

The Freethinker

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IN ROME prior to the Christian era perhaps the most ancient religious cult was that of Janus, the two-headed god of time, and traditional guardian of the city from its foundation, usually dated from the year 754 BC. Janus, after whom the first month in our year is named, appears in the annals of the Pagan mythology to have fulfilled simultaneously these two principal functions. In the first capacity he was depicted as two-faced, with one face turned towards the future whilst the other was turned towards the past; but in his other function as the celestial guardian of Rome, Janus carried the keys of the Eternal City. This dual cult was, we repeat, in existence long prior to the Christian era; Janus Claviger (the bearer of the keys), was one of the oldest Roman Gods.

The Christian Key Bearer

In his well-known book, *The Evolution of the Idea of God*, Grant Allen aptly defined Christianity as a mausoleum of dead religions, for its theology represents a veritable museum taken from the Pagan faiths of antiquity. One of the more obvious, as well as striking of these loans made by Christianity from its chronologically Pagan predecessors, was the spectacular transformation of the Roman local god Janus into the first Christian pope St Peter, the traditional Prince of the Apostles and founder of the Papacy. For Peter, like his Pagan prototype Janus, is primarily a claviger (key bearer), and has inherited not only the keys of Rome, but the still more exalted keys of Heaven and Hell. As stated in the Gospel text, "Whatever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven."

It is solely in virtue of this apostolic commission that (so the ecclesiastical tradition runs) Peter became the first pope and as such, exercised supreme jurisdiction over the universal Church, a supreme and infallible status that he has bequeathed to his successors. It is again solely by virtue of this commission of Christ to Peter that the present Pope, Paul VI, nineteen centuries after Peter's traditional arrival in Rome, still exercises the same universal hegemony over the city and the world. Once take away from the Vatican where Peter is traditionally buried "the power of the keys" (cf. Matthew 16, 19) and the Papacy as world history recognises it, would automatically cease to exist.

Mr Facing-Both-Ways

Today it would appear that the Papacy has also inherited the other principal characteristic of its Pagan prototype. Janus the divine key bearer was also the two-faced god of time, confronting simultaneously the future and the past. In a metaphysical sense at least, the present papal representative, Paul VI may be said to be doing just that in his recent announcement of the prospective canonisation of his two immediate predecessors, Pope Pius XII (1939-58) and John XXIII (1958-63). For not only in their personal characters and social antecedents (Pius was a Roman aristocrat whilst John was of humble peasant origin), but

even more fundamentally in their respective papal roles and mental outlooks these two Popes were about as diametrically opposed as any two could be within the common tradition of the Papacy.

Pius was the ultra-Conservative pro-Fascist Pope who (as Cardinal Pacelli) in 1929 signed the notorious Lateran Treaty with Mussolini, and later collaborated with Hitler and turned a blandly incomprehending ear to the appalling crime of genocide systematically applied by his Nazi allies in their concentration camps and gas chambers. Pius XII was, to paraphrase Lord Macaulay, the hope of the stern and unbending "Tories," the mediocally-minded traditionalists in the Roman Curia. It can, we

imagine, to be taken for granted that had the Pacelli regime still been in existence under either Pius himself or a like-minded successor, the present Vatican Council would never have been held and the present ecclesiastical New Deal and New Look would never have been heard of.

These, like the Vatican Council itself, were the work of Pope John XXIII, who seems to have met with bitter opposition from the entourages of his predecessor and from traditionalists like Cardinal Ottaviani in the Roman Curia, when he announced his original programme of reform to be implemented by the Second Vatican Council.

From the above facts, it is surely clear that the two Popes now apparently due for canonisation stood at mutually opposing poles of the ecclesiastical universe: Pius as the most die-hard of traditionalists in every sphere; John as the most liberal pope and comprehensive ecclesiastical reformer in the modern annals of Papacy. Yet the career-diplomatist, Montini (Paul VI) is apparently about to raise both Popes simultaneously to the celestial hierarchy; no doubt in conformity with the evangelical injunction to combine the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove.

Rival Parties and Popes

Too many critics of the Church of Rome tend to take at their face value the grandiose claims to undeviating consistency and to monolithic uniformity that a certain type of Catholic apologist is so prone to assert. In actuality, of course, like every other organisation, Rome has always had contending factions and rival ideologies contending for supremacy. There have been many such internal conflicts in the course of the long evolutions of the Vatican. Conspicuous examples which come to mind are the long and bitter struggles that marked both the Councils of Trent (mid-16th century) and the First Vatican Council in 1869-70 (over in particular the then novel dogma of papal infallibility). As one of the most acute of recent critical students of modern Catholicism, Leo. H. Lehmann, himself an ex-priest, has commented: there have always been two rival parties in the Church of Rome, what we may perhaps call generically the conservative, and the liberal; standing respectively for the intransigent conservatism combined with a totalitarian attitude towards the secular world (ecclesiastical Fascism—the original type) and a

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

The Pope With Two Faces

By F. A. RIDLEY

readiness to move with the times and to compromise with the outside world.

