with the West. Mr. Ridley hopes—as we all do—that opinions in the Vatican will similarly modify the violent views preached by Pius XI and Pius XII; that the Vatican will renounce its usual arrogance and think in terms of the interests of mankind. This is the problem with which John and his successor are faced. "Climbing down" is not an easy matter even for humble persons. For "infallible" popes it must be even more difficult. How to do this is the 64,000 dollar problem which faces the Vatican.

This valuable little book deserves a wide circulation.

especially in the USA, where the opposition to co-existence is unusually strong. (As recently as 1960, Cardinal Spellman of New York publicly denounced co-existence at a conference at Munich.) It would be even more beneficial if a copy could penetrate into the Vatican and could come to the notice of one of the more reasonable cardinals. This cleric might be able to do something to persuade

Vatican opinion that, in these days of the megaton bomb, it is useless for the Vatican to continue its old habit of instigating other countries to act as its catspaws, to fight its battles. In the atomic age, war amounts to mutual annihilation.

Such a useful book of reference surely does deserve an index. (Not, of course, the Papal sort of Index!)

Man's Animal Heritage

By Dr. EDWARD ROUX

MAN, WHO MAY BE ABOUT to end his existence by nuclear warfare, owed that existence in the beginning to his ability to handle weapons. War is not the mere result of private property and the class struggle, as Marxists tell us, nor do aggressive desires arise simply from sexual frustration, as Freudians would have us believe.

These are some of the generalisations made by Robert Ardrey in *African Genesis, A Personal Investigation into the Animal Origins and Nature of Man* (Collins, 1961, 36s.). The author describes himself as a dramatist turned scientist. He was the author of *Thunder Rock*. He came to South Africa in 1955 on a journalistic mission, met Professor Raymond Dart, and became involved in the controversy regarding the African origin of man and the significance of the fossils found by Dart and Broom in the Transvaal and by Leakey in Kenya. Ardrey's claim to be a scientist should be taken seriously. During six years of intensive study he visited most if not all of the fossil sites he mentions, examined bones in the company of Dart and his students, and studied the literature of the subject. In his critical attitude to anthropomorphism (the tendency to interpret nature in human terms) and teleology (the desire to find a "purpose" for everything) he shows a real scientific spirit, and in this respect has a better "feel" for science than many philosophers from other fields who have tried to dabble in biology.

The author has chosen for special emphasis three fields of discovery which have occupied the attention of zoologists for the last twenty years or so. The first of these concerns the territorial sense exhibited by many vertebrate animals, from fish to apes. It is known for instance that a male bird, such as our (South African) sakabula (greater widow bird) will, during the breeding season, occupy a well-defined territory which it will defend against all other males of the same species. The second subject discussed at some length is the propensity of many animals which live in groups to establish among themselves a hierarchy of individual power or dominance. Since in the case of non-human animals this was first discovered among hens, it is known as a "pecking order". The third field of study picked out for special emphasis deals with the tremendous increase in our knowledge of the evolution of man derived from the discovery of the fossil remains of our pre-human ancestors in the continent of Africa. More particularly the author is concerned here with the evidence that these ancestors were ferocious killers who wielded death-dealing bone implements and hunted in packs.

The main purpose of the book is to describe these bodies of fact and speculation and then to incorporate the material into a general theory to explain the origin of man and the nature of his civilisation.

It will be generally conceded that the study of man, his history and his culture is covered in the main by three disciplines, those of biology, psychology and economics.

The great contributors to these disciplines have been respectively Darwin, Freud and Marx. Robert Ardrey's contention is that the implications of Darwin's demonstration that man is an animal and descended from animals has never been fully appreciated by Freudians and Marxists, who have, in their different ways, presented us with distorted views of human society. Both Freudians and Marxists are utopian romantics, the former because they believe that all problems can be solved by the removal of inhibitions, and the latter because they believe that the same happy result can be achieved by economic equality. Both are extreme environmentalists. Marx, critical as he was of "utopians", made the same assumption as Rousseau and Robert Owen, the assumption "that man is a product of his social environment, that the less praiseworthy manifestations of human behaviour are consequences of defects in that environment, and that society, an institution of human invention in the first place, may therefore be designed 'with mathematical precision' to return man to his original state of grace and happiness If the exploited can gain control of the state, then private ownership will be ended. The exploiting class will be ended. The class struggle will be ended. War, misery, vice, hostility, and at last the need for the state itself will be ended, since man is naturally peaceable and good".

The essential nature of man is illustrated by the case of the juvenile delinquent. "This ingenious normal adolescent human creature has created a way of life in perfect image of his animal needs. He has the security of his gang, and finds his rank among its numbers. He has sex, although it does not preoccupy him. Without any learned instructions, he creates directly from his instincts the animal institution of territory. In the defence of that territory his gang evolves a moral code, and his need to love and be loved is fulfilled. In its territorial combats, the gang creates and identifies enemies, and his need to hate and be hated finds institutional expression. Finally in assault and larceny, the gang and its members enjoy the blood and the loot of the predator. And there is always the weapon . . . the switch-blade . . . or the bicyclechain".

