

The Freethinker

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NOT WITHOUT JUSTICE the ancient Greeks were described as the founders of Rationalism, as the first to apply a critical judgment to the myths promulgated in the name of religion. Among the *bon mots* of these pioneer debunkers of the supernatural we recall the following.

A visiting tourist was being shown over an island in the Aegean Sea. Upon a conspicuous promontory overlooking the sea stood an impressive temple evidently much frequented by the islanders.

When the visitor asked to what god was this stately temple dedicated, his guide informed him that it was erected in honour of Poseidon (Neptune), god of the sea, by grateful mariners who had been shipwrecked on the coast but had prayed to him and had been saved. This answer, however, did not satisfy the ancient Greek Freethinker, who replied: "Where is the temple erected in honour of Poseidon by those more numerous mariners who called upon the god in their hour of need and whose prayers were not answered?"

God and the Pamir

I was forcibly reminded of this story when practically every newspaper carried on its front page the ghastly tragedy of the *Pamir*, the German sailing ship which sank in a fearful storm. Of its total complement of 81, only six ultimately survived after a fearful ordeal in open boats in the Atlantic. Thanks to the advent of steam and of the scientific development of modern navigation, such accidents are rare nowadays; so rare that they become headline news! I do not recall a more sensational peacetime shipwreck since the sinking of the *Titanic* nearly half-a-century ago. In the case of the *Pamir* a romantic touch was added by the fact that the victim was one of the last sailing ships afloat. Less fortunate than her one time colleague, the *Cutty Sark*—now to be seen in honourable retirement off Greenwich—the *Pamir* went to the water once too often. Now she has gone to Davy Jones's locker with 75 of her crew.

Thank God!

We may perhaps console ourselves for this grim tragedy by reflecting that the tremendous publicity is a proof of the rarity of such occurrences at the present time. Time was when shipwrecks were two a penny, and when survival was the exception with diminutive sailing ships. Ancient maritime statistics are not very exact but, only a few centuries back, probably the majority of long distance voyages failed to be completed. However, in one respect the maritime profession does not seem to have changed very much. Shipwrecked sailors in an age of steamships and science still seem to be as credulous as their remote predecessors. For, if they no longer build temples to Neptune, they still thank the god of a later creed for sparing their own lives, conveniently forgetting their more numerous shipmates whose equally precious lives "God" did not see fit to preserve. If in pagan times no temple was built by the shipwrecked mariners who had prayed in vain, where today can be found in the whole of Christendom a church

dedicated to the glory of God by those who prayed in vain to be rescued from the remorseless clutches of the ocean?

Not Even a Whale!

The facts were grim enough in all conscience. Two boats only got away, and when found only five were alive in one boat and one in the other. The rest had perished of exhaustion or gone raving mad and jumped overboard. To add to this horror, the crew was escorted by a flotilla of sharks waiting for a succulent meal of human flesh. During the whole of this time God was conspicuous by his absence. Not only did he not command the waves and winds to stand still, as so often recorded in ancient

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

God and the Pamir

By F. A. RIDLEY

times, he provided no assistance of any kind—except the sharks! Not even an obliging whale, who might have repeated the miracle of Jonah and given the crew of the *Pamir* a long week-end of warmth and refreshment as he did to the lucky Jonah—a long, a very long, time ago! And yet, after all this, it sounds incredible that when they were at last picked up by a passing ship, the five survivors immediately demanded to see the ship's chaplain in order to thank God for having delivered them from the jaws of death. In return, they naturally received a clerical testimonial that they were "fine, god-fearing young men." Here, "fearing" would certainly appear to be the operative word.

What About the 75?

It would appear from this latest piece of headline news that human, including maritime nature, seems to change very slowly—particularly when one considers that out of a total crew of 81, only six survived. It is the old Greek story again. The six survivors thank God for their happy deliverance but 75 are in no position to do so; their last despairing cries having been choked in the raging Atlantic. Why should the prayers of the minority prevail? As far as the Captain of the *Pamir* and his 74 drowned shipmates are concerned, they will take part in no thanksgiving service; if the other six do, they show an extreme credulity; no wonder so many of their countrymen fell for Hitler.

God Moves in a Mysterious Way

Certainly anyone who can see anything providential in the wreck of the *Pamir* must be a spiritual detective. "God moves in a mysterious way," etc., and certainly in this case, prolonged inspection only heightens the mystery. God does not seem to have done a thing for the hapless crew, even for the survivors, who only survived by a quite exceptional display of courage and physical endurance. No one, either amongst the living or the far more numerous dead, appears to have had any valid reason for thanking God. Unless perhaps it was the sharks who got a free meal out of the shipwreck. But we doubt very much if any clerical commentator would draw attention to *that* aspect of the gruesome tragedy. If there is any lesson to be learned from this shocking business, it has surely got nothing to do with theology but with nautical science. Sails have had their day

and must now give way to steam. In seafaring matters, prayer does not seem to be of much help. To conclude with the apt reflection of another Greek sage, "If you kneel by the river and pray to cross over, you are still on the same side when you get up." We commend these words to all present and future commentators on the sinking of the *Pamir*.