These opposing points of view have often struggled bitterly at general councils and at papal conclaves, where liberal popes like Benedict XIV (to whom Voltaire dedicated a play) and Leo XIII alternated with die-hard reactionaries like the three ineffable Piuses—X, XI, XII. But it may be reasonably doubted whether there has ever been such a bitter and far-reaching conflict within the Church as has been raging at the Vatican ever since the accession of Pope John and his decision to recall the Vatican Council.

Let us be clear about this matter. Both Pacelli and Roncalli as the successive rulers of the greatest and most ubiquitous totalitarian power in recorded human annals were united in their determination to maintain and to augment the world-power of Rome. Upon that score there will be no real disagreement between these two prospective saints when they enter Heaven! But when we turn from ends to means, from strategy to tactics, their *terrestrial* policies were sharply dissimilar. For whilst Pius pursued an ultra-traditionalist policy, allying the before his election, which he probably owed to that fact),

Church with the *ancien regime* and the Fascist counter-revolution (he was the German expert of the Vatican Pope John recognised the current force of the winds of change as irresistible, and went to hitherto unheard of lengths at Rome in order to compromise with them.

As and when viewed in the perspectives of world-history, both these Popes sought to save and to strengthen their Church, but by sharply opposing strategy and tactics. If, in the phraseology of Dialectical Materialism, Pius was the "thesis", John represented his "anti-thesis". Now apparently their successor, the ex-diplomat Montini, is to effect the resulting "synthesis" by canonising both Popes simultaneously.

So far there have been comparatively few papal saints, no doubt due to the fact that the average pope is an administrator and man of affairs (and as such congenial to the Roman bureaucracy) rather than one conspicuous for learning and/or sanctity. Actually, the best popes *qua* popes, very rarely become saints; this distinction is reserved for bigoted morons like Pius X (1903-14), who was canonised recently. So Pius and John are not likely to meet many of their predecessors in the ranks of the heavenly hierarchy.

Christianity: Early Derivations and Future Intentions

By GILLIAN HAWTIN

THE earliest Christian churches (to use a small "c" for separated isolated communities), or the early Christian Church (if you prefer a big "C"), arose within the cradle of the *pax Romana* of the highly developed civilisation of the Empire of the Caesars. Though this was barbarous and oppressive in many ways, it should not be forgotten how high were its achievements in others; not only in material forms, such as architecture, but, for example, in legal organisation and administration. The Roman Empire fostered civic virtue; and when the small, secret Christian communities emerged from the catacombs it was by making use of the external apparatus of the Roman Empire that it at last began to make rapid headway.

You may believe, of course, that God prepared the Roman Empire as the vehicle to launch Christianity on Mediterranean civilisation and, hence, the world. After reading Gibbon you probably will not. Again, you may argue that government and the lamp of learning were preserved by the Church during the Middle Ages. After reading Coulton you probably will not. You may, instead, ask why, when the Church was perhaps most powerful, these ages were dubbed by a term to denote that they were intermediate between the enlightenment of the thirteen hundred years that Roman civilisation flourished, and the rebirth of the 13th century! On closer examination, highly developed institutions of the former were warped by the Church, during those "Middle" ages to an extent from which they have hardly yet recovered.

When Europe found out its tricks, the Churches had to look to "fresh woods and pastures new", and found them in the mission fields. They used, for the purpose of their evangelisation, schools and hospitals. This enabled them to pose as the patrons of learning and as the charitable doers of corporal works of mercy — in effect, they seized the minds of the young before they had developed, and

played on the fears of the dying in their dotage. From these so-called "social functions", a withdrawal — or, at least, a drastic modification of their activities — was forced upon them. The world had found them out. Science, rather than hocus-pocus, was seen to be the best available providence to man. Inductive thinking took the place of deductive logic, and objective observation of the realities of the universe replaced revelation.

The resultant breakaway from authority caused the Church to rent its garments, and lament that the people rushed vainly after every new idea, instead of bowing in obedience to Holy Church. Heresy was the fault of the individual and schism the fault of the new national churches. The attempt to cling to Christianity and adapt it to the changing views of the world around us, is not as new as the Bishop of Woolwich, or *Objections to Roman Catholicism*. Then once more the Church cast her arms abroad "for agony and loss". For only if one believes in a central teaching Authority (and here we insist on a big "A"), is it considered so very wicked to embrace even, perhaps, secular ends, and only if one believes in a central deposit of Christian truth, can such churches be considered to depart widely from some such norm.

Nevertheless, modern culture and society are striving more and more to be rooted in valid economic, sociological and scientific observation. Truth is seen to be relative within a general ambit of ignorance. In this climate, the Churches have been forced back from totalitarian assertion to a fresh wooing of the people. If they have become "voluntary associations" (i.e. non-necessary societies within society — to use the terms of Catholic sociology), it is not because they are essentially any more liberal, or changed in nature. They have not abandoned their claims. This is merely their contemporary, and (they hope) temporary

(Concluded on page 423)

On the Track of What?

By DAVID TRIBE

IN *The Puppeteers*, "an examination of those organisations and bodies concerned with the elimination of the white man in Africa", Harold Soref and Ian Greig mentioned a number of what they saw as dangerous Left-Wing organisations sharing "a large house in Prince of Wales Terrace, Kensington". Another has recently come to join them. It promises to be equally dangerous.

