

The Freethinker

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ABOUT 64 AD, according to Christian tradition, St. Peter—the first pope according to this same tradition—was martyred in Rome soon after his arrival from Jerusalem. Nineteen centuries later, Pope Paul VI, the present successor of Pope Peter, undertook his pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Of all Pope Peter's 200-odd successors (including anti-popes), none is reported as having ever made this journey before. Why then was it not until 1964, nineteen centuries after the arrival in Rome of the traditional founder of the Papacy, that a pope resolved to visit Jerusalem and the reputed scene of Christian origins? Why, we may relevantly—as well as reverently—ask, has Pope Paul in his infallible wisdom (and no doubt under the divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit) decided to stage at this precise moment his 20th century version of Pilgrim's Progress?

Rome and Jerusalem

The two most famous cities associated with the rise and diffusion of Christianity are unquestionably Jerusalem, its traditional birthplace, and Rome its predominant ecclesiastical centre. According to tradition, the Christian religion actually began in Jerusalem after the execution—and problematic resurrection—of its founder. The oldest extant chronology of Christian origins in the Acts of the Apostles definitely locates the earliest developments of the new religion in the Jewish capital. The tradition is not perhaps beyond dispute, but it is at least certain that, probably at a very early period, the official headquarters of the Christian Church had already been transferred to Rome.

The whole initial era of Christian origins is by now effectively shrouded in the mists of time—and of subsequent religious controversy. But whatever the precise circumstances, whether or not Peter was ever the first pope (or anything recognisably similar), or whether Paul ever actually wrote his Epistle to the Romans (and whether the Romans ever received it), one broad historical fact at least emerges with certainty. The Jewish Christianity centred on Jerusalem, perhaps the earliest form of Christianity, remained static and eventually died out. Whereas contrarily, Roman Christianity, arising in or migrating to the then capital of the vast Roman Empire, prospered exceedingly, and eventually developed into the Roman Catholic Church, the most powerful and highly organised form of Christianity—and probably the most highly organised religious institution—ever known. In the annals of Christianity accordingly, Rome and Jerusalem represent the two most famous centres, Rome, in Christian evolution at large, being much the more important.

Age of the Crusades

It is of course a matter of common knowledge that the relations established in past ages between Jerusalem and Rome have not always been peaceful. Indeed it was as a result of the huge European military expeditions initially organised by the Papacy and aimed at the forcible recovery of Jerusalem from Muslim rule during the Middle Ages,

that medieval Rome attained its maximum power. For it was during these successive crusades that Rome became the effective leader of Christendom and effectively laid the foundations of her medieval theocracy during the Age of Faith. For two centuries (c. 1100-1300) the popes preached the Holy War, the Muslim *Jihad*, re-baptised into Christianity as the crusades. It was probably the failure to hold Palestine against Muslim counter-attack that eventually brought to an end the medieval theocracy of the Papacy and led directly to the Christian Age of Faith. Be that as it may, in the Middle Ages the popes only visited Jerusalem by proxy, with the crusaders as their representatives.

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Pilgrim's Progress 1964

By F. A. RIDLEY

With the capture of Jerusalem (1099) by the army of the first crusade, specially blessed by the pope, the victorious Christians massacred 80,000 Jews and Muslims in cold blood inside Jerusalem, before "prostrating themselves in a transport of joy before the Holy Sepulchre of Christ". But the Christian "kingdom" of Jerusalem which they established lasted barely a century (1099-1187). Ironically, the only influential crusade which made a permanent contribution to world history was the last one—which never actually took place. For in the early 16th century, a young Spanish pilgrim to Jerusalem formed the bold design of recovering the Holy Land by a fresh crusade. This pilgrim was Ignatius of Loyola, and he founded his world-famous order with the express purpose of carrying through his crusade. Circumstances prevented the execution of this ambitious project, and the Jesuits turned elsewhere; but it must be remembered that they owed their initial existence to a crusade.

Second Front

However, this is 1964, not 1099: times and crusades have changed. Pope Paul goes to Jerusalem as a humble pilgrim, not in the warlike array of a crusader. However, whilst papal tactics are now very different from those which armed the medieval crusaders to recover the Holy Land, the long-term strategic aims of the Vatican do not appear to have changed so very much. For *semper eadem*: the basic purpose of Rome remains unchanged—the eventual attainment of world power.

It was with this aim in view that the great medieval popes Gregory VII and Innocent III, launched their armed gangs to the tune of *Deus vult*, "it is the will of Heaven". More peacefully, it was with the same fundamental objective in view that Pope Paul journeyed to the traditional birthplace of Christianity. For what, in effect, his infallible Holiness has done—in war time military parlance—is to open a "second front". His trip to Jerusalem was all part of the present Roman world-strategy of Christian reunion under—of course!—Vatican leadership.