The Conway Memorial Lecture

THE 48TH CONWAY MEMORIAL LECTURE was given by Mrs. Margaret Knight in the Conway Hall on Thursday evening, October 3rd, before another capacity audience, many of whom were left with standing room only. The occasion was further graced by the presence of Dr. Julian Huxley in the chair. Speaking on "Physique and Personality," Mrs. Knight was able to communicate to her audience some of her own enthusiasm for the subject. In the characteristically charming and lucid fashion we have now learnt to expect from her, she reduced the unfamiliar terminology of psychologists to easily understandable ideas, and as Professor Pear—himself an effective populariser in psychology—commented after the lecture, Mrs. Knight had "led her hearers by the hand" through the labyrinth of terms and meanings. As Julian Huxley put it, she was "popularising without vulgarising."

The lecture took the form of an exposition of the typologies of Kretschmer (Marburg, Germany, 1921, etc.) and W. H. Sheldon (U.S.A., 1940-2, etc.). In each case three physical types are associated with their respective personality types. The typology of Sheldon is perhaps more wieldy with its seven-point rating allowing for the "in-betweens." Working from the basis of endomorphs (digestive system predominant), mesomorphs (muscular system predominant) and ectomorphs (nervous system predominant), we could arrive, say, at an individual more mesomorph than ectomorph and more ectomorph than endomorph.

The first implication in the theory of typology, of course, is that there is an hereditary component which is unalterable by experience and environmental training. Some investigators have put it as high as 90%, with only 10% left for environment. Mrs. Knight is right in line with contemporary expert opinion when she says that the environmentalist psychology of the early twentieth century overplayed its hand in stressing childhood experiences as a major factor in psychological make-up. (This applies to the psycho-analysts as well as—obviously—to the behaviorists.)

The lecturer was fully alive to the dangers of theorising in advance of empirical evidence, and in fact the whole study of typology must for a long time yet be wide open to such objections. A good deal of controlled research has been done, but the methods have not been such as to satisfy every angle of criticism.

Moreover, typology is probably only in the empirical stage. That is, there are facts and theories, but no adequate grounds for the theorising. If we are prepared to grant that a fat man is less liable to a nervous breakdown than a thin one, why *should* it be so? Is there any connection between the tall lean frame of the Vikings and their adventurous, courageous nature? Must the fragile-bodied but large-brained person be necessarily of a fidgety, retiring disposition and not a good mixer? Are physically flabby people more inclined to "wear their heart on their sleeve," and seek solace from others when in trouble? If all these questions can eventually be answered in the affirmative, it will still be for the physiologist to discover why it should be so.

If, however, typology can be reduced to a more or less exact science, vast help would be possible, as the lecture briefly indicated, to people in selecting their vocation, their friends or their marital partners.

The lecturer bravely ventured on some rough classifications of actual people.

Mrs. Knight was heard with rapt attention, and the general appreciation was shown at the end by the rounds of applause from the many hundreds of endomorphs, mesomorphs and ectomorphs present.

G. H. TAYLOR.

Scientists and the Resurrection

AN AMERICAN RELIGIOUS MAGAZINE has recently conducted an inquiry into the beliefs of scientists regarding the belief in the Resurrection. In conducting this research, the investigator began by scratching out the names of unbelievers as far as, and including Unitarians. Even then he could only get favourable answers in one out of five.

The report given in *Democrat and Chronicle* says:

"A survey conducted for a religious magazine reports that 'only one out of five' of the nation's top-ranking scientists believes Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

"Wilbur M. Smith, writing for the magazine *Christianity Today*, said he had received replies from 228 physical and biological scientists.

"The question was chosen, Smith said, 'because of its definiteness' as contrasted to general questions about the immortality of the soul, the deity of Christ and the like, as an index to depth of Christian belief.

"The bodily resurrection of Christ,' said Smith, 'is set forth in the New Testament as a specific historical event, taking place at a certain time in a certain place; it involves a specific individual . . . an objective reality that could be touched and seen.'

"Smith found 606 scientists listed in *Who's Who* in America. Scratching off Unitarians, agnostics and some others, besides 37 whose names and places of education indicated they were Jewish, he wound up with 544 presumably exposed to the teaching of the resurrection.

"To date, he said, he had received 228 replies: '36 affirmations of faith in the resurrection and 192 non-affirmations.'

"Of the non-affirmations, 142 scientists said flatly that they do not believe in the resurrection, 28 indicated they did not wish to express an opinion and 23 said they did not know whether Christ rose from the dead.

"Smith, a professor of Biblical Studies at Fuller Theological Institute, Pasadena, Calif., said in a manuscript for the April 15th issue:

"The most surprising aspect is the acknowledged lack of faith . . . on the part of scientists who claim membership in some Protestant evangelical denomination.

"In view of the extreme liberal views of many congregationalists,' Smith said, 'and the infiltration of modernism in the Methodist Church, the majority of denials from men in these denominations was no surprise.

"But it was somewhat astonishing to find as many Episcopalians denying the resurrection as professing to believe it, and more Baptists and Presbyterians rejecting it than affirming it.'

"Only 12 scientists identified themselves as Roman Catholics, Smith gave no breakdown on their beliefs regarding the resurrection. In all, 144 identified themselves as Protestants.

"Smith said about 60 per cent. of those who expressed disbelief in the resurrection nevertheless 'expressed themselves almost reverently in referring to Jesus Christ.'

This Hindu Marriage System

By PROF. JITENDRA MOHAN

MARRIAGE, according to the Hindu view of it, is a religious duty, divinely enjoined and ordained, whose sole function is the continuation and perpetuation of the human race. All other things, like love between, and happiness of, the two components of the marital equation, which are usually associated with marriage, are considered to be rather incidental and insignificant.