TRACK has four aims: "(1) To create an open and responsible approach to the possibilities of television and radio; (2) To stimulate informed exchanges among broadcasters and the public, and so raise standards of criticism on both sides; (3) To define the freedoms of broadcasters and to oppose any pressure which reduces them; (4) To examine new developments in broadcasting (e.g. local radio, the fourth channel) and to advocate forms of broadcasting which reflect the spirit of the above aims."

A press release states: "A body such as TRACK was first publicly proposed in a letter to the *Guardian* in July, signed by five TV writers. It dealt with dangers to British broadcasting from ill-informed and illiberal pressure groups. Assistance was offered by the British Humanist Association, which had itself been concerned about increasing pressures on broadcasting. This offer was accepted without prejudice to TRACK's independence; the committee has a broad representation of political and religious commitments, and includes two Roman Catholics." In fact, the Chairman told the launching press conference with a jolly friar grin that he was "a practising Roman Catholic with seven children".

The Chairman is Mr Roy Shaw, Director of Adult Education at Keele University; the Secretary, Tom Vernon, press officer of the British Humanist Association; and Treasurer, Alan Brownjohn, lecturer and writer, and Treasurer of the old Viewers' and Listeners' Association, whose name was borrowed — without permission — by Mrs Mary Whitehouse's supporters. The executive committee also includes teachers, critics, scriptwriters, and Professor Richard Hoggart and Mr Stuart Hall of the University of Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. There is an Advisory Council of more critics and writers, trades unionists and MPs, composers and lecturers. There are standing committees and sub-committees on specific topics, and a category of nineteen founder-members, each of whom has contributed £5. One of the first national organisations to draw attention to the inherent dangers in the new Viewers' and Listeners' Association and point out the order of priorities in "disbelief, doubt and dirt", the National Secular Society, was not advised that this complex organisation was in process of being set up. Now that it is, a general membership (one guinea per year, students 7s. 6d.) is invited.

Despite the reference in the *Guardian* letter to "dangers to British broadcasting from ill-informed and illiberal pressure groups", which surely most, if not all, readers must have taken to be a reference to the clean-up campaigners, TRACK is at great pains to point out that it is not anti-MRA or even propagandist. Mrs Mary Whitehouse will be welcome to submit evidence to it. The Chairman said TRACK was as concerned with the "improvement" as with the freedom of broadcasting. All committee members present hastened to say they had no connection whatsoever with Mrs Avril Fox's Keep Television Free movement, now known as Cosmos. That, they said, was "propagandist and hoped for a mass membership". They were concerned to "investigate and

communicate facts". But it would not be accurate to describe them as "academic". "Expert and authoritative" were better adjectives.

I must at this stage record that a prior appointment necessitated my leaving the press conference before its conclusion. Towards the end uncertainties may have been resolved, clarification offered; though press comment elsewhere does not seem to indicate that this occurred. One thing was clear. Some members obviously intended to use the organisation in the battle of scriptwriters and story editors against directors. It is rumoured that others hope to use it to stop a further extension of commercial television and the introduction of (legal) commercial radio. Laudable as these aims may be, they seem to me to be trade union and political matters and rather different from what perusal of the stated aims might suggest to lay potential members.

What, in fact, does this perusal suggest? What is "an open and responsible approach" to broadcasting? From the same large house in Kensington we have had "an open educational approach" to religion in schools. In concrete terms this has recently turned out to mean "the Christian faith would remain in a privileged position . . . desirable against the background of opinion in this country" (*Religious and Moral Education*). Would "open" broadcasting apply the same criterion to disbelief and doubt? Or indeed to dirt? I see it reported — it was after I left — that the committee unanimously repudiated Kenneth Tynan's Anglo-Saxon, but that they "would not be demanding the resignation of the Director-General because of it". They would not be "demanding" anything, simply "investigating". There seems, however, little point in investigating unless recommendations are likely to ensue. Broadcasting organisations already have apparatus for audience research. Moreover, aim (3) seeks to "oppose any pressure" which reduces the "freedom of broadcasters" as TRACK may "define" them. But how will it define them?

In these days of ecumenical dialogue it will be seen as statesmanlike to combine Humanists and Christians in educational and broadcasting committees. Perhaps this was discussed at the projected Humanist-Vatican colloquium last November, which I have not at the time of writing heard more about. Up and down the country co-operative parish priests, nuns, Knights of St Columba, Legionnaires of Mary, Catholic Actionists, and "ordinary Catholics" are most desirous of helping out on library committees, borough and county councils, hospital management committees, the editorial staffs of publishers and opinion-forming journals, voluntary bodies concerned with cultural expression, Freedom from Hunger committees, Amnesty committees, radio and television organisations (Fr Agnellus Andrew, O.P., sometime Catholic commentator, has become a producer and now appears in *Radio Times* as plain Agnellus Andrews), trade union management committees, ward executives, tenants' associations taking over large areas "to fight Rachmanism", education committees, welfare services, mother and baby homes, old people's homes, departmental committees, benches of magistrates, Alcoholics, Narcotics and Neurotics Anonymous, parent-teacher associations, youth clubs, Duke of Edinburgh Award committees and adult education. I hope they will be happy in the large house in Kensington, where religious texts still adorn the leaded windows.