Christian Union

It must be conceded that the former professional diplomat, Montini, is demonstrating himself to be a past-master of the arts of ecclesiastical diplomacy. For where in the world can Christian reunion be preached more

plausibly than in Palestine, the cradle of Christianity? Where else would the Pope have found it easier to make effective contacts with the non-Roman Churches both Greek Orthodox and Reformed, than at the Sepulchre of Christ whom all acknowledge as their founder? Decidedly if in the concrete circumstances of the first Christian century, Peter or Paul, or whoever the first pope may have been, showed his flair for current politics by selecting the

then world capital, Rome for his episcopal see, Pope Paul VI is nowadays demonstrating a similar flair in selecting Jerusalem, the Holy City of all Christians as his strategic centre for launching that campaign for Christian reunion which is now the avowed policy of the Vatican. It is not for nothing that the Vatican is the most experienced political organisation in the world.

No Christian Morality

By COLIN McCALL

IT WAS RATHER ungracious of the *Sunday Telegraph* to print an editorial criticism alongside an article by Canon Douglas Rhymes which it featured on its middle page on January 5th, a few days before the publication of the Canon's book, *No New Morality* (Constable, 12s. 6d.). But graciousness must take a secondary place when Christian morality is impugned. The *Sunday Telegraph* may be "independent of all groups"—as it boasts on its masthead—but it couldn't possibly allow such a "challenging view" (again its own words) even when expressed by an Anglican clergyman, to go unchallenged.

Not that Canon Rhymes of Southwark Cathedral would admit to impugning *Christian* morality. Like many another socially-progressive parson before him, he seeks to separate Christianity from Churchianity; to get back to the teachings—and the actions of Jesus. He believes—of course—that the Church got things wrong; that it followed Paul instead of Christ, especially in relation to sex, marriage and divorce. So the Church today perpetuates an authoritarian morality, whereas "Christ's standards of dealing with people contain little of law and much of love".

Superficially there is something in this case. The Seventh Chapter of the First Book of Corinthians has certainly influenced Christian history and Christian sexual morality. What the Canon fails to face up to is that much support for the Pauline attitude can be found in the Gospels. We need look no further than the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew, ch. 5) with its adultery in a lustful look and its prohibition of divorce, "saving for the cause of fornication". But this prohibition is repeated with the same reservations later in the same gospel (19, 9) and without any reservation in Luke (16, 18) and Mark (10, 11).

The Canon is aware of this. He knows that the Anglican marriage ceremony follows Jesus in its "whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder". But what do these words, and the preceding "the twain shall be one flesh", mean? Do they, he asks, "mean that when a form of marriage has been undertaken and certain sexual acts have taken place there exists a reality which cannot be broken? Or do they mean the reality of a relationship in which the twain are indeed one, and in that oneness are truly joined together by God?"

This, of course, is typical ecclesiastical evasiveness. It is clear from the context (Mark, ch. 10)—and how many times have Christians exhorted Freethinkers to heed the context of Biblical quotations!—that the Church was following Christ when it condemned divorce. It is not, as Canon Rhymes suggests, that something has "gone wrong" with the attitude of the Church to sexual morality. It was wrong from the start. It is no use looking to the Gospels, any more than to the Pauline Epistles, for a sensible attitude to sex. Indeed, the very birth and life of Jesus are a disparagement of normal sex, marriage and even family life.

Nor, surely, can the old "love and compassion" line be plugged effectively much longer. As an admirer of the

Bishop of Woolwich, Canon Rhymes might also be able to detect love where there isn't any—or even where there is hate. But what I have elsewhere called a "despite-all-appearances-coal-is white" attitude finds less and less support in the lay world.

The pity is that men like Dr. Robinson and Canon Rhymes are unable to break with the Church. That, instead, they have to perform mental gymnastics in order to reconcile their religious and their social views. The Canon, for instance, acknowledges that "the view of divorce held by the Church is not accepted by the great majority of the people", and that the blocking of the Abse Bill was "ethically doubtful in a secular society". He doesn't think it right "to bring pressure to bear on society to insist that a minority view of marriage should be reflected in the law of the land". He cannot believe that this could be the attitude that Christ would have us take.

Canon Rhymes, like Dr. Robinson, creates his own Christ—or borrows that of Paul Tillich. So we are told that the approach of Christ was to lead "young people to the deepest and most profound knowledge of themselves" by "revealing what they were capable of . . .". They should be trained, the Canon says, "in what Tillich calls 'a seeing love, a knowing love, a love that looks into the depth of our hearts'".

This, I suggest, has nothing whatever to do with Jesus Christ or with Christianity. But the fact that "we concern ourselves so much with the morality of pre-marital and extra-marital sex, but seldom raise seriously the question of sexual morality within marriage", has. The "rules" are, as the Canon says, "hard and fast". It is not surprising, therefore, that he should incur the wrath of the *Church Times* and the admonition of the *Sunday Telegraph*. He may protest that he is not undermining Christian morality—only the "wrong visual image" of it—but he is deluding himself. He is right in suggesting that Christians and Humanists can stand on "common moral ground", but that ground is Humanist, not Christian. It is, in fact, what we are slowly climbing to: a morality that is human and humane, that has no need for supernatural justification.

In so far as Canon Rhyme's efforts help towards this, they are to be acclaimed. As a defence of Christian morality they are a failure.

