

# The Freethinker

Vol. LXXVII—No. 43

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Fivepence

IN THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER in the present year of alleged Grace 1957, an extraordinary gathering took place in Rome. It was literally an "extraordinary" gathering, being the sixth "Extraordinary General Congregation" to be called during the four centuries' stormy annals of the *Company of Jesus* to deal with some special problems which confront the order. The American magazine, *Time*, reports that at the Jesuit headquarters in Rome, 180 priestly delegates met under the chairmanship of their Superior-General, Fr. Janssens. Clad in the plain, black cassocks which the rules of the order enjoin, they sang a hymn of invocation to the Holy Spirit and then got down to business.

## The Company of Jesus—1957 Style

The Jesuit Order is, of course, by far the most famous of all religious orders and few religious organisations have exercised such influence on matters not normally regarded as belonging to the sphere of religion as the order founded by the ex-soldier Ignatius Loyola. Some of the harshest judgments recorded of any human institution have been recorded of the Jesuits; some of the harshest have been indicted by *Catholic* pens such as that of Pascal. However, no one can deny the extraordinary influence exercised by the order collectively throughout its four centuries' existence. Similarly, the charge so often made against the Jesuits that their long and severe training tends to an excessive uniformity, seems difficult to reconcile with the numerous specialised fields in which individual Jesuits have excelled. To take a few at random, within the last century, the order can boast of a famous astronomer—Fr. Secchi of the Vatican Observatory; of one of the greatest of modern English poets, Gerard Manley Hopkins, and of a palæontologist of the very first rank such as Fr. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, the discoverer of Pekin man—and incidentally the author—according to a French reviewer—of one of the most astonishing posthumous works to be bequeathed to posterity by a priest. All the above and their kind are quite outside the field of normal theological studies.

## Some Contemporary Jesuit Activities

At the end of an unusually stormy four centuries' existence, the order founded by Loyola in 1540 indicates no lack of current activity. *Time* gives some of its activities. We learn that the order has more than doubled its membership during the present century, "numbering some 15,000 at the turn of the century, the Society of Jesus has since more than doubled its size, now stands at a record 33,732." Our informant adds that the largest single contingent does not come from any "backward" country but consists of the 8,156 Jesuits to be found in the U.S.A.—"God's Own Country." Despite which fact, however, at the last election of the almost autocratic General of the order, the highly fancied American candidate was beaten by the present Belgian holder, Fr. Janssens. The Jesuits, unlike the Popes, have never confined themselves in practice to Italian candidates: there have been three previous Belgian

Generals, and the predecessor of Janssens was a Pole. Incidentally, an unwritten rule of the Society forbids any Jesuit, even Jesuit Cardinals, from standing for the Papacy. There has never been a Jesuit Pope. *Time* goes on to give a list of the activities and institutions run by the order in 1957. We subjoin some of the more significant.

Both the present Pope's secretary and his confessor are Jesuits. Both the Vatican radio and the Vatican official journal are run by members of Loyola's Order. Besides which key positions, we learn:

Jesuits work in 71 missions, 6,640 mission stations, 4,000 schools, 350 hospitals and 16 leprasaria, publish 1,320 periodicals in 50 different languages, including 24 U.S. magazines. Run 59 colleges and uni-

versities, including Rome's Gregorian University for ecclesiastics, an institution which boasts amongst its past pupils the present Pope, 13 previous Popes, 77 cardinals, 686 bishops and eight saints! A formidable array of statistics!

## The "Counter Revolution"

Our American contemporary, after setting out these impressive figures, then went on to discuss the technical problems concerning decentralisation of the General's huge responsibilities, which was the precise purpose of the meeting of this Sixth Extraordinary Congregation. However, it may perhaps take us actually further if we look at the underlying reasons for this astonishing recovery of an order which our liberal predecessors in the 19th century regarded as the very quintessence of obscurantism and fanaticism in every aspect of human activity. In which respect we may recall the aphorism of Jules Michelet, the great French freethinking historian: "Stop the man in the street, the first passer-by, and ask him, 'What are the Jesuits?' He will at once reply 'The Counter Revolution.'" (My emphasis.) Upon which one need only comment from the above statistics that nowadays, a century after Michelet's day, "The Counter Revolution" appears to be very much alive.

## The Most Dangerous of All Enemies

Why? How has this astonishing recovery come about? Actually, to find the *real* reason, all one has to do is to take a look at the past evolution of the famous order of militant shock-troops—as we may term them—founded on military lines for perpetual combat with the enemies of the Church. The Jesuits like to have enemies about—quiet times do not suit this essentially military Society. From this angle, the spectacular ups and downs which have characterised the 400 years' existence of Loyola's creation, were accurately foreshadowed by that acute psychologist. For in Loyola's own *Spiritual Exercises*, the guide book of the order, one will find this famous aphorism: "The worst of tempests is a perfect calm; the most dangerous of all enemies is the absence of any enemy." Space permitting, one could in fact describe the evolution of the Jesuits from the above point of view. The militant order founded on essentially military lines by the former Spanish Knight,

## —VIEWS and OPINIONS—

# The Jesuits 1957 Style

By F. A. RIDLEY

Ignatius of Loyola, has always been at its best when it had plenty of enemies about! It was precisely when enemies were lacking that the Jesuits found themselves in a vacuum and degenerated accordingly. One could actually explain their historic ups and downs very largely along these lines.