This Believing World

NO ONE who read—with understanding—the late Somerset Maugham's stories or saw his plays, could possibly have doubted his unbelief, and the *Daily Mail* (16/12/65) we were glad to see, bluntly called him "an Atheist" in its fine obituary notice by Peter Lewis. Maugham made no secret of the fact in his essays that he had no use for Christianity, or indeed for religion of any kind. Unlike some of our contemporary writers, Maugham concentrated his talents on pure story-telling, at which he had few masters. He based a good many of his stories on his own adventures in travelling which gave them extraordinary realism, and he was equally at home in the difficult arts of the short story and stage plays.

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HOWEVER much the BBC is criticised, and some of its items often raise a howl of anger, no one can deny that at Christian festival periods it does its best for the Church. And in case one might miss an item, the *Radio Times* (8/12/65) gives a half page to its special programme of 27 items for the week before Xmas. There they are—Carols for Everybody, Carols from many churches, "Israel's Glory, Gentile's Light," Goodwill towards Men (in *Women's Hour*) Christmas Meditation, and so on.

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FORTUNATELY for our sanity, these are well interspersed with the usual music, sports, plays, etc., most of them purely secular, and even on Christmas Eve we can switch to, say, the *Bruce Forsyth Show* or a "harmonic arrangement by the incomparable Larry Adler.

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THAT WELL known broadcaster and writer, Brian Inglis, is quite sure that "people can talk without speaking" (*Daily Mail*, 11/65) because "identical twins can transmit brain-waves to each other." But there is a "long way" to go before ESP (extra-sensory perception) is fully understood." According to Mr. Inglis, animals can "communicate"; so can insects, and nearly all of us have had extra sensory experiences at some time of our lives. The proof? It is all in Rosalind Heywood's "entertaining" book, *The Infinite Hive*. Has somebody pinned down an "infinite" at last, then?

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NEEDLESS TO add, of course, that the first great worker in ESP is Dr. J. B. Rhine, in spite of the fact that his own "researches" have been questioned over and over again by other researchers. Even Mr. Inglis admits that scientists jibbed at Rhine. But ESP is now, we are told, "admitted by all but a handful of diehards." Is it indeed!

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THE LATEST change in the Prayer Book proposed by the Church of England is to include one for suicides (*Daily Express*, 17/12/65) who have hitherto been treated disgracefully in the matter of prayers. In fact, all suicides have been, so to speak, excommunicated. Now the Church wants God to treat suicides more mercifully "through Jesus Christ." In any case most of the prayers in the Prayer Book are unmitigated twaddle, and it is not surprising that even the Church cannot now swallow them. And the Tudor language is so archaic as to be funny. But then are not all prayers, recited so reverently to the wind, funny? Of what use are they? Perhaps only to keep churches going?

A Personal Note

By COLIN McCALL

THIS, the last issue of THE FREETHINKER for 1965, will be the last one to appear under my editorship. Pressure of other work has necessitated my resignation from a job that I have been proud to hold for nearly a decade.

It has not always been easy. I am more aware than anybody of the paper's deficiencies, but I would plead in self-defence that many of these could have overcome had the money been available. The regrettable fact is that the paper has to be run on a shoestring, and that articles cannot be paid for.

I should like, therefore, to express my gratitude to the many contributors who over the years, have kept THE FREETHINKER going. The oldest of them, 84-year-old Herbert Cutner, could always be depended on for This Believing World—which he has written since the days of Chapman Cohen—and for regular articles. F. A. Ridley, a former editor, has also appeared almost every week, generally as the writer of our Views and Opinions. C. Bradlaugh Bonner, president of the World Union of Freethinkers, has been another frequent contributor. And our finest stylist—certainly since the lamented death of Reginald Underwood—Oswell Blakeston, has kept us in touch with the world of literature and delighted us with his satire.

Lately, Miss Gillian Hawtin and Miss Phyllis Graham have considered the social and psychological effects of the Roman Catholic Church to which they formerly belonged. And two other women, Mrs. Margaret McIlroy and Mrs. Kit Mouat, have shown insight and sensitivity in approaching modern problems from a humanist standpoint.

Talking of ex-Catholics reminds me of the late inimitable Irish-Australian, Dr. J. V. Duhig, always to be relied on to shake the Papists—including his own Archbishop uncle. And Denis J. McConalogue, who has given me invaluable help behind the scenes, is another former member of the Church of Rome.

Until banned and silenced by the South African Government, Dr. Edward Roux, Professor of Botany at the University of the Witwatersrand, contributed many scientific articles in most readable form. F. H. Amphlett Micklewright has brought a keen legal mind and historical sense to bear upon aspects of contemporary life.

I should also like to thank our printer, Mr. William Wray, for his help and co-operation at all times. Most of all, though my thanks go to the board of G. W. Foote and Co. Ltd.—especially the chairman, William Griffiths and manager, Mrs. Ruby Siebert—for giving me a free hand as editor and support on the occasions when my policy has come under attack. And, perhaps, in conclusion, I should briefly state that policy. It has been to keep THE FREETHINKER independent and non-sectarian; to encourage—though not uncritically—all branches of the secular-humanist movement; to give expression to varied and opposing points of view when they seemed worth considering and were reasonably stated.