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Modernising Britain

By DAVID TRIBE

THE MAGIC FORMULAE, "God's in his heaven—All's right with the world!" and "You've never had it so good", have lost their power to charm. All Britain's political parties seem now committed to the slogan, "Modernise or fossilise". While there will undoubtedly be joy on earth over one saint that repenteth, Secularists would prefer a continuity of just men who need no repentance.

Belatedly official channels are recognising that our trains, roads, offices and factories, and even more our homes, schools, hospitals and prisons, are sadly out of date. The mother of the Industrial Revolution and, starting in her overseas colonies, the social revolution in civil liberties and welfare, has become a jaded granny.

Technological progress has been sporadic and piecemeal, illogical and often debased. Not only has a great gulf developed between the "two cultures", but internal consistency has been lacking within the technical field itself. Absence of overall planning has led to family vendettas between the twins of road and rail transport; transport and industrial development; earned and unearned (including capital gains, bequests, and football pools) income; regional and national planning; private (including public and denominational) and county schools; lower and higher education. Yet greater conflict has arisen between technical demands and social needs. As a nation we seem to seek accident and illness cure rather than prevention; increased numbers of cars, gadgets and drugs, than safety devices for and the control of side-effects in those we have; artificial fertilisers, than artificial family planning; nuclear scientists, than social scientists.

But if Britain is, for a great and well-established industrial community, technically backward, how much more retarded is she ideologically. Officially, the nation is Christian. Various members of the Trinity and the heavenly hosts send us proxy messages several times a day via press, radio, television, public ceremonies, school assemblies and the Bench of Bishops. Broadcasting and cinema programmes end, and operas and state functions begin with "God Save the Queen", though citizens have forgotten, if they ever knew, whether Her Majesty is to be saved from mortality, perdition, or republicanism. Unbelievers suffer civil disabilities. Argument builds upon argument against the central teachings of this Levantine mystery cult. Cambridge and South Bank ecclesiastics vie with each other in the range of their heresies. The official pretence that this is a Christian nation goes on. Whether true or not, Christianity is, we are told, what people need and want. The churches and Sunday schools empty, children giggle at school assembly, religious programmes are switched off radio and television, cinemagoers slip out side doors before and during the National Anthem. Still the official pretence goes on.

No longer have primitive superstitions the power to dominate whole nations. Some hearts may still be enthralled, but minds are breaking free. Even the faithful residue are dimly conscious that the reedy notes of psalms and prayers, hymns and collects (however "modernised" and retranslated) are passing up into an alien air inscribed by the vapour trails of jets and the slipstreams of satellites. Only in the humid atmosphere of social and political conformity do they vibrate in congenial surroundings. Here the admen and the holy men, the politicians and the theologians have so racked and crucified the meanings of words that ideas have fled in confusion, and only "Christ-

ian Whateveryoulikes" abound.

Convinced that truth and honesty are two of the highest ethical ideals, the National Secular Society makes no bones about declaring that the concepts of religion are incompatible with current knowledge and should be abandoned. We do so not in a spirit of sectarianism—"the sect that doesn't believe in God, you know". Religion is not just a set of incorrect propositions that can be adopted or discarded like a dressing-gown. It is an attitude to life, usually acquired by brainwashing, that often persists long after the formal propositions have been rejected.

We are told that this attitude is one of a search for truth and beauty, the love of man, generosity, tolerance and goodness. Certainly some followers of the religious life have demonstrated all these qualities. Religions have tended to become sociopolitical systems in which useful ethical ideas, derived more from philosophers than saints, have been incorporated. But these useful ethical ideas are part of the fabric of abiding human relations and have nothing to do with religion as such. The overwhelming majority of ancient and modern religions of which we have any reliable knowledge share the following concepts, which many contemporary apologists would tend to gloss over: (1) man's relationship to the universe is one of sharing the same creator; (2) man gains control over those aspects of the universe essential to his well-being, not by observation and experimentation, but by directing supplication to their creator; (3) man's relationship to man derives from the fatherhood of god(s); (4) man's prime responsibility is thus to god(s), through prayer, worship and ritual, and not to man through ethics; (5) as this relationship and responsibility to god(s) would be pointless if temporal, so man must have an eternal destiny in another form; (6) this world must be as the creator wanted it to be or he would have made it otherwise; (7) suffering, social, racial, sexual and political inequality must therefore be accepted, even if their role be imperfectly understood; (8) as all ethics and natural law springs from god(s), so they have absolute validity; (9) social stability is preserved by recognising that all ethical and political injunctions pass authoritatively from god(s) to divinely appointed kings and priests, who must rule by lineage and authoritarianism and not by the fallible fashions of democracy; (10) critics of this arrangement are clearly both wrong and malevolent, and to be removed from circulation. Modern religions like current Christianity have, of course, been modified in the light of secular criticisms; but if we look carefully at the official structure of Christian Britain today, we will see elements of all the above presuppositions.

A modernised Britain has no room for such mischievous beliefs. If the National Anthem—*calling on a figment of the imagination to save a political anachronism*—is nothing but a piece of monumental silliness, other social, cultural, political and ethical consequences are far more pernicious. The scientific spirit must replace the Holy Spirit not only in the field of technology, but in those of politics, economics, aesthetics and ethics.