### Revolution and Counter-Revolution in the

#### Mid-20th Century

When viewed in the light of the perspective afforded by Loyola's inspired forecast of the actual evolution of his order, it becomes quite clear why the present century has witnessed this remarkable revival of the great bulwark of

religious reaction. From a sociological point of view, the present age represents an age of Revolution versus Counter-Revolution, and naturally, such an age suits the Jesuits perfectly, since the 16th century in which they originated was also such an age; and they were created precisely to *fight* its battles. Today, the Vatican is fighting for its life as in similar battles in the past; in such a back-to-the-wall stand, it cannot dispense with its Jesuit shock-troops. Accordingly, Fr. Janssens and his clerical army can look forward to an exciting life—though not, perhaps, to a *long* one.

## The Chronicler as David's Champion

By JOHN BOWDEN

WITH THE CHRONICLER, as we should expect, the man who designed the Temple and the man who built it are extolled to the highest. David is the Chronicler's "white-headed boy." Not only did he provide for the building of "God's House," but he it was who welded the twelve tribes into a powerful nation and made Israel feared by her neighbours. According to I Sam. 16: 10; 11, David was the eighth son of Jesse; according to the Chronicler (I Chron. 2: 13: 15) he was the seventh son. An inadvertent error? Not at all; seven was the "sacred number," so seventh David had to be.

Sixteen chapters are devoted by the Chronicler to David's reign, most of them being concerned with the preparations for the building of the Temple. Biographical details are scanty and are at variance with those given in the Books of Samuel. There, David is an outlaw who, after many vicissitudes, succeeded to the throne of Israel. In Chronicles he is transformed into a saint whose life was dedicated to the cause of Jahweh. His misdeeds are skimmed over lightly or altogether ignored. The Chronicler says nothing about the intrigues which secured David the throne. There is nothing about his adultery with Bathsheba nor of the treachery whereby he procured the death of her husband, Uriah. There is nothing about his family feuds or of the rebellion of Absalom. That the Chronicler knew all about David's delinquencies, observes Wellhausen, is clear from incidental expressions.

In Sam. 24: 1 it is stated that Jahweh moved David to number Israel and that when David had done what he was impelled to do the benevolent (?) Jahweh brought about the death of—not David—but 70,000 of the people! The advanced theology of the Chronicler would make this appear a monstrous injustice; so quietly and unostentatiously he altered "Jahweh" to "Satan." He however, makes no attempt to explain why the innocent people were punished instead of David.

In Sam. 5: 12 we read that David smote some Philistines at a place he named Baal-perazim. The Philistines in their flight abandoned their images, "and David and his men took them away." The Chronicler probably suspected that these images had been carried off to be used as teraphim (household gods); at any rate he changed the story. He states that "David gave commandment and they were burned" on the spot.

David's warriors numbered 30,000, says the older authority (2 Sam. 6: 1); they numbered more than 300,000 the Chronicler intimates (I Chron. 21: 23: 27). When Joab at David's behest, made a count of the fighting men his return stated that there were 800,000 men of Israel and 500,000 men of Judah (2 Sam. 24: 9). I Chron. 21: 5-6 has it differently. There were, we learn, 1,100,000 men of Israel and 470,000 men of Judah. In the battle against the Syrians recorded in 2 Sam. 10: 18 David slays 700 charioteers and 40,000 horsemen. It was *seven thousand* charioteers and

40,000 *footmen* the Chronicler assures us (1 Chron. 18: 4).

It is in his account of the sum collected by David for the Temple that the Chronicler excels himself. According to his veracious (!) statement in 1 Chron. 22: 14 the king collected 100,000 talents of gold and 1,000,000 talents of silver, all of it to purchase materials for, and to pay the building costs of the holy house. According to Peake (*Commentary on the Bible*) a talent of gold is equal to £5,775 in English money (it would be twice that to-day); while a talent of silver is worth £412-10-0. Thus David, according to the Chronicler, accumulated the enormous sum of £5,775 millions in gold and more than £412 millions in silver—for the construction of an edifice not much larger than an ordinary modern chapel.

Nine chapters of the second book of Chronicles are devoted to Solomon and his exploits. Again, prominence is given to work in connection with the Temple, which was to house Jahweh's eyes and heart "perpetually" (2 Chr. 1: 16) and the specifications of which were given by Jahweh to David *in writing!* (1 Chron. 28: 19). We note the Chronicler's assurance that for the ground on which the Temple was subsequently erected, David paid 600 shekels of gold. But the older authority (2 Sam. 24: 24) has it that David paid 50 shekels of silver only for the ground and had an unspecified number of oxen thrown in! The Chronicler doubtless considered 50 shekels a paltry sum and so boosted the amount to something more in accord with the importance of the building.

## Religion Today

THE NEW TESTAMENT contains the following clear-cut promise made by Christ himself as sign of, or compensation for, belief in him, viz.:

*"And these signs shall follow them that believe: in my name they shall cast out devils: they shall speak with new tongues. They shall take up serpents: and if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them: they shall lay their hands upon the sick, and they shall recover."* (Mk. XVI. 17-18.)

Now in virtue of this clear-cut promise, all that is necessary for the recovery of a sick person, is to call in a Christian to lay his hands upon him.

Now, if Christians do possess this infinitely beneficial power, then in the whole world nothing is more baffling than that they do not make use of this power, as the existence of hospitals bears witness.

If, on the other hand, Christians do not possess this clearly stated power, then the inference is inescapably that, either Christians themselves do not believe in Christ (and then the whole thing is absurd), or that the New Testament itself is not as inspired and true as Christians believe.

E. G.-A. (Ghana).

# Religious Faith and Moral Life

By G. I. BENNETT

"And this sense and apprehension of loneliness at the moment of the severance of all earthly ties and parting with light and life, was perhaps the cause of the idea or notion which possessed me, that in all our most intimate thoughts and reflections concerning our destiny and our deepest emotions we are and must be alone."

—W. H. Hudson in *Far Away and Long Ago*.