Aware that it is the only weekly freethought journal in the English-speaking world—with an international if not large readership—I have tried to keep it as topical as its printing schedule allowed and to avoid parochialism. I hope at least, that I have kept it lively.

My successor, David Tribe, has I know, livelier things in store, and I wish him every success.

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

Items for insertion in this column must reach THE FREETHINKER office at least ten days before the date of publication.

OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mound)—Sunday afternoon and evening: MESSRS. CRONAN, MCRAE and MURRAY.

London Branches—Marble Arch and North London: (Marble Arch), Sundays, from 4 p.m.: MESSRS. L. EBURY and C. E. WOOD.

(Tower Hill). Every Thursday, 12-2 p.m.: L. EBURY.

Manchester Branch NSS (Platt Fields), Sunday, 3 p.m.: MESSRS. CLARE, MILLS and WOOD. (Car Park, Victoria Street), 8 p.m.: MESSRS. COLLINS, WOODCOCK, and others.

Merseyside Branch NSS (Pierhead)—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.: Sundays, 3 p.m. and 7.30 p.m.

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

INDOOR

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group (Regency House, Oriental Place), Sunday, January 2nd, 5.30 p.m., "Any Questions."

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, January 2nd, 6.30 p.m., DAVID TRIBE "One Hundred Years of Secularism."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall Humanist Centre, Red Lion Square, London, WC1), Sunday, January 2nd, 11 a.m., DR. JOHN LEWIS, "God."
Tuesday, January 4th., 7.30 p.m., L. MINCHIN, "Paths to World Government"

Notes and News

WE ARE glad that John Allegro has spoken out again about the "emotional and religious" obstacles to an impartial study of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Edmund Wilson—in a series of *New Yorker* articles and in his book, *The Scrolls from the Dead Sea* (1955)—presented in clear terms the issues raised by the discoveries, and asked "whether the scholars who have been working on the Scrolls—so many of whom have taken Christian orders or been trained in the rabbinical tradition—may not have been somewhat inhibited... by their various religious commitments." Mr. Wilson, it was said, was not a scholar but only a reporter. But what his critics overlooked was—as the late Dr. A. Powell Davies remarked (in another good popular work, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls*)—that Mr. Wilson was a very good reporter who "transmitted quite correctly what the experts who have been working on the Scrolls have come to think about them".

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MR. ALLEGRO himself was in "trouble" in 1956 when, in a BBC broadcast to the North of England, he mentioned that there was a reference to a crucifixion in a Scrolls commentary on Nathum, and he thought that the leader of the Essenes was probably the victim. The Dominican priest, Roland de Vaux, and the American Jesuit scholar Patrick Skehan, "felt it incumbent upon themselves to

write a disclaimer to the *Times* newspaper", as Mr. Allegro reminded us in a recent *New Statesman* article (17/12/65).

★

WE RECALL, too, that in 1958, Mr. Allegro told the *Sunday Express* of "some quite inexplicable delay in the publication of some of the findings in the Dead Sea Scrolls." He was not suggesting that there was "anything sinister" in the delay or that any material had been withheld. But then, he added, "with the present set-up," he had no means of knowing. That "set-up" was: five Roman Catholic priests, two Presbyterians, one Lutheran minister and just one agnostic—himself.

★

By "refusing to compromise their religious conception of Jesus as a completely unique God-man," wrote Mr. Allegro in the *New Statesman*, "the Christian scholars are in danger of erecting in their minds a mental barrier against the one line of inquiry that could lead to the long-awaited breakthrough in New Testament studies... the person and mind of Jesus are subjects with which they are understandably incapable of dealing with complete objectivity." We recall again Mr. Allegro's *Sunday Express* suggestion (12/1/58) that a fresh team should be appointed to edit the Scrolls and to ensure "unprejudiced reception for future discoveries." And that "responsibility for making the first inspection" should not "rest solely on the shoulders of Father de Vaux.

★

THE POPE is apparently taking no chances, writes Robert Halstead of Keighley (Yorks), who cites a *Peace News* report (5/11/65) of "what is undoubtedly a large nuclear fall-out shelter within the Vatican." Grass was being sown above it, but the concrete ramps were visible. "It was built by the present Pope on a site excavated during Pope John XXIII's pontificate for an extension to the Vatican museums.

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"THAT makes you a Virgo," Hermoine Gingold was informed when she gave her birthday as the end of August. "That's clever of it," she commented. "Don't you believe in the stars?" she was asked. "Not to that extent" she replied. This was in *Pure Gingold*, a delightful series of programmes on BBC-2 which, on December 18th, contained skits on spiritualism, astrology and similar superstitions. We liked especially Miss Gingold's song, I am only a medium medium," in which she described being visited by "a lovely Indian brave, Who'd come hot foot from the grave." This is exactly how spiritualism deserves to be treated.

★

"WHERE is Dolores Hart to-day?" asked Alfred K. Allan in the December issue of the Maltese paper, *The Faith*. "You probably remember this radiant and delicate young actress for her deeply moving portrayal of St. Clare in the film *Francis of Assisi*...". Actually we don't, but then we never saw the film. "Of late," Mr. Allan continued, "you have probably noticed that this gifted and natural young actress has been missing from the screen." Again we have to disappoint him. There may, however, be some readers who did see *Francis of Assisi* and who have missed Dolores Hart. If so, they will be pleased to learn that there's "a good reason" for her absence from films. She has "turned her back on a glamorous and luxurious Hollywood career" and become a nun. Those who seek further details of Dolores Hart's "great courage and faith in the face of serious problems and difficulties" will find them in Mr. A. K. Allan's book *Catholics Courageous* We don't.