In what ideological framework is this scientific progress to develop, so that we give men hope, contentment, psychological satisfaction and inspiration, as well as washing-machines? Not in the Christian ethic, even shorn of its supernatural bribery and blackmail. Here the greatest virtue is submission, and the greatest vice irregular sex-

(Concluded on page 20)

This Believing World

The Vatican Publicity Association has been working overtime, as have our own newspapers who made the Pope's visit to Palestine front-page news. The radio and TV also gave it priority. We saw the places where "our Lord" wandered during his sojourn on earth. Or, at least the "traditionally accepted" places; the places where it is thought or said that he visited. But, as some writers have told us, pilgrims through the centuries have hallowed these spots, whether or not they are authentic.

★

On BBC TV on January 3rd, there was a profile of Pope Paul, in which we were given a good account of his life. We also heard him give a speech in English, though being a pope does not necessarily carry with it the gift of tongues, and he was hard to understand at times. No doubt, it was a plea for unity with the Vatican in full charge.

★

It was only to be expected that the eagle eye of Mr. Barbanell, the editor of *Psychic News* spotted the letter of Mr. Yeulett in these columns, who—though a Communist—has been completely converted to Spiritualism, and who wants to know how can we explain his conversion? Well, the simplest way would be to arrange (as we have suggested) for us to meet him with his medium and see what happens. But we do note that Mr. Barbanell seems rather uncertain about the outcome. Whether the medium succeeds or fails, he argues, it cannot make any difference to "the six evidential facts that Yeulett received".

★

Let us here give one fact that neither Mr. Barbanell nor Mr. Yeulett nor the medium will discover. For two years or so, the Goya portrait of the Duke of Wellington has been hidden and not a solitary medium in the world has found out where. Let Mr. Barbanell, Mr. Yeulett, and the medium, tell us where it is through a "spirit guide". If Uncle George or Aunt Martha can be brought up from the mighty deep of Spiritland, and his well known "albert" or her massive Victorian brooch described in evidence, why cannot we be told where the portrait is?

★

The Bishop of Woolwich who is "rejected and despised" by so many of his brothers in Christ has finally discovered the grand secret of the Resurrection which he discussed in detail in the *Sunday Mirror* for December 29th, 1963. He took about four columns to prove that after all, the greatest historical event in history depends on "faith". We wonder if he is aware that about one hundred years ago, Dean Alford, a great authority on the Gospels, found it was often easier to fall back on "faith" rather than on "fact". The notes to his famous edition of the Greek Gospels prove this.

★

For Dr. Robinson "faith" in the living Christ proves that he *must* have risen after being put to death. The empty tomb and the angels sitting in it may not be historical fact, but thank God the Resurrection is true for all Christians who have "faith" these days, just as it was for earlier ones.

★

On January 6th, "Peterborough" in the *Daily Telegraph* reported a curious agency message from Jerusalem, viz.: "It was like a scene out of the Old Testament—14 Bedouins listening to a broadcast of the procession on a transistor radio".

Bang! Bang! Bang!

WHENEVER THE PRIEST tried to sit down, he found that the bus went off BANG. Of course this was not the conductor's story. The conductor said that whenever the priest tried to sit down, the priest went off BANG. Passengers took sides in the argument, which was very unpleasant. Finally, the conductor ruled that it did not matter whether it was the bus or the priest who went off BANG. In either case, the important thing was that the priest must remain standing.

The priest thought this was terribly unfair. He wanted to sit down. Some of the passengers agreed that he should be allowed the common comfort, and others cried out that on no account should there be any risk of any more BANGS.

One gentleman who was present announced that he was from the Home Office, but he could offer no solution. The priest himself suggested that if everyone cried out BANG loudly and then he sat down quickly, it might be all right. But many passengers were unwilling to co-operate in this experiment in camouflage.

The conductor began to brood, and he said the whole thing was unheard of. Anyway, no one heard the BANG again after the priest got off the bus.

The next time such a thing happened—to a nun whose teeth seemed very large and unused—it was only a question of . . . bang! bang! bang!

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

Papal Curse

Perhaps your readers will be interested in the following extract from *The Diseases of Occupations*, by Donald Hunter, MD, published by English Universities Press Ltd., London, in 1955. On page 13 will be found the following: "The manufacture of alum was first established in England by Sir Thomas Chaloner who when travelling in Italy was struck by the resemblance of the soil about the Papal alum works at Tolfa to the soil of Guisborough in England. About 1600 he bribed some of the Pope's workmen to enter his service and he smuggled them out of Italy hidden in barrels on board his ship. For this he was solemnly cursed by the Pope. The curse was made in the name of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in the name of the Virgin Mary, in the name of the angels and archangels, of cherubim and seraphim, of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, evangelists and saints. He was cursed in the house, in the church, in the field, in the highway, in the path, in the wood, in the water, in living, in dying, in eating, in drinking, in hunger, in thirst, in fasting, in sleep, in walking, in standing, in sitting, in lying, in working, in resting, in the hair of his head, in his brains, in his temples, in his ears, in his eyebrows, in his eyes, in his cheeks, in his jaws, in his teeth, in his lips, in his throat, in his breast, in his heart, in his fingers, in his hips, in his knees, in his legs, in his feet and in his toe-nails. But despite papal denunciation the manufacture extended considerably and the method continued unchanged until the middle of the nineteenth century".