"There are thoughts which brook no confidant; there are griefs which cannot be shared. . . . We dream alone, we suffer alone, we die alone, we inhabit the last resting-place alone."

—H. F. Amiel in his *Journal Intime*.

IT IS PRECISELY this idea of man's essential *aleness* that so upsets those who have been brought up in a religious environment. Not having the disinterestedness to examine their beliefs critically, and perceive for themselves how tenuous and insubstantial is their nature, for the most part they cannot conceive of others being able to do so. When they encounter the man who professes unbelief, their attitude is one of doubt towards him. Is he really honourable and sound? Perhaps he is a person of equivocal character whose motives are suspect? And who does not know but that he subconsciously wishes to shut God out of his life in order to pursue, without inhibition or compunction, a selfish, sensual, nihilistic mode of life?

It is not too much to say that that is still, in this mid-twentieth century, the reaction of many religious folk to those who disavow faith in a theistic creed. But it is not merely they who think along these lines; there is a popular widespread belief that religion promotes moral life. Inherent in religious faith, it is assumed, there is inspiration to righteousness. Man, Christian theology holds, is intrinsically sinful. With even the best of intentions, his lapses from virtue are regrettably many. Without religion, his endeavours, however genuine and sincere, to keep to the "straight and narrow path" are forlorn. With a religion (which means faith in God) the prospect of leading a good life is decidedly brighter. Why should we lead a good life? The theologian asks that question in order to answer it with: Because it is the will of God that we should. If there is no God, he may well go on to argue, and therefore no hereafter, no punishment for our misdeeds and no reward for our virtue, and we live in an impersonal universe that reckons nothing for us, then why be good?

Does this sound unethical? It is certainly a strange conception of moral life, which may be summed up thus: Religious faith is a compelling power that makes men good, perhaps almost without their realising it, but, in any case, it is only in the light of such faith that moral life acquires meaning.

To me it has always seemed that moral life needs no divine or holy sanction to justify it—that it is self-evidently good if the postulate of man's being a social animal is admitted. If there are those who do not know or do not care or cannot grasp that man is a social animal, then no amount of religion will make these sub-normal specimens of humanity decent, lawful, self-respecting citizens. I do not believe that any individual "denies God" (to use a popular expression) in order to be free to live unscrupulously, and I strongly doubt whether any individual becomes unscrupulous as a result of coming to disbelieve in God's existence. And if it were true that such degeneracy followed an abandonment of faith, what kind of morality is it that needs the buttress of faith to make it worth while? Do those who cleave to such an idea appreciate its shocking implication—that we are all of us beasts in a jungle under the thinnest and flimsiest of guises? I do not see

human nature through Utopian eyes, but I take a better view of it than that.

If our religious friends would but notice, freethinkers in the main are not, as they incline to think, men and women of dubious morals, but good honest folk. The persistence of this old hoary idea that goodness consorts only with faith has no justification in fact. It is and always was an extraordinary fallacy. There are good men and bad in all walks of life, in all strata of society, and doubtless among believers and unbelievers alike. The man of no religion, however, who lives a good life, chiefly because it is in his nature so to live, but also because there are sound secular and human reasons why he should, has by that fact a higher moral sense than the man who is good-living largely because his religion tells him he must.

I do not dispute that at a certain level of civilisation religion served a useful purpose in elevating moral sentiment and raising the moral tone of society, as Winwood Reade memorably pointed out in his *Martyrdom of Man*. But we—or some of us, at any rate—take humble pride in the realisation that we are beyond that mentally and morally embryonic stage when, like good children, we must do what we are told without really comprehending why we are doing it. The time has indeed come for us to assert the dignity of man—of man who by his own unaided efforts, and by dint of much trial and error over countless thousands of years, finally succeeded in pulling himself out of the morass of mere brutishness in which he primevally wallowed, and who has struggled to a not altogether contemptible level of civilised living. His endeavours from primal times to make sense of his environment led him to strange animistic beliefs that we—yes, the naïvest of us—in our greater knowledge and maturity of mind now know to be false. Even into comparatively recent historical times man has cherished the fancy that he was guided, supported, and protected in his activities of bread-winning, home-making, family-raising, and society-building, of fighting evil and of humanising his ideas and institutions, by a Being on High watching his exertions with the concerned love and sometimes frowning severity of an anxious father. Some day, perhaps, all men except morons will apprehend that this has been humanity's greatest delusion; that no such Being exists or ever did exist; that in this mighty universe we human mortals are but the product of a chance combination of biochemical conditions and circumstances; that our human destiny is not decided by Divine fiat but is, for all practical purposes, in our own hands; that we stand alone, and prosper or perish by our own intelligence, or lack of it.

We stand alone. . . . Hudson and Amiel were right, painful as the observation was for them to make. I do not think there is, as some religious folk imagine, considerable courage in accepting that aleness as a reality. It is a matter not so much of courage as of honest intellectual conviction. Only the will to follow truth wherever it leads is required. And I ask: Where in the light of modern knowledge and experience can truth lead an inquiring intelligent man except to an understanding that he lives in a world that was not made for him, in a universe that is indifferent to his fate; and that, in the absence of any omens that he is the child of a benevolent God, he can do no better, in the fleeting years that are his, than to labour uncomplainingly, cheerfully, and self-reliantly for the happiness and well-being of his kind?

## This Believing World

**Writing in the Ipswich "Star,"** Canon R. H. Babington sternly insists on the reality of Angels who all "owe their existence to" God Almighty, and on the reality of the Devil—who no doubt also owes his existence to the same Deity. He believes in both "on the authority of the New Testament" just as he believes that when Jesus was crucified, dead "saints" arose and, out of politeness, waited until Jesus came out of the tomb *first* before joining their happy relatives in the towns and villages where they had once lived. As the worthy Canon points out, the authority of Christ Jesus on all matters is "final." It must be, for Jesus is "God Almighty."