Irenaeus

By C. BRADLAUGH BONNER

[Another Early Christian Father; a note based on *Bulletin* 121 of the Cercle Ernest Renan by M. Guy Fau.]

IRENAEUS is a much-quoted author of whom very little is known for certain and whose works have been lost. Nevertheless, the *Encyclopedia Britannica* declares confidently that he was "Bishop of Lyons at the end of the second century" and "one of the most distinguished theologians of the ante-Nicene Church".

His importance for the orthodox lies in the claim that as a child he listened to Polycarp, and Polycarp was — so it is said — acquainted with the Apostle John. His importance for the student of Christian origins is that in the Latin version of his *Refutations and Overthrow of Gnosis*, usually referred to by the abbreviation *Adv. Haer.*, much information on the Gnostic beliefs is to be found. This Latin version was known in the fifth century, but meets with no earlier mention. The commonly accepted details of his life are derived from Eusebius, a dubious source, and from Hippolytus, claimed to be his disciple. It is Eusebius who declares that "Pothinus, having attained 90 years of age, was martyred, and succeeded as Bishop of Lyons by Irenaeus" (*Hist. Eccl.*, vv. 5-8). Hippolytus calls Irenaeus a presbyter. If Irenaeus was born c. 130 AD, there were then not bishops (*episcopoi*) but Elders governing Christian communities. Irenaeus, as far as can be judged, was born in Asia Minor and wrote in Greek. M. Georges Ory asks if a confusion did not arise between Gaul and Galatia, in those days called by the same name in Latin, i.e. Gallia.

Briefly, we do not know for sure when Irenaeus was born, whether he wrote about 180 AD, or where he dwelt. His link with an Apostle can be dismissed as wishful thinking. The information, however, which is given in the Latin text ascribed to him is of the greatest interest, and would have, if we could be sure of the authenticity and date of *Adv. Haer.*, the greatest importance. The author claims to have known Mark, a leading disciple of the Gnostic Valentinus (who lived c. 150), and also to be well acquainted with the doctrines of Marcion, a contemporary of Valentinus. His work is a principal source of information concerning these arch-heretics. It has been claimed that Tertullian (160 - 230 AD) drew on *Adv. Haer.* in his writings against the Gnostics; it has also been held firmly that much of *Adv. Haer.* was drawn from Tertullian. Epiphanius, who lived two centuries after Irenaeus, and who also wrote against the Gnostics, includes what purports to be part of Book 1 of *Adv. Haer.* in his *Panarion* in Greek; and Hippolytus, writing c. 225, gives summaries of *Adv. Haer.* which are in agreement with the Latin text.

Gnostic writings would seem to have been well-known at the time Irenaeus and Tertullian were attacking them. Since then they have entirely disappeared. *Adv. Haer.* opens with this declaration: "I have judged it necessary, after having read the commentaries of the disciples, as they call themselves, of Valentinus, having also met some of them and become acquainted with their ideas, to reveal to you their prodigious and very profound mysteries." If only we could be certain today that this work attributed to Irenaeus as written c. 180 AD were utterly authentic, it would be very precious indeed. If only we could trust any uncorroborated statement in Eusebius's *History of the Church*! We should all then be orthodox believers! We

should then know that Irenaeus wrote a letter to his friend Florinus in which he recalls memories of his childhood: "I can tell you just where the blessed Polycarp used to sit and talk, where he used to go and the manner of his life." We should also note that Jesus Christ died at the age of fifty, according to the Apostle John; that, although Irenaeus knew the names of the *episcopoi* (popes?) of Rome, he did not know who was the successor at Smyrna of his master Polycarp. Again he is apparently opposed to Polycarp on the question of Easter. His one reference to the Apostle Peter is to declare that he was, with Paul, the founder of the Church of Rome.

What do we learn of the Gnostics whom Irenaeus attacked? "Know that all these who adulterate the truth and injure the teaching of the Church are the disciples and successors of Simon, the Samaritan Magus. Although they do not admit the name of their master, they teach his doctrine and put forward the name of Christ Jesus as a screen for the impious teachings of Simon." This Simon, moreover, claimed to be "the most sublime power, i.e. the Father above all".

It was within the Church that Marcion and Valentinus preached their doctrine of the celestial Christ. In these doctrines they "mingled lime with the milk of God". Furthermore "we are going to show that they are atheists, drawing the wisdom of their systems from Greek wisdom and from the philosophers, as well as from the Mysteries." He also quotes from what is now looked upon as the Pauline Epistles as examples of Gnostic teaching (1 Cor. 2, 6; 1, 18, etc.).