A. E. QUINN.

MODERNISING BRITAIN

(Concluded from page 19)

uality. But in Secular Humanism. In the new outlook and the New Morality of Secular Humanism, men do not become irresponsible libertines, but enter a sphere of responsibility and dedication to a cause which can command the full allegiance of both reason and emotions. Freed of superstition, guilt-complexes, humbug and sectarianism, mankind can tread the path of evolution, neither spattered with the blood of "nature red in tooth and claw" nor looking back at alleged historico-redemptive acts, but looking forward to species co-operation transcending the barriers of race, colour, nationality and creed in a spirit of tolerance, generosity, friendliness, understanding and peace.

THE FREETHINKER

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

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North London Branch NSS (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY.

Nottingham Branch NSS (Old Market Square), every Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Tuesday, January 21st, 7.30 p.m.: WILFRED RISDON, "Some Problems of Health".

Esher, Surrey (Friend's Meeting House), Monday, January 20th, 8 p.m.: DEBATE, "The Existence of God". J. A. MILLAR and a Roman Catholic priest.

Hornchurch and Romford Humanist Society (Harold Wood Social Centre, Gubbins Lane), Tuesday, January 21st, 8 p.m.: CLIVE LORD, "A Fresh Look at Humanism".

Iford Humanist Society (Wanstead Community Centre, The Green, Wanstead), Saturday, January 18th, 7.30 p.m.: SOCIAL EVENING. Admission 2s. 6d.

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, January 19th, 6.30 p.m.: B. HOLLIDAY, "Some Impressions of the USSR".

Marble Arch Branch NSS (The Carpenter's Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1), Sunday, January 19th, 7.30 p.m.: S. D. KUEBART, "Pope Pius XII and the Nazis".

Shirley, Surrey (John Ruskin School), Friday, January 17th, 8 p.m.: J. A. MILLAR, "Secrets of the Supernatural".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, January 19th, 11 a.m.: KATHLEEN NOTT, "What is a Humanist?".

Woodford Green (Ray Lodge Congregational Church, Snakes Lane), Sunday, January 19th, 7.45 p.m.: J. W. BARKER, "Why I Am Opposed to Religion".

Notes and News

WE WONDER if this is the first issue of THE FREETHINKER to contain separate articles by a brother and sister. G. L. Simons is, of course, well known to readers. This week, 15-year-old Sheila Simons joins him as a welcome contributor to our paper. Recently, her brother tells us, Sheila was arguing with a religious schoolmate when she was overheard by her divinity teacher. On being questioned about her views, Mr. Simons said, "my sister complained that the atheist case was never presented in religious lessons, whereupon the teacher, probably thinking she would refuse, invited Sheila to give a lecture on atheism. She accepted and, with a little help from me, prepared a talk which she subsequently delivered. It lasted over half-an-hour and from all accounts went down extremely well."

"IF THE Pope ever hoped to visit the Holy Places as a simple pilgrim", Patrick O'Donovan wrote in *The Observer* (5/1/64), "publicity and national pride have made it impossible. If the Pope, in fact, ever intended his trip to be the "humble pilgrimage" that he spoke of, he went the wrong way about it from the start. If he had really wanted, presumably the arrangements could have been made quickly and quietly with a special request to King Hussein of Jordan and the President of Israel, that there should be as little fuss and publicity as possible. Instead, everything from the first carefully-timed announcement at the closing session of the Vatican Council has ensured the utmost publicity.

★

BRITISH CATHOLICS can have no cause for complaint at the newspaper and broadcasting coverage of the Pope's trip. These were lavish with their space and time, respectively, the BBC calling on Father Agnellus Andrew (special interpreter of papal ceremonies) to report at length during news bulletins. No mere news announcer for such an occasion! On Panorama, though, the matter was placed in the sure, safe hands of Richard Dimbleby.

★

NO PAPER did better than the *Sunday Telegraph*, which informed its readers on January 5th that, by what it modestly called "a remarkable feat of organisation and planning", the following week they would receive a special supplement, "a unique record in colour of the Pope's trip". The *Sunday Telegraph's* own team of photographers had combined with that of the *Daily Telegraph* to produce "a 20-page pictorial narrative of the three-day pilgrimage which is being talked about all over the Christian world". The *Sunday Telegraph* had at least three "special" correspondents covering the story: Anthony Mann and Guy Rais in Jerusalem, and Richard Buston in Amman, in addition to Douglas Brown, who set the scene with a preliminary report from Galilee. Whether the more mundane-sounding "own" correspondent from Jerusalem was either Mr. Mann or Mr. Rais, or a third man, we can't say.