★

**But on one point the Canon is adamant**—"the Devil is a created being, not a rival God." So those Christians and others who find God and the Devil always clashing without His Satanic Majesty getting liquidated in the encounter because, like the Lord, he also has Eternal Life, must never give Satan Divine honours. He is a Fallen Angel, not a God. And though thoroughly bad, he can not only withstand the anger of the Lord, but the terrific fires of Hell without getting hurt in the least. It is all so wondrously beautiful that we must thank Canon Babington for making it all so plain.

★

**And here is a recent book**—*Divorce in England* by O. R. McGregor—which proves conclusively from statistics that, far from the "anarchy" which we were told would follow easier and cheaper divorce, marriage as an institution has never been more popular. Nor has the family been disrupted in anything like the numbers religious people were always prophesying. What has happened is "a decline in public respect for the supernatural sanctions invoked by religious marriage ceremonies." Marriage should be a contract between two people and, so long as the State gives it its blessing, they can dispense with any supernatural ceremonies. In fact, it cannot be too often repeated, it is the *State* marriage in most countries which is legal, not the religious one.

★

**We have always been given to understand** that it was in pandering to a "continental" Sunday with its games and motoring and drinking, that Britain was undermining God's Holy Sabbath Day more than anything else. We are hopelessly wrong. The Lord's Day Observance Society angrily and piously insists that "royal example and influence is doing more to undermine God's Holy Day in Britain than perhaps any other factor." How dare the Duke of Edinburgh play cricket on a Sunday with a Roman Catholic like the Duke of Norfolk at Arundel Castle? To desecrate thus the Sabbath Day is bad enough—but, dash it, with a *Roman Catholic!* Our heart goes out to the L.D.O.S., though sometimes we cannot help wondering what Her Majesty thinks of her Christian friends?

★

**Men of God appear—more or less**—to be moving with the times. There are actually parsons who defy the dedicated authority of their Bishops on such a vexed question as marrying innocent divorcees in church; and every now and then we even get the dreadful news that a Roman Catholic priest throws his solemn vows overboard and gets married. This surely should help to send any Pope to a premature grave—for it is quite as bad as a nun who rejects her vocation and prefers to be, perhaps, an ordinary waitress. But how can one hope always to beat the Devil? Fr. T. P. Millerick broke with his parish church the other week and

married the local schoolmistress. He now calls himself "the black sheep of the flock" but he has "found his true love." And good luck to him; he might one day throw over the Church altogether and find faith and salvation in Free-thought.

★

**And it is not only Christianity** which cannot always hold its true believers. There is Mr. W. Purfurst, a one-time chief Buddhist monk in England who proudly preferred to be called Bhikku Kapilavaddho when embracing Buddhism, who has now given it all up (according to the *Sunday Pictorial*) for "beer and women." It is a delightful choice, and to make things easier, he has changed his name again to Dick Randall. After a few rounds of beer we cannot imagine even his most fervent Buddhist fans trying to call him Bhikku Kapilavaddho. Buddhists in England will no doubt grievously mourn his heart-breaking defection.

## The Rising Generation

### XXVI—IS THE BIBLE INSPIRED

THAT everybody in a Christian-controlled country is taught that the Bible is "inspired" is, of course, a truism. But what exactly is meant when we say that the Bible is "inspired"?

Although it is not exactly taught, the fact is that as soon as you ask whether the Authorised Version of the Bible is inspired, and if it is, why should there be a Revised and other Versions, you will find that the claim is made that it is the Hebrew and Greek "originals" which were inspired, and not just our "versions," that is, translations.

It is God Almighty who "inspired" the *original* writers of the Bible—the Jews in Hebrew, and no one knows who in Greek, so that all people could have God's Word—"His Precious Word," as some Christians call the Bible, direct from the Almighty. The Catholic Church, however, is in full disagreement with the Protestant Church here, for it has added a number of works called the Apocrypha to their Bible. No one appears to know for certain whether this portion of the Bible was inspired by God quite as much as the rest as all Protestants hotly dispute the inclusion, and refuse to have the Apocrypha inserted in their Bibles. In any case, please note that although one has to swear on the Bible when taking an oath in court, no dignitary of the Churches would say that *that* Bible was inspired. Only the "originals" are inspired.

Unfortunately, there are no originals. There are plenty of copies in Hebrew of the Old Testament, but no one, not even the most learned rabbis, can say that the Hebrew Bible which they reverence so highly is the one inspired by God. It is, they will tell you, a highly edited one, and we have nothing with which it can be properly compared. A translation of a Hebrew Bible was made in Greek about 200 B.C., but the present Hebrew differs from this translation in hundreds of places.

As for the Greek "originals" of the New Testament, all we have are manuscript *copies* of varying texts—that is, none of these copies agrees with any other. They differ in thousands of places. No one, in fact, has the slightest idea what is the "original." Never forget that there is *no* reference in early Christian literature to the four Gospels by name until about 150 years *after* the supposed death of Jesus. Numerous Gospels were written during that period, but no one ever referred to those we now call "inspired" by God Almighty.

Why then is the Bible called the "Holy" Bible?

H.C.

# THE FREETHINKER

41 GRAY'S INN ROAD, LONDON, W.C.1.  
TELEPHONE: HOLBORN 2601.

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

THE FREETHINKER can be obtained through any newsagent or will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, £1 10s. (in U.S.A., \$4.25); half-year, 15s.; three months, 7s. 6d.

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.

F. NADEN.—There were poets before there were scientists, but in an age of science it is hardly the poet's job to act as a medium for the expression of knowledge. Let him leave it to the scientist. See Max Eastman's book, *The Literary Mind*, for a development of this theme.

## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### INDOOR

- Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics Institute).—Sunday, October 27th, 6.45 p.m.: E. H. ATKINSON, "Christian Science."  
Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (83 Suffolk Street, opposite West End Cinema).—Sunday, October 27th, 7 p.m.: A. R. WILLIAMS, "Newspaper Religion."  
Central London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, W.1).—Sunday, October 27th, 7.15 p.m.: H. TOMPKINS, "Can a Tory be an Atheist?"  
Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, October 29th, 7.15 p.m.: J. HUTTON HYND, "Humanism and Ritualism."  
Glasgow Secular Society (Central Halls, 25 Bath Street).—Sunday, October 27th, 3 p.m.: F. J. CORINA, "Confessions of an Atheist."  
Leicester Secular Society (75 Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, October 27th, 6.30 p.m.: COLIN MCCALL, "Atheism on the Air?"  
Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Wheatshaf Hotel, High Street).—Sunday, October 27th, 7 p.m.: A Lecture.  
Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Hall, Upper Parliament Street).—Sunday, October 27th, 2.30 p.m.: J. K. CORDEAUX, M.P., "The Middle East."  
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, October 27th, 11 a.m.: Prof. G. W. KEETON, M.A., "The International Scene."  
Wales and Western Branch N.S.S. (Bute Town Community Centre, Cardiff).—Tuesday, October 29th, 7 p.m.: S. SHAPLAND, "Brotherhood of Man."  
West Ham Branch N.S.S. (Community Centre, Wanstead).—Thursday, October 24th, 7.45 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY, "Germany and the Roman Catholic Church."

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

## Notes and News

READERS will remember that Maesteg (South Wales) cinemas, after winning permission at the poll to open on Sundays (in face of bitter clerical opposition), decided not to open on Sundays, because they were not permitted to open until 8 p.m., after the chapels had finished their services. However, on Sunday, September 15th, Maesteg Valley cinemas opened for the first time, this in response to requests from many disappointed would-be cinemagoers. Congregations in most of the chapels were instructed that they must not support any form of Sunday entertainment, but this had little effect, as queues formed long before the cinemas were due to open. As the (mostly old) people left the chapels they witnessed the (mostly young) people entering the cinemas, which perhaps made them wonder if their own entertainment will be so well patronised (they meet "consumer resistance" already) a generation hence.

★

THE South Wales Area Council of the National Union of Mineworkers (representing 100,000 miners) is to support the Wales and Monmouthshire Sunday Opening Council, who hope to enlist the support of other unions.

★

AUSTRALIAN Catholics are continually pressing for literary censorship. In Western Australia the Young Christian Workers want the re-establishment of the Standing Committee on Indecent Literature (a body on which several religious denominations were represented). In New South Wales, Bishop Doody of Armidale issued a pastoral letter entitled "Indecent and Harmful Literature," which called for "indecent literature" to be opposed by Catholics, who should "insist that the necessary steps be taken to prevent its publication and distribution." To the R.C.s, naturally, a medical book on birth-control may be classed as "indecent literature." After that, ecclesiastical interference with the publication of scientific, freethought and "anti-religious" (*i.e.* anti-Catholic) books could be expected. It is to be hoped the Australian Government will resist attempts to establish a Vatican-style Index in the country.

★

It is reported from Mansfield, Notts, that a man has had the rateable valuation of his house reduced by £2 after he had complained that he could not relax in his garden because of the hymn-singing at a Spiritualist chapel next door.

★

It was interesting to hear a Brains Trust psychologist say that taking away religion from some lunatics might have very serious consequences. A new argument for the retention of religion, no doubt.

★

SPEAKING at a diocesan rally of Catholic nurses, Bishop Ellis of Nottingham asserted: "The Catholic nurse expects her privileges. She expects liberty to attend Sunday Mass and to be allowed to put forward her code of morality to hospital officers and surgeons, and to say that she *cannot take part* in such and such an operation." It is estimated that 70% of the total number of nurses in the country are Catholics. The dangers seem obvious. When nurses refuse to help in an operation to, say, save a mother's life by terminating a pregnancy, a critical position is reached.

—NEXT WEEK—

CLYDESIDE COMEDY

By COLIN MCCALL

# The Stratford Debate

By G. H. TAYLOR

THE DEBATE between Mrs. Margaret Knight and Dr. D. M. MacKay, a research physicist of London University, took place on Sunday evening, October 6th, at the Stratford Town Hall. The West Ham N.S.S. Branch President, Mrs. E. Venton, capably took the chair, and the debate was conducted with perfect courtesy and had a large and appreciative audience, in which it seemed that perhaps the Christians may have been in a slight minority as compared with freethinkers and neutrals. In any case, some rather indifferent contributions to the discussion on the part of the Christians present received, shall we say, a charitable reception from their freethought opponents in the way of encouragement by applause. And when the Christian voices petered out there were always freethinkers ready to keep the discussion going. The main exchanges were as follows:

## MRS. KNIGHT OPENS

Mrs. Knight commenced the debate ("Christianity or Scientific Humanism as a guide to modern life") by defining the terms. The gulf between them was belief in the supernatural, such as the belief in a personal God, in Jesus Christ as divine, in his resurrection, in human survival after death and in supernatural sanction for morals. She rejected Christianity as untrue, and its teachers were, to use Morley's expression, "tampering with veracity." If it were asked, "Who do you think you are, you who reject the teaching of the founders of Christianity," the answer was obvious: we know more because we live later and have at our disposal knowledge to which bible-makers and dogma-makers had no access. They believed, for example, according to their lights, in a flat earth, possession by demons and so on. Religion had been driven out by knowledge, and a Gallup Poll had shown, for instance, that the belief in a personal God is held by a minority of people today (about 40%, even less among the young). We had outgrown the belief in God as we had that in witches: it was not that some scientist had devised an experiment specially for disproving witches; the belief had been outgrown with developing knowledge and it was the same with the belief in God.