What did these arch-heretics teach? That there were Good and Bad Powers, one of whom, said Marcion, was the Jewish Creator. Jesus Christ was not a man, but a spirit sent by the Power of Good to save mankind from the Powers of Evil, including Jehovah. Valentinus thought there were Thirty Powers (Aeons), male and female, guardians of the Pleroma (Heaven), among whom were Horus, Christ, the Holy Ghost and also Jesus. Christ was the Prince of the Aeons and was sent down to earth by the Supreme Deity to save mankind, and was destroyed by the God of the Jews. All this in the century following on the pretended crucifixion of Jesus Christ. No wonder Eusebius required a link with the Apostles who lived at that time.

FORUM

RELIGION IN THE SCHOOL

Alliance Hall, Caxton Street, London, S.W.1, Tuesday, January 18th, 1966 7.45 p.m. Speakers include Ernest Armstrong MP, R. Gresham Cooke MP, David Tribe. Written questions to the organisers: National Secular Society, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1.

THE YEAR'S FREETHOUGHT

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Journey with a Clergyman

By DENIS WATKINS

THERE were two of us in the carriage. The clergyman was reading *The Conscience of the Rich* by C. P. Snow and I was reading *Why I am not a Christian* by Bertrand Russell.

For most of the journey neither of us spoke. Then the clergyman said: "And do you find yourself able to accept what he has to say?"

"I find him persuasive and convincing," I replied.

The clergyman laid down his book. "More so than the Bible perhaps?"

"I find the Bible neither persuasive nor convincing," I said.

He smiled and said quietly, "Maybe you are not attuned to its message."

"That is probable," I agreed.

"It is a precious one if you can accept it," he went on. "Perhaps your view has been distorted by works such as the one you are reading. It would be a great pity if it prevented you from doing justice to one of the greatest books of all time."

"I find this book reasonable and the Bible unreasonable."

"I can understand that. Works such as *Why I am not a Christian* present a specious logic which is readily attractive. But the Bible has vast reserves of wisdom as well as the power to sustain and strengthen human beings."

"So has Shakespeare."

The clergyman shook his head slightly. "But, my friend, you are missing out. Believe me, you really are. The Bible is uniquely charged with the power of the Holy Spirit. However, if it is to affect you personally you must yield yourself up to it. Once it touches you and you get things in focus you will see what I mean."

"I prefer to remain with Bertrand Russell."

"I know the book is seductive but reason is not all. Keep an open mind. Please do not shut out God. Do not become the prisoner of superficially attractive ideas. You will find that what is offered by books such as that cannot satisfy your deepest needs."

The train stopped at my station.

"So you cannot agree with the views in *Why I am not a Christian*?" I said as I was leaving.

"I'm afraid I have not read the book," he replied.

CHRISTIANITY: EARLY DERIVATIONS AND FUTURE INTENTIONS

(Concluded from page 418)

de facto situation. And, to be truthful, even freethinkers may be forgiven for preferring bishops who talk like bishops, instead of singing the songs of the Lord to the new "pop" tunes, in both literal and metaphorical senses!

If Christianity is supposed to be a vital reality in the hearts and homes of the people, it is a little surprising that after two thousand years incursions of the clergy into our secular midst such as worker-priests, are still needed to demonstrate these undoubted benefits. If the religion is bound to enrich our lives below, and ensure eternal life hereafter, it is astonishing that men, with their innate love of a bargain, have so to be canvassed.

Not that the modern so-called "open society" is *per se* inimicable to the Church. Catholic sociology is indifferent to forms of government so long as they permit it to flourish.

"For forms of government, let fools contest," the Roman Catholic, Alexander Pope, wrote. However, even if we

regard the Church as a voluntary society, we should not forget that *she* does not, in theory, relinquish her claim on us. It is worth our while to examine her as a power claiming divine authority present in a society which, like our own, argues only secular foundations. We should not succumb to their trick of pointing out individual Church leaders as conspicuous in, for example, political activities; it may blind us to the more pervasive influence of the total organisation. It is worth our while, too, to consider the unit of which this ecclesiastical hegemony is composed, viz. the family, and their views of it as having a divine origin. The consideration, and the rejection of this view, will leave us the clearer-headed concerning our own ideas of the family as essentially a human institution, biological and social.

It is most important to be clear-headed in our theory here, because from these views follow our views on the great controversy of denominational education. We should not forget, moreover, that failing an appeal to the Bible and tradition, the Churches are more and more propagating the *ideas* of Christianity (on these and every topic), views based, in fact, on Bible and tradition, but without giving chapter and verse. The churchman believes these truths are of God, so must stand, even if let loose upon society without their labels. It behoves us to be discerning, for there are false teachers among us.

PAGAN CHRISTMAS

NOW THAT Christmas is over we wonder how many fervent Christians realise that they have been celebrating (as countless of their ancestors had done) a Pagan holiday? Its Yule log, and the giving of presents, are relics of the old Norse religion in which Baldur and Odin played big parts and, as has been pointed out even by Christian historians, the early Christians "unable to eradicate the old ideas were driven to the expedient of trying to give them a colouring of Christianity."

NEUTRAL ?

A "neutral" religious building will be erected at Church-hill College, sometime in the spring . . . and will represent a qualified triumph for the college's most determined pressure group, the practising Christians . . . The only Christian symbol will probably be a cruxifix on a central altar.

—*The Sunday Times* (19/12/65)

A neutral cruxifix, no doubt!