★

MICHAEL WALL in *The Guardian* (7/1/64) shared Mr. Ridley's view of the real motive behind the Pope's trip. "It is hard not to believe", Mr. Wall wrote, "that the Pope's pilgrimage was wholly designed to bring about this meeting with the Patriarch [of the Eastern Orthodox Church], and that the inspiration which initiated it also came to Pope John, who deeply longed to bring together his own Church and the Orthodox".

★

ON SUNDAY, January 5th, the Churches of Port Talbot, the steel-strike town, called for a day of penitence. "Perhaps there are men in Port Talbot who should be penitent", the *Daily Herald* commented (6/1/64), "but they can do more good round the conference table than in chapel".

★

IN A small ad for a shorthand typist, a Sheffield refractories company asked applicants to state their age, salary required, and religion. The last, the chairman and managing director, Mr. Gilbert Hinckley, told the *Sheffield Star* (3/1/64) "may have got in by mistake". But, he said, "it's the kind of information that is useful to have in black and white to help assess a person's character". Asked if an Atheist would stand as much chance of getting the job as a Methodist, Anglican or Catholic, Mr. Hinckley replied that he didn't think atheism really existed. He himself was a Good Companion, "the finest religion of all".

Psychical Research and Secularism

By G. L. SIMONS

FOR THE SECULARIST, psychical research has an unfortunate image; it is thought to be associated in some way with supernaturalism. It seems to demand souls or spirits and a non-physical reality, and appears to be hostile to the straightforward scientific view of things. I think, however, that this view is not an accurate one, and depends partly upon a logical confusion, partly upon a too narrow view of science. I will not argue that telepathy, for example, is a fact I will merely suggest that if it is, then the agnostic/atheist view of reality is not harmed at all.

It is characteristic of experiments in telepathy (and the other related activities—clairvoyance, precognition, telekinesis, etc.) that they are carried out in a purely empirical fashion: cards are used with shapes or colours or numbers on them. Subjects are asked to make predictions which are visually tested. At no time does the procedure (if it is legitimate) stray outside the limits imposed by scientific method. At their most basic level the experiments depend upon the investigation of sensory impressions (the basis of all science) of subject and scientist. At no stage does a mystical or supernatural element occur, unless capriciously introduced to provide an "explanation" (in the same way that "possession by devils" explains mental disease).

The nature of this approach is quite different from the conventional way in which the soul is regarded. The soul is "spiritual". If it is made of a substance, as Descartes thought, it is not a substance in the scientific sense; it cannot be investigated in the orthodox scientific manner. Even to attempt to do so, we are told, involves a misunderstanding of its true nature. We are simply to accept that each person has an immortal soul, and not to demand empirical evidence. Indeed, for believers in a soul this view is quite intelligible. If the soul could be examined in a test-tube or under a microscope—if it was merely a (rarefied) physical organ, it would undoubtedly lose some status. Its very obscurity and remoteness are the grounds of its appeal.

Hence it is apparent that on the one hand telepathy, etc., and on the other hand souls and gods and suchlike are entirely different in a logical sense. The believers in telepathy claim that it can be reasonably investigated in an empirical fashion; the believers in souls (and what not) would be horrified in the suggestion that their beliefs be similarly examined. Telepathy stands or falls according to its ability to satisfy the criteria provided by scientific method, e.g. observation, testimony, statistics. But the believer in a soul or a god has no time for scientific method; gods and souls, he maintains are "outside" science and must be believed in for other reasons.

Thus the study of telepathy can rightly belong to science; to this extent it is not supernatural, but empirical in an orthodox sense. (Many psychical research groups are so based—perhaps it is significant that to date their results appear to be negative.) Scientific method does not have to be modified to examine the truth of telepathy. Rhine and his colleagues at Duke University (from whom we seem to hear very little nowadays) would be the first to admit this. Some secularists are confused in not distinguishing carefully enough between the relative permanence of the tenets of scientific method, and the scientific truths which this method reveals. The body of knowledge derived from scientific investigation is continually being enlarged. But the principles whereby this knowledge is accumulated on the whole remain unchanged.

I believe it possible to investigate reality using science, but at no stage should it be assumed that reality is delimited in a restrictive way. This is the error of both the crude materialist and the metaphysician. Science should be entirely free to examine all phenomena or alleged phenomena. If telepathy is grounded in fact then science is quite capable of studying it and enlarging the body of human knowledge. Indeed, the researches of modern physics indicate that matter is highly complex and that physical law is not the clear, inevitable thing that was thought in the nineteenth century. It may even be preferable to talk of "natural" law instead of "physical" law, since the latter has a too materialistic connotation.

Hence the scientist should welcome all scientific research, even when it invades fields which involve his emotions. It is this open-mindedness that gives the secularist his superiority over his less secular friends; it is sad when there is an emotional outburst from some secular source against a researcher in a mysterious field. The secularist has science on his side. If the truth of a proposition can be rationally established then the secularist is committed to believing it. His terms of reference admit no other possibility. The implications of this are broad. It is at least a logical possibility that someday there will be an empirical demonstration of some of the "truths" of religion. The secularist should always be open to persuasion if such a case can be rationally presented.