However, we are none the worse, for religious belief or observance was not necessary, Mrs. Knight contended, for the maintenance of morality. In fact, evidence of delinquency points the other way, showing that believers are more prone to crime than unbelievers, with Roman Catholics at the top of the crime statistics and those "of no religion" at the bottom. Man could get the impulses to decent behaviour out of his own nature.

Belief in God, went on Mrs. Knight, so far from leading to moral behaviour, was actually destructive of morality. On the hypothesis of a God in control of things, there is much evil and suffering for him to account for, not attributable to man. Cancer, typhoid, leprosy, tapeworms and the like were on the Christian hypothesis created by God, not by man.

Stories in the Bible which seemed absurd were now being called "symbolical." Here Christian leaders laid themselves open to the suspicion of doing a "double think."

## DR. MACKAY FOLLOWS

Mrs. Knight's opening having been received with much applause, Dr. MacKay followed, quietly spoken and with a pleasant manner.

Some unbelievers had tried to show that God was merely the gap in our knowledge, he said, but he saw no need for God in this capacity. Science would fill the gaps but God

would still be the Power behind the whole process. It would not do merely to analyse the factors: we must "read the signs." It was the same in human behaviour as in physics, and to ask whether an action was right goes deeper than merely asking how it happened. Science would provide us with knowledge, but the "God of Truth would hold us responsible," so we must use God's gifts wisely. It was for each of us to "enter into relationship with God" and to "teach children to be guided by God." "His experience compels the Christian to try to put into words what he feels, but our experiences must be checked against the fact that at a focal point in history something happened that affects our lives now." We need to be continually reassured that our experiences are valid, so "we go to the New Testament, where we find similar experiences which ring a bell, and you begin to see what they mean."

"If God's hand in things is real," explained the speaker, "then it makes sense to find, in one's own experience, God." We must get "the experience of coming to grips with Christ's offer, and if we do that, there is a psychological level at which it all makes sense."

## QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

Among many questions put to the disputants, but principally to Dr. MacKay, one asked the latter how he explained the problem of evil. "There has never been a Christian answer," he replied, "God's answer is the Cross, not an argument." Another questioner took this up, saying the Cross was yet another sign of injustice, and so could not be used as an explanation.

Dr. MacKay was asked how he explained the cruelty of Church leaders towards their opponents throughout history.—"I don't. I leave that to God." Perhaps, he added, power had gone to their heads, "but their cruelty should not be used to excuse own own."

*Does not your belief in God depend on the geographical accident of your native land? If you were born into a Buddhist family what would become of your Christian beliefs?* Dr. MacKay did not reply.

*You have been using the term God very often. What do you mean by it?* God, said Dr. MacKay, was beyond definition, except negatively. If God did not reveal himself we should not know him; "it is the God we find in action in the Bible."

*How do you know this "God"?* "Get to know people who know him," replied Dr. MacKay, "and they will try to tell you what he is like."

Mrs. Knight was asked how she explained mystics. They are to be explained like other people, she replied, on our knowledge that mental processes are the result of brain processes.

Dr. MacKay was asked how he explained Christians taking opposite sides in war.—"A Christian who loves God loves justice," said Dr. MacKay, "and it is not always obvious to him when to lay down arms. It is a problem on which Christians differ."

Asked whether he believed in the Virgin Birth, Dr. MacKay had "no settled opinion," but with God all things were possible.

## CONCLUDING SPEECHES

Dr. MacKay reasserted some of his points in conclusion and said the Bible contained "the record of honest men in their encounter with God." Mrs. Knight said it would not do to present legends as symbols. Moreover, the results had not been very successful from the Christian standpoint because the "records of honest men" had led to much

Christian quarrelling and, indeed, bloodshed. Dr. MacKay said what science produced were ultimately the gifts of God. But if we are to thank God for the antiseptic, observed Mrs. Knight, we ought logically to resent his bringing the disease in the first place. She did not follow what was meant by "encountering God." If prayer was meant, then where were the controls, offering a practical test of its efficacy? To start with the hypothesis of God is to commit yourself to an assumption in the first place: the result of this was "selective perception" by the believer (i.e. counting the hits and ignoring the misses).

### SOME IMPRESSIONS

A freethinker must be on his guard in giving an estimate of a debate in which he is personally on the side of one of the contestants. The reaction is just as likely to be in the direction of giving the Christian rather more credit, so as to be "on the safe side" in one's estimate. As an extra precaution I have, where necessary, quoted Dr. MacKay's actual words rather than presume to paraphrase, much less

interpret, them. Frankly, if some of his remarks had the words assembled in a different order, or even taken and shuffled like a pack of cards and then re-dealt haphazard, they would convey just as much to me. I say this sadly, not gloatingly, for a good fighting debate is much better than one in which one combatant persistently sticks his head in a frame as an obliging target.

It is no departure from conservative language to say the case for Christianity was a thing of shreds and tatters by the end of the evening, and the Christians in the audience were unable to rescue it. There is little fun in punching a cushion and Mrs. Knight's debating skill was never seriously tested by this London University scientist. Dr. MacKay used the term God as a subject on to which he could stick predicates *ad lib* without bothering to say what he meant by God.

Dr. MacKay, let it be said, took everything with unfeeling good humour, and both the principals were warmly applauded at the end.

## A Philosophy for the West

By H. CUTNER

This concludes a review of *Sensism* by Charles Smith. (The Truth Seeker Co., U.S.A.)