From this the rest follows sequentially. Being divine in nature, marriages are made in heaven. The matches are to be decided by the elders, and the juniors are merely to go the prearranged way. Romance, love, and courtship are, of course, all bunkum. The wishes of the people to be married are of no consequence, lacking as they do all "experience" of such matters. A mutual, casual, momentary look on the part of the boy and girl is more than sufficient, and that also in deference to "the modern times." Once married, the mills of child-bearing must work actively and unabatedly. The human race must go on. That is the foremost duty of the individual to generations past and generations to come. Woman is the ornament of the home, handmaid by the day, queen by the night. This sums up the average Hindu view of marriage.

I am in entire disagreement with the very basis of the Hindu marriage system. To view individuals as child-producing machines is, I feel, to reduce them from personalities to functions, from ends to means. I am not denying even for a moment that the continuation of the human race is one of the foremost responsibilities of mankind. What I am denying is the Hindu view that this is the sole function of marriage, irrespective of the quality of life lived and reproduced.

Marriage must ultimately proceed—and that, to my mind, is its only legitimate justification—from the fact of human companionship. The coming together of two like natures, or of two unlike but supplementary natures, is the most effective way in which both of them can develop themselves. People with similar tastes and temperaments can join in a partnership which shall immensely contribute to their individual but interrelated processes of self-development. This relationship of man and man can develop at any level: sex, caste, colour, region, nation notwithstanding. Obviously it can develop between a man and a woman. There are, of course, bound to be gradations and variations in the depth and extent of this relationship. With some an individual may have something in common, with others he may have much more in common, and, perhaps, with another he may have almost everything in common. In this last state there would develop not merely a relationship, but an integration of personalities, with love and understanding, attachment and confidence for each other. This is, however, a time-consuming procedure, a maturing process; and a single pre-marriage look which the Hindu system permits to the prospective bride and bridegroom is insufficient to allow any mutual understanding and appreciation.

But this relationship is, in its ordinary course, something private to the individuals concerned, and there is no reason or justification whatever for society to interfere in any way with the two persons concerned. There is, for instance, no reason or excuse for society to grind its teeth, or hurl objections if I live with a woman, who is simply my friend, and not my wife or mother or sister. At present, the mere fact that she is none of the latter three, and is merely my

friend, is sufficient for society to go about denouncing her and me. If there is nothing wrong about a man and a man staying together, there certainly can be nothing wrong, if we are to be rational, about a man and a woman living together without marriage. They might be friends, or partners, or lovers, or anything, but their relationship is something for which, normally, they are answerable to none except themselves, and which stands only in exceptional need of social formalisation or legalisation.

The appearance of children introduces another factor, which is vitally affected by the nature of relationship that obtains not only between the parents and the children but also between the parents themselves. Children thus invade the privacy of their parents and link them to society. Society has therefore a right to demand and see—and enforce, if necessary—that the children are not subjected to any unpleasantness or lack of facilities owing to the delinquency of their parents.

Here emerges the need for marriage as the agency of social control, through which parental responsibility towards children is not only discharged but also enforced. Marriage is thus the mechanism by which the consequences of mating are properly controlled and regulated by society. Let me hasten to make it clear that this does not mean, and must not be taken to mean, that marriage is, as is its Hindu view, merely concerned with childbearing or child-rearing. Marriage, to me, can be justified only against the wider background of a reciprocity of understanding and appreciation, and is merely a convenience by which society controls the social consequences—in the shape of children—of a relationship which is basically private to the persons concerned.

Obviously, prearranged marriages are simply preposterous, and differ from prostitution only in having a more dignified exterior and name. Marriage by courtship is the only proper form of marriage, because this is the only way which offers the possibility of mutual exploration and understanding. There must be extensive social intercourse. Of course, this requires a number of reformatory and reconstructive processes. The system of coeducation must be made something more real and live than the farce that it is at present. The economic system must be overhauled to permit economic equality, independence, and opportunity to women, so as to liquidate the soil for their, what may be called, enforced prostitution or concubinage. A revolution in social ideas and ideals must come. Women must be given not merely rights but also opportunities for their political organisation and expression. Marriage must be prefaced by and based on understanding, love and affection. And, though the possibility of any future withdrawal out of a marital relationship would automatically be greatly eliminated in such a situation, the right to divorce must be viewed as integral to marriage; no moral odium should be attached to it, though it must certainly be considered unfortunate both because of the disruption of a relationship and because of the unhealthy and unhappy consequences that it is likely to have for children owing to family disorganisation. Marriage must also be entirely decommercialised, with dowry system completely banished. And, most important, marriage must cease being the concern of God; it must become, firstly and finally, the concern and responsibility of man.

This Believing World

To the sacred tune of a world-famous hymn, "Lead, Kindly Light," that newly-freed State of Ghana—freed from the horrors of Colonialism and Imperialism—has at last ushered in (at least) a threat of Dictatorship. Any attempt, we were sternly told, on the beloved lives of Ghana's leaders will result in "the most unprecedented and unsuspected action in history." Two pagan priests escorted Prime Minister Nkrumah, a Christian, before pouring bottles of brandy around the microphone to invoke the protection of spirits, and helped on the good work by lustily singing "Lead, Kindly Light." This efficacious mingling of paganism and Christianity should do the trick if nothing else, and Totalitarianism is again born.