COINCIDENCE ?

A FEW weeks ago (9/11/65) the *Liverpool Daily Post* recounted a "chain of unhappy coincidence" vouched for by one of the choristers at Christ Church, Waterloo, where it all happened the previous Sunday. Evensong had just reached the point in the *Nunc Dimittis* which runs: "a light to lighten the Gentiles", when the Church was plunged into darkness. Only a faint gleam of light came from a few bulbs in the centre of the building. To make matters worse, not only did the service next proceed to the prayer "Lighten our darkness we beseech Thee O Lord", but the choice of the closing hymn was "Hail Gladdening Light". The choir were only glad, the *Daily Post* added, "to hide their confusion in the vestry, where they removed their surplices to the miserable light of a few matches".

*A Happy New Year
to our Readers*

CORRESPONDENCE

RECIPROCATION

AFTER long heated debates, the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, finally decided to acquit the Jews of any guilt in the death of Jesus. No doubt, such an acquittal must cause rejoicing in certain circles, and one good turn deserves another. Therefore to create more harmony in this believing world, the Jews ought to see it fit, to declare the Catholic Church blameless for the death of thousands of Jews by torture and fire during the Inquisition.

ELMER K. HANSEN
(British Virgin Islands)

A GRAVE INSULT TO THE POPE

AS A SHORT answer to Miss Phyllis K. Graham's article (November 26th), I feel inclined to invite her to reflect on the grave and most offensive title she has repeatedly given to His Holiness the Pope, by calling him "The Leopard in a New suit."

It would have been criminally grave enough to use such language against the man in the street. She knows that the Pope besides being the religious head of more than five million Catholics he is also a head of state of the Vatican City. He is in harmonious and peaceful (not to say cordial) relations with England and almost all the civilised states of the world. He is a man of peace in all his life, but especially now as the representative of Him who is known as *Princeps Pacis*, the Prince of Peace. His "message of peace" delivered at the general assembly of the UNO, after invitation of its Secretary General, was applauded by all present, even by the atheists. Why then offend the Pope by calling him "The Leopard in a new suit"? Is that a sign of decency? of education? or rather a sign of blind hatred?

Millions and millions of people, all over the world, would show sympathy with the Pope, had they been able to know the insult hurled against him by Miss Phyllis and the Freethinker. She could not have attacked a more universally beloved man than she did. I am sure that, on sincerely reflecting, Miss Graham would feel sorry.

My last word is that we ought all to respect and love one another. God is love, and those who truly love are in God and God in them. Love is constructive: hatred destructive: If we cannot agree in mind, let us, at least, agree in heart. An intellectual error is not necessarily morally guilty, but even the least movement of hatred is.

G. M. PARIS, OP
(Malta)

[Love, like charity, should begin at home. We suggest that father Paris should ask his hierarchy to show constructive love towards the Maltese Labour Party.—ED]

A PART TO PLAY?

A LETTER by Kenneth J. Ead in the issue of November 26th afforded me much interest and food for thought. I am sure he voices the problem of many whose educational standards ceased at primary school level. It is very evident however that he has, like myself and many others put his learning to good purpose inasmuch as he has learned to read wisely, widely and well, and that is no mean achievement. I too sometimes find articles in both "Freethinker" and "Humanist" far above my intellectual understanding, but your correspondent does not lack intelligence, and although he like myself lacks that polish and vocabulary that makes the scholar, he has understood the implications of what he has read, and this has shaped his thinking accordingly. Like him we are impatient at the slow progress we are making towards that mental freedom which unbelief in the supernatural brings to all. I find, after reading the findings of scientists in the fields of biology, astronomy, geology and many others, no difficulty in postulating a natural universe, independent of supernatural agency. I do not pretend to know anything, or at most very little of any of these complex sciences, indeed it is not necessary. I am sure that your correspondent has sufficient knowledge to sow the seeds of doubt amongst his own circle of believers of religious twaddle. He can safely leave the vital problems such as secular education, birth control and a code of humanist ethics to the experts in these fields. He can best further the cause by joining a branch of the National Secular Society or British Humanist Association and be as generous as he can afford in financial support. Occasions frequently arise when a letter to the editor of the local press has useful results. In this way he can help to undermine the stranglehold that religion has on radio, television and press.

Kenneth strikes a rather pessimistic note in his letter, but I am of opinion that the power of organised religion is declining. This is especially to be noted in the more intelligent and thoughtful of our young people excluding that relatively small section

making up the "mods" and "rockers". We are approaching a healthy attitude towards subjects like sex, birth control, abortion and others which a few years ago were "taboo". The results of the so called Christian ethic and moral teaching is amply reflected in the crime statistics. We see its failure on every side. All of us Atheists share his disgust at the debasing effects of religious beliefs and with that in mind, we of little can do something, even if it be ever so little to further the cause of unbelief and a secular and humanist code of morals.

May I add in conclusion for Kenneth's information that I am a product of the early years of compulsory education and my school days ended at 12 years of age. I regard as my greatest achievement the ability to read and write intelligibly. At 85 years of age I regard this little achievement as the one which has added much to make for my present day philosophy. Take courage Kenneth and keep on the road you are treading and help others to share your journey.

FREDERICK E. PAPPS

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