

# The Freethinker

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THROUGH THE KINDNESS of Mr. R. F. Sadler, of Messrs. Constable and Co. Ltd., the publishers, I have been reading *The Amazing World of John Scarne*, the autobiography of the world-famous card manipulator, magician, and authority on gambling. It is a book that will interest all who are disturbed at the ease with which unscrupulous tricksters can fool the public in countless different ways. For John Scarne has a rare capacity for detecting fraud and a commendable public spirit in exposing it. With his ability, he could have made a fortune as a gambler; he chose instead to be an entertainer, becoming probably the greatest of his kind.

There is so much in the book that I cannot hope to cover it at all adequately. I propose, therefore, to concentrate on the section devoted to E.S.P., mentioning in passing that Scarne became adviser on gambling to the U.S. forces, helping to eliminate a large amount of the fraudulent card-sharping and dice-throwing that took place in the Services; that he does not hesitate to state unequivocally "Hypnotism is a fake"; and that he numbers among his friends such varied types as the late Harry Houdini and ex-heavy weight boxing champion of the world, James J. Braddock.

## The Challenge

Now, on to E.S.P. "Extra-sensory perception and psychokinesis are strictly humbug," announces John Scarne in his typically bold way. Boldness that will shock the pious adherents to Dr. Joseph Banks Rhine, but boldness that I consider to be justified. Rhine's adherents need to be shocked, anyway. My suspicion is, though, that they will continue—as is their wont—to murmur that they still feel that there might be something in it. Well, if there is anything worth having in Rhine's E.S.P. claims, there is a simple way of finding it, and Mr. Scarne has issued his challenge:

To prove there is no such animal as telepathy, clairvoyance, mind-reading, thought-reading, second sight, thought projection, extra-sensory perception, or whatever you wish to call it, I am prepared to wager \$100,000 against an equal amount that no person in this world can call correctly the serial numbers on a dollar bill that I will place and seal in an envelope, without the envelope being opened. If the person accepting the challenge professes to be a telepathist, I will permit his sender to see the serial number of the bill in question in order to give him an opportunity to transmit his thoughts to the receiver. Naturally the "telepathic" receiver and sender will be searched for hidden gimmicks before being stationed in different rooms for the experiment, so as to avoid any trickery by collusion.

He is also prepared to wager another \$100,000 that nobody can make "an inanimate object move (dice included) either by the P.K. effect or by some spirit agency." Anyone wishing to accept either of Scarne's challenges should deposit \$100,000 in the United National Bank in New Jersey; Scarne will cover it within 48 hours. He names acceptable judges, and then says: "So, all you believers in psychic phenomena, get it up, or shut up." But those are Mr. Scarne's final words on E.S.P. and P.K.; let us

consider some of his reasons for saying them.

## Horseplay

He tells us a good deal about the mind-heading horse, Lady (later called Lady Wonder), referred to recently in these columns. Mr. Scarne had the good fortune to see the filly in action before and after she had received the blessing of Dr. Rhine. The first time he saw her, in February 1928, the horse stood in front of an old table on which were arranged rows of children's bricks bearing letters of the alphabet. Answers to questions were given by the horse pushing appropriately lettered bricks with her nose. She pushed the phenomenal answer, "CAR," to Mr. Scarne's spoken question, "How did I get out here?" But—poor horse—she was flummoxed when Mr. Scarne wrote a question on a pad.

Mr. Scarne realised, of course, that Mrs. Fonda, Lady's owner, needed to know the question before it could be answered, so, after five minutes' silence, he turned to talk to his companion and "accidentally on purpose," as it were, he let her see the question, "Where do I live?" Lady then began to spell out "NEW YORK" with the lettered bricks. Although he lived in Fairview, New Jersey, Mr. Scarne continued to play up to Mrs. Fonda and her filly, complimented them, paid \$5, and then left.

As he drove away he "couldn't help but wonder if it were true that the professors from Duke University had been fooled by such an obvious bit of horseplay on the part of Mrs. Fonda." The act was easily explained. He had detected Mrs. Fonda cueing the horse with a whip. What might have puzzled some people was that the owner stood "about two and a half feet behind and at approximately a 60-degree angle to Lady's head," but the position of a horse's eyes on either side of its head gives it a "wide backward range of peripheral vision." Mrs. Fonda proceeded as follows:

The shaking of the whip the first time was the cue for Lady to bend her head within a couple of inches of the lettered blocks. Mrs. Fonda's shake of the whip a second time was the cue for Lady to continuously move her head in a bent position back and forth over the blocks. When Lady's head was above the desired block, Mrs. Fonda cued Lady to drop her head on to the desired block by again shaking the whip. "It was as simple as all that," adds Mr. Scarne.

## "Investigation"

In 1929 came Dr. Rhine's article on his six-day "Investigation" of the mind-reading horse, from which the parapsychological expert concluded:

There is left then, only the telepathic explanation, the transference of mental influence by an unknown process. Nothing was discovered that failed to accord with it, and no other hypothesis proposed seems tenable in view of the results. With Rhine, incidentally, among others, was that other psychic-minded Professor, William McDougall, also of Duke University.