★

The Duke of Edinburgh, as godfather to his niece's baby girl, Marija, took part in some real magical rites at her baptism. He had to renounce Satan three times and he had to breathe hard on the baby "to blow Satan away." So far, little Marija was as good as gold, but when the Duke followed with the immersion business, she rightly protested and bawled her loudest—exactly like any baby would. In spite of this, he had to carry her "three times round the christening table," which was necessary to symbolise "the eternity of life." And Marija bawled louder than ever. Perhaps it was to show that after all life was *not* eternal!

★

ITV's "Religion" show the other Sunday was conspicuous by its almost entire absence of religion. It dealt with the Population Problem, and with pictures and talks proved the appalling seriousness of millions of people *dying* of hunger all over the world. And did the various speakers appeal to God Almighty with special reference to the way he looked after sparrows? Not a bit of it. Only science and scientific methods of agriculture could possibly solve the huge problems of feeding the rapidly expanding populations of the world. God was *non est*.

★

Alas!—that Golden Age when the Churches could make short shrift of any scientist who dared oppose them and the Bible has long since disappeared. Look at the way the Bishop of Chichester, at the recent Convocation of Canterbury, was imploring "for a recognised meeting-place where churchmen and scientists could discuss and study the religious significance of scientific progress." The *religious* significance! This is a far, far cry from Galileo and, for that matter, from even Darwin. Still, it is a good thing for the Churches to learn exactly where they stand in this scientific age of ours. And that is, to put it bluntly—nowhere. If Evolution and Astro-physics are true, the picture of Jesus flying "up" to Heaven to sit on the right hand side of God is farcical. As for the Devil, Angels, Miracles, etc. . . .!

★

Where now stands the Archbishop of Canterbury and his truckling to Rome on the question of marrying divorcees in church? The *law* allows a clergyman to do as he likes—and in spite of any ruling by Convocation, that law stands. The Archbishop can do nothing about it except to disapprove. The Pope also disapproves, but, in the ultimate, will have to give in like the Archbishop.

★

An article in the "Sunday Express" recently talked about "the troubled world" of Don Antonio, which might just as well have been the troubled world of so many of our own English Protestants going over to Rome, in reverse. The Don is the priest in charge of a mountain village in Italy which has been invaded by an American-Italian evangelist, Pastor Todaro, belonging to sect called "the Church of

Jesus Christ," and he has done a "splendid" job of work in converting hundreds of the villagers from Rome to his own brand of Protestantism. It appears that a statue of St. Joseph used to be carried around in procession for two days, which the local bishop changed to four hours, an action which almost caused hell in religious riots.

★

It gave the Pastor the opportunity he needed, especially when he pointed out that America was a land flowing with milk and honey and where anybody could get an easy job—more or less—if he became a Protestant. At first, he had an audience of 12; but after the St. Joseph clash, it reached 200, and the villagers began to build a Protestant church, helped not a little no doubt by the rumour that 50 dollars would be given to new converts. As Todaro's passport is for five years, he will have plenty of time to rope them in. It looks as if our own converts to Rome will find all this a very troubled world for the One True Faith.

World Union of Freethinkers

PARIS CONGRESS RESOLUTIONS (SEPTEMBER 1957)
THESE RESOLUTIONS were formulated by the Resolutions Committee, chairman Maître J. Gremling, and, after some discussion, were passed unanimously by the Congress.

1. The World Union of Freethinkers assembled in Congress at Paris from September 6th to 10th, 1957, remains faithful to the decisions of its preceding Congresses with respect to the principle of the complete separation of Church and State; and holds that a truly democratic State can never yield any of its powers in any manner to the Vatican, since the Pope cannot retreat from the doctrine that subordinates the rights of the citizen to what is termed the rights of God. The Union is therefore opposed to any Concordat between a State and the Vatican, and in particular it would draw the public attention to those clauses in the Concordat between General Franco and the Vatican which forbid any public manifestation of religious opinions or of a philosophy other than the Catholic religion. Such clauses are in direct conflict with the Charter of the United Nations Organisation, which proclaims freedom of religion and of philosophy. Therefore the World Union of Freethinkers calls on UNO to take steps to obtain respect for its Charter and freedom of conscience for all citizens.

2. This Congress of the World Union of Freethinkers assembled at Paris from September 6th to 10th, 1957, considers that the problem of overpopulation is one of the gravest on the international plane that our generation has encountered, constituting as it does, a source of pauperism, of disease and of stagnation, and moreover, producing a constant threat of war. The Congress calls for a policy of help to the under-developed countries to raise their standard of living, combined with a policy of family limitation without consideration of religion or ideology; but that no such policy should include legislation which might be detrimental to the essential rights of the individual. The Congress denounces the hostile influence of the supernatural religions to such policies; in particular that of the Church of Rome as expressed in recent pontifical declarations, and also the interference of this Church, not only in national legislation and in the activities of international bodies, but in the private lives of individual citizens.

—NEXT WEEK—

THE MARGARET KNIGHT—
DR. MACKAY DEBATE

Reported by G. H. TAYLOR

THE FREETHINKER

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

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Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.

Details of membership of the National Secular Society may be obtained from the General Secretary, 41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1. Members and visitors are always welcome at the Office.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

Correspondents may like to note that when their letters are not printed or when they are abbreviated the material in them may still be of use to "This Believing World," or to our spoken propaganda.