The indifference of telepathy to an inverse square law (i.e. the suggested success of experiments independent of distance) causes some secularists concern. But they need not worry. It is the strength of science that it is self-correcting. Basic notions have been revised before; doubtless they will be again. The important thing is to preserve the essence of scientific enquiry. If it is necessary in the light of new knowledge that conventional concepts have to be modified or even abandoned, the secularist, unlike the religious believer, is in a position to do this. His philosophy allows it without being self-defeating, and in this lies its strength.

Telepathy and associated activities may or may not be true, but the secularist should not hope that they are false. They do not threaten his position. If such things are true they will be shown to be so by science. If research involves rethinking our concept of reality, so much the better—this is part of the excitement of intellectual enquiry.

LONDON INDOOR MEETINGS

R. J. SPROULE, the new Hon. Secretary of Marble Arch Branch of the National Secular Society is, we note, maintaining the high standard of the indoor lectures at the Carpenter's Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1. The syllabus for the second half of the winter season, which opened last Sunday with Martin Ennals of the National Council for Civil Liberties, includes such varied speakers as Alan Bush (on "Music and Religion"), Hector Hawton (on "The Humanist Revolution") and Canon J. D. Pearce-Higgins, Vice-Provost of Southwark (on "The Evidence for Survival after Death"). On February 16th, the Branch will celebrate its hundredth Sunday evening lecture with a special meeting in aid of the NSS Benevolent Fund, when the speaker will be Dr. Ronald Fletcher. At the closing meeting on March 22nd, D. H. Tribe, President of the Society, will be "Looking Ahead".

What I Believe

By SHEILA SIMONS

I AM fifteen years old, and for the past eleven years, I have attended morning assemblies at school, recited the Lord's Prayer and gone to Sunday school and occasionally to church as part of an understood routine. All the time I was told how all-merciful and kind God was and how he loved each one of us. This I accepted until I began to be conscious of the world around me.

From that time I began to find it impossible to believe in an all-loving God who allowed war, floods, earthquakes and all types of disasters in a world he is supposed to have created. People say that man is responsible for much of the misery and, although this is true in many cases, why does not God intervene and help us? Children die of hunger and from disease, and are left orphans by war. Are they somehow overlooked by this great creator whose supposedly only son once said, "Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven".

I was also told that I must be meek and humble but I find these qualities undesirable in human beings. When I look back and see what man has achieved I realise that he is not a creature to prostrate himself before an imaginary being, and to crawl through life, afraid and worried in case he will not qualify for heaven.

I believe that all gods of all peoples were invented because of fear born of ignorance. It is well-known that early man worshipped the sun and moon and rain—things he did not understand. Science banished his fears and with them went the numerous gods. Around these ancient gods fantastic stories were built, but these are now only regarded as legends. Is our god so different from theirs? We do not believe in the Greek and Roman gods which were mere personifications of certain qualities or unexplainable phenomena. Why should we believe in ours? Christ who was seemingly so perfect that people began to worship him?

Religion belongs to an era of ignorance and as we enter a new scientific age there is no room for ancient ceremony that binds individuals and influences the laws of society. We do not need someone on whom to rest responsibility and to run to with problems, for although people can claim to have been guided by God, their decisions are made unconsciously by themselves.

If there is but one god why are there so many religions in the world? We do not believe in other religions so why believe in ours? Christianity has stolen attributes of other religions and has woven them into the story. How many people know that many other religions claim their founders were born of virgins, that Buddha is supposed to have walked on the water, that Christmas was a pagan festival and that Easter was named after a god of the Norse-men, Eåstre?

What man has accomplished is to no-one's credit but his own. Indeed, if one looks back in history, religion has always been a reactionary force in many disputes. Even today religion opposes change and in the most religious countries poverty is widespread. Some wars were caused by religion, and extreme cruelty has been practised by religious believers.

People still cling to the skirts of the fastly disappearing nurse-maid who is no longer needed in this new age, but the children who are growing up now have no desire for religion and soon, I believe, it will disappear and no longer stand in the way of progress.

Christian Unity and Disunity

IN THE *Daily Herald* on January 7th, Anthony Carthew described the "scene at the Manger" in Bethlehem the previous day, when Pope Paul VI made his "historic plea for Christian unity". It was, Mr. Carthew said, a glittering morning as the Pope walked through a flurry of clerics to the Church of the Nativity and beamed when he saw the odd little building with its jumbled stones of half a dozen architectures, and its tiny entrance which is not much more than a hole in the wall.

He went straight to the grotto where the manger is and prayed before the crib.

Then, standing before the manger, Paul read a speech, eloquent in its hopes for the unity of the Church and a coming-together of all the divided sects.

He said: "We must pursue our Ecumenical Council to its conclusion. We must give to the Church's life new attitudes of mind, new aims and new standards of conduct so as to endow it with every form of spiritual beauty—in thought word and prayer, in our methods of education, art and law.

"It is now clear to everyone that the problem of unity cannot be put on one side. Today the will of Christ is pressing upon us and obliging us to do all we can, with love and wisdom, to bring all Christians the supreme blessing and honour of a united Church.