The street gang is a small unit, the modern great power a big one. The USA and USSR have much in common with the gang and with each other: territory, rank, institutionalised loyalty for one's friend and hatred for one's enemies, and, above all, weapons. But weapons have now achieved their own apotheosis. Men now wield weapons which can destroy not only their enemies, but themselves and all higher forms of life on earth.

Regarding nuclear warfare, Ardrey suggests three possibilities. *Homo sapiens* may obey his weapons instinct with minimum inhibition and subject the planet to a maximum explosion. This would probably wipe out all higher forms of life and leave some microbes and lowly insects to carry on the process of evolution. More probably the explosions may be minimal and destroy only a

portion of mankind. This would end civilisation and produce a race of mutants most of whom would succumb to natural selection. From those who survived a new species of *Homo* might in due course arise.

However there is still the third possibility: that we have already seen or shall shortly see the end of general warfare. This will depend on "sufficient inhibition" being created "to hold in check the weapons instinct". The author regards this outcome as the most frightening of all "if for no other reason than that it is the only one that we shall have to live with".

CORRESPONDENCE

ECCLESIASTICAL PIGS

Referring to Mr. Oswell Blakeston's interesting review of new books especially the one concerning ecclesiastical pigs, may I mention another. At the parish church of Winwick near Warrington (where I was baptised) there is a carving of a pig on the outer stonework of the church.

The church stands on rising ground and during church building operations tradition tells that the masons' stones were found rolled to the bottom of the slope during the night and that this occurred repeatedly, and so slowed up the work. The story goes that a pig that resented the building of the church was responsible for the mischief.

F. S. HOUGHTON.

CHRISTIAN CRITIC

I am a Christian, and have read your publication for the past eight weeks. It would appear to me that you do not uphold the sentiment behind the name of your publication . . . Free-thinking!—most of your articles and letters are just as bigoted and biased as are some Christians!—the only difference being . . . they are for . . . and you are against!!!

How about a little more constructive criticism, and less withering sarcasm, which in large doses, tends to become boring.

(Mrs.) O. J. CHILDS.

SECULARISM

In his letter on p. 416, Mr. McCall concedes my main point in the third line, viz. "The dictionary gives a number of definitions". Ergo, the general public does not know what the National Secular Society stands for. People will doubtless marvel at my critic's erudition, but it is doubtful whether they will be interested in what Holyoake said in 1849 or thereabout.

I imagined that all would realise that the words "hanged, drawn and quartered" were hyperbolic. The reluctance of atheists to openly avow themselves such a century ago suggests that rightly or wrongly they considered themselves in danger. Bradlaugh was exceptionally brilliant and brave, as befits a Northampton man. He made some errors of course, which atheists of today should realise and profit by.

W. E. HUXLEY.

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OBITUARY

H. T. DERRETT

We have just heard belatedly of the death of H. T. Derrett, of Glendaruel, Argyll, Scotland, an old and staunch member of the National Secular Society. Mr. Derrett willed his remains to medical research.

D. L. WEBSTER

Another stalwart veteran, D. L. Webster of Sidmouth, Devon, died in November. Mr. Webster had taken THE FREETHINKER and been a member of the National Secular Society for many years. Thomas Walmsley of Lancashire writes: "He was a fine character and a convinced Atheist, like myself. We were good friends and he wrote to me weekly. I shall miss him very much".

THOMAS ROBERTS

Although he never occupied or sought prominence, the Free-thought movement and the National Secular Society had few more faithful followers on Merseyside, and THE FREETHINKER few more faithful readers, than Mr. Thomas Roberts, of 12 Ward Grove (and formerly 17 Rochester Road), Rock Ferry, Birkenhead, who died on Boxing Day, aged 79. His memories, and sometimes his reminiscences, went back to early national pioneers of the movement and their Merseyside and Manchester visits, and he was a stalwart member of the one-time Birkenhead Branch in the early 1930s. A quiet, unassuming and humane man, who made many friends, he never pushed himself but was always ready to do a kindly act or lend a helping hand, and the firmness of his convictions was matched only by his gentleness in word and deed, with which went a never-failing sense of humour.

A widower for three years, he had come home to spend Christmas with his family after a few days in hospital, but was taken ill again on Boxing Day and had to be rushed back to hospital, where he died. His last, unread, copy of THE FREETHINKER was buried with him on New Year's Day at Bebbington Cemetery, where a secular service was conducted by Ronald Standfast (Wallasey, ex-Birkenhead), an old friend.

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