A. DODSON.—The Catholic laity in general are not encouraged to read the Bible, except by Freethinkers.

R. WILLOWS, A. WINGATE, J. E. SLACK.—Thanks for flattering remarks. If all casual buyers of THE FREETHINKER would become subscribers, even if only for quarterly periods, it would help considerably.

WM. SHAW.—So long as medicine was subordinated to religion it could not advance. Try to get Dr. Haggard's *Devils, Drugs and Doctors* from your library.

DAVID RUDGE writes: "Spiritualism will die by the hand of its own child, Psychic Research."

Lecture Notices, Etc.

INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics Institute).—Sunday, October 20th, 6.45 p.m.: J. ARCHER, "The Counter Attack of Religion."

Central London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, W.1).—Sunday, October 20th, 7.15 p.m.: J. L. SHEPHERD, "Freethought."

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, October 22nd, 7.15 p.m.: A. J. COLLINS, "What is Social Credit?"

Leicester Secular Society (75 Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, October 20th, 6.30 p.m.: H. J. BLACKHAM, "Secularism, Past, Present and Future."

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. Trades Hall, Thursday Street).—Friday, October 25th, 7.3 p.m., A. ELSMERE, "Lourdes."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Hall, Upper Parliament Street).—Sunday, October 20th, 2.30 p.m.: The Rev. BERNARD RICKETT, "The Deadly Menace of Communism."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, October 20th, 11 a.m.: W. E. SWINTON, PH.D., "Technics and Ethics" (commemorating the birth of Thomas Telford, 1757).

OUTDOOR

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

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street, Kingston, Surrey).—Every Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER and E. MILLS.

London (Tower Hill).—Thursday, 12-2 p.m.: Messrs. D. TULLMAN and L. EBURY.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, FINKEL, SMITH or CORSAIR.

Sunday 8 p.m. (Deansgate Blitzed Site): Messrs. WOODCOCK, MILLS, SMITH or WOOD.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Meetings most evenings of the week (often afternoons): Messrs. THOMPSON, SALISBURY, HOGAN, PARRY, HENRY and others.

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

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Sunday, 11.30 a.m.: R. POWE. Thursday, 1 p.m.: R. POWE. Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY and R. POWE.

Wales and Western Branch N.S.S. (The Downs, Bristol).—Sunday, 3 p.m.: D. SHIPPER.

West London Branch N.S.S.—Every Sunday, at the Marble Arch, from 4 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged, £252 17s. 9d.; H. J. Barrand, £1 1s.; A. Hancock, 2s.; J. Wilson, £2; R. Muir, 9s. 6d.; Anon, £1.—Total to date, October 11th, 1957, £257 10s. 3d.

Notes and News

A TOUCHING display of Christian charity was given by K. van Rijckvorsel, the writer of an article in the Dutch daily *De Tijd*. Herr van Rijckvorsel, a Catholic People's Party M.P., affirmed that Catholics should not support the work of the Netherlands Organisation for International Aid, a non-sectarian association which has made noteworthy humanitarian attempts to aid the inhabitants of the under-developed countries—without attempting to propagate the R.C. religion as a necessitous concomitant of their gifts. Catholics, said Herr van Rijckvorsel, should contribute to their own missionary activities as other organisations have only *material relief* as their purpose. This seems to demonstrate quite clearly that the R.C.s have little interest in helping these unfortunates; they merely seek new recruits.

★

THE Joske Divorce Bill which was introduced to the Australian Federal Parliament in April attempts to provide uniform divorce laws for the whole of Australia. After being condemned by the Australian Bishops' Committee, support for it has weakened surprisingly, and it now seems unlikely to be passed through. Australia's 17% Catholic population wield an influence out of all proportion to their numbers.

★

DR. GALEAZZI-LISI, chief of the Vatican City's health department and physician to the Pope, has ordered precautionary measures in an attempt to avert an epidemic of Asian 'flu in the Vatican. Evidently Faith is not enough, in spite of all the papal pronouncements asserting the contrary.

★

THE Thomas Paine Center in Philadelphia has had an empty niche since the opening a year or so ago. A small card showed why. It read "This space reserved for the bust of Thomas Paine." Now the space is to be filled, for the Friendship Liberal League, who are responsible for the Center, have been loaned the bust for one year, with prospects of renewal. The bust was originally offered to the city of Philadelphia, to be displayed in Independence Hall, where the American Declaration of Independence was signed, but it was on show only between 1918 and 1931 when the curator was favourable. The rest of the time since its completion in 1875 it has not been displayed because—as the *Philadelphia Inquirer* puts it—"Paine's freethinking views were unpopular with many persons." Now, however, it is in good hands and an appropriate place. Mr. Ludwig Alt and his fellow F.L.L. members are to be congratulated on ensuring that.

★

WE were at first rather surprised to read in an A.P. report from Warsaw that the reputed appearance of the Virgin Mary was *worrying* the religious and civil authorities in Cracow. "Worrying" seemed a strange word in this context, until we learned that "For a fortnight hymn-singing crowds have gathered in the tiny square where the vision is said to have appeared to 48-year-old Mrs. Czeslawa Janusz." Then we agreed with its use. Even the Roman Catholic weekly, *Tygoonik Powszechny*, has warned against hysteria, though somewhat belatedly it seems.