JUST as he took a line of his own on philosophy, so Charles Smith in *Sensism* has some original things to say on religion. Freethinkers who have followed Paine, Ingersoll, Bradlaugh and the rest, will find it difficult to allow "God Almighty", the "Heavenly Father", "redemption", "atonement", "crucifixion" and other words associated with the most Fundamentalist conception of Christianity, to come back with other meanings into our criticism of religion.

"Christianity is", he says, "pragmatic pathetics in conditioning men to be good." The New Testament was originally meant to be a code of ethics, but while "logicians and mathematicians think in names of several degrees of abstraction", the "common people need imaged things and persons." So the Heavenly Father must be real for them, while actually he is "a verbal idol," that is "a verbal expression personified." "As men require visible forms on blackboards for understanding the invisible forms of geometry, so they require symbols for the adoration of invisible spiritual beings". This well expresses Charles Smith's approach to an understanding of the people "personified" in the Gospel story. In actual fact, they never existed; but they certainly exist as *words* — and as words which have so definite a meaning now that they have become "persons". "Men will kill for creeds" insists Mr. Smith, "but not for knowledge. They hate the heretic more than the sceptic." Thus, we can understand why "prophets and priests do not say 'it seems', 'it is probable', but declare, 'Thus saith the Lord'." And when "the Lord said unto the prophet", all it means is "the prophet said" and no more.

As will be seen from all this, *Sensism* does not attack ethics as such, even if veiled under the name of Christianity, as much as the idea that behind all its teachings are real beings. God "has no independent physical existence; his being is his being perceived by the mind. He is not the cause of anything. Awareness of God is awareness of the name of 'God'."

Mr. Smith goes very deeply into the arguments for God's existence — they "include Design, Purpose, Moral (including Conscience), Universal Consent, Revelation, and Intuition". As for the "spiritual arguments", these include "First Cause, Cosmological, Ontological, Prime

Mover, Contingent-Necessity, and Creation." And it is quite impossible for me to do anything like justice to the way the author takes them one by one and demolishes them. For example :

'The Divine Creator and Purposer is an analogical creation. If the Creator and Purposer literally existed as a conscious being who plans man and the universe for foreimagined goals, man and the universe would still be mechanisms. Unless man is a mechanism, the Supreme Being, if there is such being, could not plan him. "Planning the immechanical" is a meaningless phrase. Conscious organic beings design inorganic beings. That the inorganic designs the organic is not a reasonable assertion. . . . "Who made the world?" is a leading question. The non-leading form is, "Was the world made?"

In other words the author demolishes the famous Design Argument by sheer weight of logic — and who can deny his conclusion, "Universal design makes God the author of evil"?

Needless to add, Charles Smith has no use for "metaphysics." But all the same, he devotes more than 100 pages to disproving it, dealing with Augustine, Descartes, Locke, Hume, Berkeley, Kant, and many other famous Idealists or near-Idealists. He thinks the word "idealism" should really be "ideaism" for it teaches mostly "the doctrine that all we know or most surely know are our own ideas". But "ideal beings, including the Supreme Being, exist but not independently; they are real but not causal; their being is their being perceived by the mind."

On the Bible and Christianity, Mr. Smith has such a lot to say that it is simply impossible to give even an epitome of his examination. "The New Testament" he insists, "is social propaganda in fictional form."

Some of the Bible writers did not distinguish (he says) between persons and personifications of tribes, countries and stars. The generations of the sons of Noah given in the tenth chapter of Genesis include Gomer, personification of a country; and Madai personification of a people. Egypt, the Hebrew name of which is Misraim, is listed as a son of Ham and grandson of Noah. This historicizing of a personification is responsible for the belief of some men that the coloured peoples of the world are descended from Ham. Abraham and Sarah are symbols, personifications of two Semitic tribes. . . . From the nations round about the Hebrew historians borrowed legends, traditions, folklore, and historical events and rewriting wove them into a history of the historyless Hebrews to give them a big name in the world. They succeeded.

It will, I am afraid, take a long time before even our Rationalists will agree with this, let alone Christians. But it is all true nevertheless. If Dupuis and Robert Taylor —

among many other writers like the Deist Woolston — had been listened to instead of being sneered at, Secularism would have made much more headway. And Charles Smith calls attention to another fact, the "four pre-dated forgeries" exposed by the Higher Critics. They are the Five Books of Moses forged about the year 400 BC but predated by 1000 years; the Gospels forged in the second century and predated 100 years; The Donation of Constantine forged in the latter part of the eighth century and pre-dated 400 years and the False Decretals forged in the ninth century and pre-dated from seven to five centuries.

Placed first in the New Testament, the Gospels were "long accepted as older than the Apocalypse and the Pauline Epistles."

But the Bible is for Charles Smith first and foremost "analogical", for "analogy is the language of religion." Naming "gasoline" the life blood of an engine is "analogical description"; and so "barbarians use analogy, animistic and personificational language to explain events, speaking as if everything is alive and every action is willed". He "personifies the seasons and describes their sequences as the slaying and resurrection of divine persons".

Jesus is a character similar to the capitalised virtues of Medieval drama, each of whom is begotten by the Holy Spirit, "language personified." The authors of the Gospels "searched the Jewish scriptures for phrases and sentences which they could represent to be a prophecy and of which they could write the fulfilment on paper, statements in ancient books are more probable than that the authors of those books knew what would occur a few hundreds of years later."

Step by step Charles Smith takes the reader through his invincible logic not only to think for himself but to see what religion in general and Christianity in particular really are. Jesus of course, "never lived" though "Jesus the Nazorean, the Saviour, lives wherever men are saved by the sacrifice of others. Works upholding the historicity of Jesus are of the same character as those upholding the historicity of Adam." Jesus never speaks of Adam — "the Gospels are not histories. Probably no library in the world now indexes them under History".