"The door of the fold is open. Our desire is strong and patient. There is room for all."

It is ironic that Paul should make this plea for unity in the very place on this pilgrimage which, as Mr. Carthew pointed out, shows just how divided Christendom is.

Its holy grotto is divided, the Greek Orthodox Church possessing the exact spot of Christ's birth, which is marked with a twelve-pointed star, and the Roman Catholics having the manger in the rock.

Even the entrances to the church are segregated, and a member of the one sect is not allowed to walk through a door belonging to another sect.

I had personal experience of this saddening disunity today, Mr. Carthew said, when just after dawn I went into the church to listen to an Armenian Mass. A high priest in purple, his hair hanging shoulder-length in page-boy style, chanted the strange, wailing words of the Mass. In mid-Mass the North door of the church—the Armenian door—opened and a Catholic priest in vestments came through. He was one of the Vatican pilgrims and a stranger to Bethlehem.

The Armenian priest spotted him from the corner of his eye, threw down his prayer book on the altar, and sprang like a purple fury towards the Catholic.

The Armenian had actually jumped on the Catholic's back and was trying to tear his vestments when a Greek Orthodox gentleman separated them.

Just an hour later Pope Paul was saying in this same church: "We salute with great reverence and affection the illustrious and venerated heads of the other churches here present, and we express to them our desire for understanding in the faith, charity and discipline of the one Church of Christ."

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CORRESPONDENCE

SPIRITUALISM

Please forgive my delay in answering your challenging letter re Jessie Mason's mediumship (THE FREETHINKER, 27/12/63), the truth of the matter being that I can only obtain your paper when circumstances will permit. As you must understand, I cannot promise anything, but will certainly show your article to Jessie Mason, and leave the matter with her. In any case she usually demonstrates clairvoyance at the Co-operative Hall on Wednesday evenings, at 8 p.m., at Rye Lane, Peckham, S.E.15, in public, so why not go and see (and judge) her for yourself? For my part, I cannot accept your innuendoes that everything was not above board, and that the lady in question was snooping on me. What justification have you for implying this? In my letter to you I related facts. What would you consider as evidence? It was your proud boast that you sought truth, and yet when truthful facts are preserved for consideration, they are glossed over, and dismissed as unconvincing.

D. YEULETT.

[Mr. Yeulett knows our terms. The next step is up to him—and Mrs. Mason. After all, it is he who is trying to convince us that she is a clairvoyant.—ED.]

TRAGEDY

"But surely the highest form of literature is always tragic," says R. Smith in his article, "Leibniz, Pope and Goethe" (January, 1st, 1964). Why "surely"? Because Schopenhauer or another of Mr. Smith's pessimistic heroes says so; or merely because every human being has to die? Whatever the reason for Mr. Smith's remark, he would be hard put to defend it convincingly. He would have to start with a consideration of "highest" in relation to the arts, and that should take him quite a while. For my own part I should question an assessment that devalues Goethe as Mr. Smith's does.

ROGER BASSETT.

WHAT IS GOD?

If Mr. G. L. Simons (2/8/63) had consulted a modern manual of critical biblical scholarship, such as *Dictionary of the Bible*, by F. C. Grant and H. H. Rowley (1963), he would have been at once straightened out as to its meaning: "It is the custom to use a capital G for God of the Jewish-Christian tradition, and a small letter for the others" (p. 333), and on the next page he would have learned that "the God" (*ha-elohim* and *ho theos* of the originals) refers to the West Semitic god Yahweh of Jesus and of Israel (see also *Hebrew Religion*, by Oesterley and Robinson, end paragraph).

There is no other meaning for the Christian. "Jahweh's (Jehovah's) Witnesses" is a genuine name for all genuine Christians, shouting "hallelu-Yah".

The arch-heretics—Marcion in the 2nd and the Bishop of Woolwich in the 20th century—try to put their own fancies into "the God", but those are intellectual forgeries.

Freethinkers need not bother about these forgeries. They should stick to the basic proposition of reminding forgetful or ignorant Christians of their foremost biblical scholars' authoritative statement as to the only authentic meaning of "God" in the (original) Bible, and that no one is Christian who does not believe in Yahweh and Co.

If anyone persists believing in "a god God beyond all gods" he is muddled up semantically, but he is definitely no Christian, i.e., no follower of the anointed (demi-god) of Yahweh.

GREGORY S. SMELTERS (Australia).

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OBITUARY

It is with deep grief that we of the North London Branch of the National Secular Society have to announce the death of Frank Murrill on January 2nd. He came to us as a youth in 1940, and the simple philosophy of Ingersoll became the lodestone of his life: "The place to be happy is here; the time to be happy is now; and the way to be happy is to make others happy".

He hated injustice and cruelty and worked hard for the cause he loved. He would not wish that we should mourn for him, but who can help it? We have lost a true friend and helper.

"Little Frankie" was endowed by nature in generous measure with the gifts of kindness, humour, loyalty and courage. He will be missed for a very long time by his many friends at Marble Arch and in the Freethought movement.

LEN AND EVA EBURY.

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