A Philosophy for the West

By H. CUTNER

Sensism. The Philosophy of the West, by Charles Smith, Two Volumes, 1612 pages. Price 10 dollars (£3-10s.0d.) The Truth Seeker Co., New York, 1956

CHARLES Smith is the well known Editor of the oldest Free-thought journal, *The Truth Seeker*, ably following its founder, D. M. Bennett, and Eugene and George Macdonald, its former Editors, but with a difference. He has specialised in philosophy, and particularly in a philosophy "appropriate to the atomic age"; and some of his views, expressed in forthright language, may not be at first acceptable to many Freethinkers. New ideas, new ways of expressing them, have always been heartily opposed. One has only to recall the violent opposition to d'Holbach's *System of Nature* and to Buchner's *Force and Matter*, not only by Christians, but by quite a number of Rationalists. Voltaire was immeasurably shocked by the *System of Nature*, while Buchner, attacked on all sides for his Materialism, had weakly to protest that he at least was not a Materialist. Bradlaugh himself preferred not to call himself a Materialist, though if the word has any meaning at all, both he and Buchner were nothing else.

Sensism is the result of 28 years of hard study, but of course the author must have pondered on the problems raised by philosophy and science and Freethought much longer than that. And he has gone a way of his own. For example, he uses such words as God Almighty, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and others, familiar to everybody through their long association with religion and language, just because they are part of language — only, he insists, that they represent ideas which have in the course of time been "personified". Many of them are, in fact, mere "verbal expressions".

But to understand clearly his point of view one must study his definitions and vocabulary — a not too easy task, if I may be allowed to say so. *Sensism* requires concentration to follow the author's meaning, and he has a great deal to say on all sorts and conditions of things — and thought.

At the outset, it will be found that Charles Smith is an anti-Communist, a "mechanical" Materialist, and a thorough-going Freethinker. But — and there is a "but" — there are some things in which for various reasons he will not have many supporters. His philosophy is for the West — that is, it is a white man's philosophy. He does not believe that all men are born equal, and certainly not that, in the main, coloured people even if given exactly the same conditions and opportunities as white people could ever reach the same cultural standards. He does not believe that any mixture of coloured peoples and whites will produce a superior type of mankind. He puts this in one clear sentence — "The average intelligence of human beings is below the average of the White race."

But it is not so much the views of Mr. Smith on these racial questions which will interest the average reader, as his views on the many problems of philosophy he deals with. He is not afraid of challenging the greatest of philosophers — and particularly those whose ideas have been accepted as almost, if not quite, unanswerable.

When Descartes said, "The soul is more easily known than the body", that, "One thing is certain: I know myself as thought and I positively do not know myself as brain", and so on, and therefore it follows "I think; therefore I exist", Charles Smith has a simple answer: "Descartes was mistaken." He adds,

The body is known directly through the unsensed sense; the existence or occurrence of thought, the soul or the mind is indirectly through the use of names in inference from sensed physical objects. Knowledge of the names "mind", "soul", and "thought" is acquired through the ear. A man is surer that he has hands than that he has a brain, soul or mind. The knower and knowing are known by inference from the directly known, the sensed physical world.

In other words, *Sensism* teaches "awareness" — awareness of the outside world; a thorough-going Materialism as opposed to Idealism. But before the reader can get to this point, he will under the author's guidance, have to go through some very detailed exposition of the work of many philosophers. And unfortunately, philosophy is not everybody's "cup of tea". Yet knowledge and the sources of knowledge make fascinating study, and without some acquaintance of these it is by no means easy to have an intelligent discussion on the existence of God and on Atheism.

This is what the late Chapman Cohen found out very early in his career, and why he was so anxious for Freethinkers not to bother so much with Bible-banging as with philosophy and science. That he inclined far more to Idealism than to Materialism was perhaps due to his lack of interest in experimental science than to anything else. And in any case, in the end he had to "restate" Materialism, and not Idealism, on purely Atheistic lines.

Charles Smith's Materialism is unequivocally expressed.

He says,

Matter is whatever produces or has the power to produce awareness of itself or is inferred from the sensed. Only matter independently exists, only matter moves, only matter is knowable through the senses, and only matter properly conditioned is able to know. Nothing happens until matter moves, for happening is a moving of matter. Mechanism, which the metaphysically confused call a philosophy of stagnation, is a theory of motion. Instead of requiring acquiescence with whatever exists or occurs, it alone justifies reasoned and directed effort.

He insists that whatever name be given to matter it is still matter. That is the straight reply to those anti-materialists who seem to think that they have disposed of "matter" if they call it "energy". If, he adds, "matter could be destroyed, all things would cease to be and nothing would exist to form new things."

And we need not be surprised that he rejects both psycho-analysis and dialectical materialism. "The Id, the Censor, the Libido are similar to gods, angels and devils." As for dialectical materialism, "since it rejects mechanism it is a kind of religion." Communism "is a revolt against reasoning, against independent thinking, in favour of associational thought; it rejects mechanical physics." And he goes still further. "Christianity and Communism, its legitimate daughter, must, do, and will oppose every effort to prevent the White race from preserving itself. These two religions will force Australia, Canada, the United States, and Europe to repeal their immigration laws so as to permit entrance of the surplus populations of Asia."