It is unfortunate that the high cost of printing makes *Sensism* so dear to buy. It is one of those eternal books to which one must go again and again to follow and imbibe the author's long studies of philosophical, historical and religious subjects. But it will well repay the reader.

The two volumes are beautifully printed and produced. They are a pleasure to handle, and I can only wish more of our own readers could study them. Certainly their Free-thought education is not complete without this "Philosophy of the West."

## CORRESPONDENCE

### AGNOSTICS

This is an age when we run away from terms. The rat catcher becomes the rodent operator and the Rationalist is rapidly becoming the Humanist.

I am an Atheist and I believe in sticking to the term. It is constantly misrepresented but the remedy is not to run away from the term but to correct the misrepresentations.

Atheist means, according to its derivation, a man without a God. This is stated in one of the three dictionaries I possess. The others define an Atheist as one who denies the existence of God. I have never met such Atheists and I have met most of the prominent Atheists during the last fifty years.

I was led to write the above by reviews of Bertrand Russell's collected essays entitled *Why I am not a Christian* (Allen and Unwin) and in particular by Philip Toynbee's review in *The Observer*, where he states the essays "represent, of course, the amateur side of this most professional philosopher, for Russell nowhere claims that he, or anyone else either, has provided, or ever could provide, a logical proof for the non-existence of God." This places Foote and Cohen among the amateurs since neither ever claimed to provide a logical proof for the non-existence of

God. Clearly, it is not possible to prove that God does not exist any more than it is possible to prove that there is not a living creature on the other side of the moon. The onus of proof is on the believer. He should define his God and furnish his evidence. The Atheist will have no difficulty in demolishing it.

Now they are starting on the misrepresentation of the Agnostic. Dr. Sangster, in the *Sunday Times*, says he has a friend who divides Agnostics into two main classes: (a) those who deny that God is knowable, and (b) those who say that He may be knowable but that He is not known to them. Both these classes imply that an Agnostic believes a God exists, and Dr. Sangster has no difficulty in showing how to deal with one of these classes.

An Agnostic who believed a God existed would be a Deist. The Agnostics I have met take the view that they do not know or that the existence of God is a matter beyond human experience. And so far as dictionaries go, the Agnostic is more lucky than the Atheist. We only dodge misrepresentation for a short time by inventing a new term. Let us stick to the old term. G. J. FINCH.

### N.S.S. PROPAGANDA

I feel that all the N.S.S. attempts to drive some sense into the public will prove of little avail until they use the three main organs of established religion: the Press, TV and radio.

Use these by the same methods of attack as the Jesuits: obtain positions of power in these organisations; then use that position to see that a fair share of space and time is allocated to Freethinkers' views. As Catholics use their position to ensure that N.S.S. ideas are deep out of sight and mind, so that N.S.S. must see that Secularists obtain similar positions of power to act as a counter-attack.

The small public meetings are but pinpricks on the thick elephant hide of a priest-ridden community. G. BLAKE.

### GOD?

Mr. Mills (September 27th) decides "Blind Chance" is unthinkable. I find the idea of God unthinkable. While the idea of the universe without a maker may seem difficult, the idea of a universe-maker is surely impossible. The marvel of the universe is surely eclipsed by the marvel of the universe-maker, so why does Mr. Mills find it easier to accept the greater marvel without explanation, yet feel forced to reject the lesser one unless it has (to him) a reasonable explanation. The law and order that obtains is responsible for life. Law and order was not made for man; man evolved because of it. C. V. SYMES.

Under the above heading correspondent W. Mills rules out "blind chance," and like Paul, finds "no excuse" for people not believing in God's existence. It's in "The Book"! However, W. Mills refrains from stating his definition of God. It is a positive "fact." Christians are so cocksure and dogmatic! "If you don't believe you will be damned!" Another positive fact is that the God of the Christians is an ogre. I would quote from the late Col. R. G. Ingersoll: "If everything that we cannot account for is above nature, then ignorance is the test of the supernatural. The man who is mentally honest stops where his knowledge stops. At that point he says that he does not know. Such a man is a philosopher."

In other words, W. Mills shows his ignorance by trying to "prove" the existence of God. Can he tell us who created the God he worships? The Holy Bible is silent on this important point. R. G. FORSTER.

**CAN MATERIALISM EXPLAIN MIND?** By G. H. Taylor. Price 3/6; postage 6d.

**FREEDOM'S FOE—THE VATICAN.** By Adrian Pigott. Price 2/6; postage 6d.

**THE DOLLAR AND THE VATICAN: Its Character, Methods and Aims.** By Avro Manhattan. 2nd Edition—Revised and Enlarged. Price 21/-; postage 1/3.

**CHALLENGE TO RELIGION.** A re-issue of four lectures by Chapman Cohen. Price 1/6; postage 4d.

**BRADLAUGH AND INGERSOLL.** By Chapman Cohen. Well illustrated. Now available. Price 6/-; postage 7d.

**AGE OF REASON.** Thomas Paine's masterpiece with 40-pages introduction by Chapman Cohen. Cloth 4/-; Paper 2/6; postage 6d.

**HOW THE CHURCHES BETRAY THEIR CHRIST.** British Christianity critically examined. By C. G. L. Du Cann. Price 1/-; postage 4d.

**ESSAYS IN FREETHINKING.** By Chapman Cohen. Series 1, 2, 3, 4. Cloth bound. Price 6/- each series; postage 6d. each.

**THE BIBLE HANDBOOK** (10th Edition). By G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball. Price 4/6; postage 6d.