Actually, it is unfair to the concentrated thought of Charles Smith to take isolated passages without indicating that all his arguments are very carefully considered and argued. They are not just mere assertions. It is up to anybody to oppose him but he must be read first. The intolerance of Christianity he equates with the intolerance of Communism — for him both are religions, and as such both must be opposed.

Religion, Morals and Christianity take up a large part of

the second volume and the only conclusion one can come to is his thorough-going Freethought. He notes, for example, the great names of Herophilus, Hipparchus, Archimedes, and Strato passed into virtual oblivion while the people of Europe were repeating the fictional characters in the Jewish writings — Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and Jesus. Jesus in particular, a fiction!

The truth is that there are still Rationalists who treat the Bible not as an actual history book of course, but as a work which contains quite a lot of history. They are still defending the historical existence of, say, David and Solomon, although there is not a scrap of evidence for either. Nothing whatever has been found which in any way substantiates the story of either "king" by archæologists in Palestine.

What Charles Smith has to say therefore about the Bible and Christianity in his book, deserves the attention of all Freethinkers. Just as he went to the heart of philosophy so he has gone to the heart of religion.

(To be concluded)

Depopulation

By R. READER

THERE STILL EXIST, even today, large numbers of gentle, kindly folk who instinctively flee all that is sudden, uncouth, brutal, and violent in human living. Their temperaments are such that they place the highest value on the avoidance of controversy. They are to be found at all social levels, and they make up the binding force in society that keeps it from flying apart under the stresses of the more forceful, go-ahead types.

Such people often have a quiet, inward conviction of a divine plan, but indulgence in profound religious thought goes quite against their natures. Yet, as we all know, these folk are nearly always tacit supporters of organised religion. Why? Obviously because they feel that organised religion is their best bulwark against the violent sides of life which they so abhor.

To attempt to win over this large section by theological argument is useless, because their adherence to organised religion is not based on such things as the existence or non-existence, or divinity or non-divinity of Jesus Christ at all. It is based only on the harmonious meeting of their timorous natures with an advertisement appeal—the latter as blatant as that of a market-place seller of patent pills. With all due respect to these people, their attitude is no more discerning than that of the sufferer from indigestion whose eye is suddenly caught by the hoarding, and who rushes in forthwith to buy the nostrum.

"But if the nostrum soothes, where is the harm?" it will be asked. "If such people find pleasure in illusion, why take illusion away from them?"

This argument is not valid. The nostrum of organised religion soothes momentarily, but it exacts payment a thousandfold in suffering, tears, and blood. It is not for nothing that blood is the theme of the Bible and the emblem of its hero. Our gentle-minded individuals are, in fact, working for the advancement of violence and death. They are working against themselves. And we should take their illusions from them for the same reason that we should snatch a chocolate from the hand of the unsuspecting stranger knowing it to be poisoned.

Latterly, much play has been made with the Dead Sea Scrolls. But other scrolls, less nebulous, less ambiguous, of an altogether harder, more tangible and practical kind, exist in the world's museums. They tell of the Crusades, which decimated the flower of English and French knight-hood; the War of the Albigenses; the sufferings of the reformers in Germany; the 16th century wars of religion;

the sickening horrors of the Inquisition, which burned alive some 80,000 heretics, and condemned nearly 400,000 others to frightful punishments and imprisonments. Nearer our own time, they tell of mothers praying to an all-loving god for sons locked in mortal combat. And today, the popular press fairly reeks with the evil consequences of modern science under the sway of religious neurosis. These documents are extant and deal with facts which actually occurred. They are organised religion with the veneer of the prospectus stripped off.

"But the rack and the stake have gone" it is objected. "Modern organised religion has no time for such things." This is true, but it is equally true that it has no time for any effective remedy for the present world malaise, and will therefore, in the long run, produce far greater suffering. The mental strain of contemporary life; many sickening crimes; the frenzied arming; the atomic tests; international tension; international war—all can be traced either directly or indirectly to the simple fact that mankind, everywhere, has outgrown its living space, and must reduce its numbers or perish completely in a nightmare of suffering. And this, in turn, leads ineluctably to the conclusion that intensive birth control is the only answer. We cannot suppress human beings already born into the world, but we can and should prevent too many from entering it. A Depopulation Conference to attack the causes of war is, in fact, an absolutely essential prelude to the Disarmament Conference, which seeks to destroy the instruments of war without first removing these circumstances which have called them into being.

But the subject is never mentioned. Of all those delegates, only one, the representative of a minor State, dared mention this truth just after the last war. His remark was greeted with a deathly silence, and then, with a loud babbling, the Conference got down to discussing irrelevancies. He did not venture to speak again. Why? Because all these so-called representatives are, in reality, national advocates, dancing like puppets on the strings of the organised religions of their respective countries.

Our peace-loving friends should ponder these things. If they were making investments in a company, they would not blindly accept the statements printed in the prospectus. They would check up on them. They would examine past records. They would want to know the men behind the company, the opinion of others who had dealt with them and so on. To do so would be common prudence. How much more important, therefore, it is not to accept the claim of organised religion to be the defender of peace at its face value. For, in this world of 1957, it is not just money that is at stake. It is all human life.

Piety and Morality inc.

By LEONARD MARTIN (S. AFRICA)

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH is reminiscent of a large commercial business in some of its methods. It is often said that the Church carries on many works that cannot be classed as commercial, such as work amongst the poor, provision for schooling, healing, music, art, architecture, spartan or unselfish living.

First, let it be pointed out that most of these good works are *secular*, or they can be carried out just as well by bodies which are not in any way religious; and, in fact, *are* so carried out. No one will deny that modern businesses and newspapers are by no means philanthropic institutions, but are run solely to make dividends and send up share prices; whatever some of them may once have been. And yet charitable efforts, sponsored by purely commercial

concerns, are by no means unknown. Disaster relief funds, efforts to give poor children a holiday by the seaside and the like, are not at all unknown. But is it really charity only? The real reason behind all this, and one need not be a cynic to say so, is greater circulation and more profits. The only consolation is that many do benefit, as a result.

It is the same with the Church. Some of its *secular* works may be to the benefit of society. The basic motive, however, is to gain converts, and these, in the end, are useful only as an indirect means of gaining prestige and power.

Different people, naturally, have diverse ways of looking upon the Church. One way is to look upon the Church as a big business, but selling religion, instead of soap or tooth-paste. If one line does not "pay," says commerce, and also Mother Church, withdraw it without any fuss, and smoothly substitute another. Boost this line today; that tomorrow. The one who sells the most, or, in the case of the Church, ropes in the most converts, obtains promotion; just as the most efficient salesman may end up as a general manager.

Don't neglect advertising. If free publicity can be obtained in the press, obtain it. Have a sensation now and then, but not too often, or the reaction will be reduced accordingly. Someone has seen the Virgin somewhere; there is a spectacular cure at Lourdes. Keep quiet about any failures. But do not neglect to announce any increased membership, or a convert of some eminence in the literary or artistic world. What a "feature" he will be! The more you go into it, the more strikingly do the well-known methods of the Church agree with those of commerce. If you examine it closely, the similarity becomes ever closer.

These impressions were first borne upon me years ago during an excursion to De Heilige Landstichting, near Nijmegen in the Netherlands, near the German border. There, in an enclosed and hilly area, one found a replica of Palestine, with all the well-known places dealt with in the New Testament cleverly reproduced, or a kind of Catholic Hollywood set, as much like the original as possible.

That was long ago, so I can't say if it still is in existence. Previously I had never heard of it. What impressed me most was the first "station," a veritable religious emporium, much like a Woolworth's. It was run on a strictly commercial basis. You could get almost anything religious there—at a price. Money, in fact, almost shouted.

I had read Dreiser, himself an ex-Catholic, and his indictment of the financial screw turned on relentlessly by Mother Church in the U.S.A., even on the poorest of the poor, to obtain those badly needed revenues which keep "Rome, Unlimited" going. Most of this money nowadays appears to come from there; so it seems only fair that the next Pope should possess an American twang, instead of being an Italian priest, as usual.

But now I saw all this for myself, this religious commercialism, blatant, unashamed and without any mitigation: the "only true church," with the lid off, as it were, at last.

Facts for Freethinkers

THE *Catholic Times* recently published some statistics, showing the year of introduction of Roman Catholicism to certain countries and the percentage of adherents in the population today. Of those countries given, pride of place must be given to Portugal (4th century) with 94.1% (although they are headed by Mexico with 96% and no year given). Next comes Austria (294 A.D.) with 88.4% and Eire (431), 75.3%.

Canada (1615) has 44.7%, and is closely followed by Basutoland (1852), 42.2%; Holland (7th century), 39.7%; and Switzerland (no date given), 37.9%.

Tahiti (1836) has 22.2%, Australia (1795) 17.4%, Alaska (1862) 11.8%, Algeria (1632) 9.4%, and Great Britain (203) is listed as having 7.6%.

It should be borne in mind that the R.C.'s list gives lapsed members and apostates as still being R.C. Perhaps their most distressing figure is that given for Israel. In spite of the fact that the One True Church was founded by Our Blessed Lord and His disciples so long ago, the percentage of R.C.s today is no more than a paltry 1.6%.

CORRESPONDENCE

RELIGION AND TELEVISION

I read with interest your article "Freethought Televised to Millions," and I hope that TV over here will start having these frank interviews. But I do feel that Mr. Lewis's remarks that Mr. Graham's crusade is purely mercenary, his suggestion that he took this job to get more money and his statement about the 250,000 people brought to swell his audience, are all open to doubt.

We must bear in mind that the clergy are usually as honest as they possibly can be "within their beliefs and the current moral laws." They do not often do something just for the money, because they believe that they will be punished if they do anything like this in the name of their God. I feel sure that it is extremely important that Freethinkers and Humanists should make a point of keeping right on the truth, and in the end the truth will be found to win through.

[As Chapman Cohen used to say, the worst thing you can say about the clergy is that they really believe what they preach! —ED.]

OBITUARY

We profoundly regret to record the death at the age of 70 of our contributor, Mr. Edward H. Grout, who passed away suddenly but peacefully at his Shrewsbury home in the evening of October 2nd. Mr. Grout lived alone since the death of his wife, Mrs. Emily Grout, last April. Both were staunch Freethinkers and retained their mental vigour to the end; Mr. Grout was, in fact, working on some projected articles for THE FREETHINKER. As a young man he contributed to THE FREETHINKER under an assumed name—Arthur Scudder.

We recall with particular pleasure that his last article was placed as a "Views and Opinions" for July 19th last. To his daughter, Miss Lucy Grout, we offer our sincerest sympathies. G.H.T.

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