Rhine's publicity brought fame and fortune to Lady and her owner, and when Mr. Scarne visited them again in 1940 the business was thriving. A new barn had been

## — VIEWS and OPINIONS —

# E.S.P. and Humbug

— By COLIN McCALL —

built, and the children's bricks had been discarded in favour of a new system, whereby Lady Wonder (as she now was) had only to touch a lever with her muzzle for a metal letter to tilt downwards. The horse had been trained to move her head over the levers, and a single cue from Mrs. Fonda sufficed to indicate which lever to press. Outside the barn were cars from almost every state, Mr. Scarne tells us. And he witnessed an appalling example of credulity on the part of a Chicago police-captain who, after being told absolutely nothing of any value, thanked the horse for being a "great help" to him. To Mr. Scarne the whole thing "spells HOKUM with capital letters."

As for Dr. Rhine's P.K. dice experiments, they "are not worthy of being discussed simply because his dice are faulty." The "common commercial variety" referred to in the reports "includes a lot of queer dice," and "no casino operator . . . would ever think of using dice that answer to such vague description." "They certainly would not use the opaque white dice" shown in one of Dr. Rhine's photographs.

#### "Flock of Flaws"

"I know, and everyone knows—at least they should know"—says Mr. Scarne—"that all of the evidence submitted by Rhine to prove the existence of psychic phenomena is a lot of humbug." But the problem considered in *The Amazing World of John Scarne* is not that of psychic phenomena; simply why Rhine seems to achieve more positive results in his tests than experimenters in other colleges. Dr. Eugene Adams of Colgate University used the same cards as Rhine and repeated the latter's technique. "My results were negative," he said. Professor Kennedy of Stanford University pointed out that a scientific test of truth is that experiments should be capable of repetition with similar results. His results, he said, "did not correspond with those of Dr. Rhine." As a gambling expert, Mr. Scarne had a rather different approach from these scientists. In Rhine's books and articles he finds not one flaw, but "a flock of flaws."

Among them is the one that seems to have puzzled my recent critic, Mr. D. Bear (*THE FREETHINKER*, 25/7/58), namely that those subjects whose scores are not above "chance expectation" are eliminated on the grounds that they possess no paranormal powers. But Mr. Scarne's analysis of Rhine's tests with his "star subject," Hubert Pearce (reported in *Extra-Sensory Perception*) is perhaps most interesting of all. Pearce ran through a pack of Zener cards (consisting of 25 cards, five of each five symbols: star, square, plus sign, circle, and wavy lines) 45 times. Sometimes the scores were checked after only five cards out of the 25 had been turned (Rhine, as so often, is aggravatingly imprecise in his description: "Either after five calls or after 25 calls—and we used both conditions generally about equally . . ." he writes, so we don't know how many times). Now, checking the cards in fives plays havoc with Rhine's "chance expectation" of five correct guesses in 25 cards. Mr. Scarne illustrates: "Supposing the first five cards dealt were all stars, it would be foolish for Pearce to call a star with the subsequent cards as there would be no stars left in the deck. Then the next five calls were made and a second check was made by Pearce and Rhine. Supposing these five cards were found to be all circles. Pearce would be foolish to call either a circle or a star . . ." Or again, if 20 cards had been called and checked without one bearing wavy lines, clearly Pearce would call wavy lines for the remaining five cards. The American Institute of Mathematical Statistics notwithstanding, "chance expectation" of five correct guesses when the cards are checked in fives is just nonsense. However, the Institute may be said to have covered itself by

the clause, "assuming that the experiments have been properly performed" (*New Frontiers of the Mind*, page 211). And they needed to!

But it really is amazing how many people have been "taken in" by the Rhine E.S.P. claims. We owe a debt to men like John Scarne, who call Extra-Sensory Perception by its proper name—"humbug."

[*The Amazing World of John Scarne*, by John Scarne. Constable, 1957. 35s.]

## Rovers to Different Heavens

IN VIEW of the strong tie-up between the Churches and the Scout Movement, it is surprising that the latter has had scant attention from the freethought movement. There is no secret about the Church and Scout relationship (unlike the similar association with the armed forces) and the official Scout attitude towards religion reads: "It is expected that every Scout shall belong to some religious denomination and attend its services." Loyalty to God is demanded in the Scout Promise and Scout Laws.

That the Scout movement fastens on to the Churches in order to increase its membership may be inferred from the following, taken from "Aids to Scoutmastership": "What are the Churches doing to neglect such a lever?" Indeed, both parties are using each other desperately, the better to snare their victims. But a price must be paid, and so when Vigilant, in *The Scouter* (December '57) said that a troop of camping Scouts had worshipped together "not as Catholics, nor as Protestants, nor Free Church Scouts, but simply as Christian Scouts," the Catholics in the movement (it could hardly have been anyone else) came down upon him to such effect that *The Scouter* for March carried a note in which the Committee of the Council pointed out that Vigilant had broken P.O.R.10(5), which states: "Where it is not permissible under a law of the religion of any Scout to attend religious observances other than those of his own form of religion, the Scouters of the Group must see that such a rule is strictly observed while the Scout is under their control."

Vigilant—one can almost hear him sighing—apologised, explaining that it was an imaginative account he wrote, and not an actual one. The poor chap meant well but it was all a beautiful dream! What a sham for the Scouting manuals to stress that religion, for Scouts, is a practical thing to be "lived"! "Aids to Scoutmastership" states that the "basic religion" of the Scout is "not that of any particular Church or sect . . . (it) gives him a Christianity for everyday practice."

It is admitted that the different sects and forms of worship involve a "difficulty," and apart from regulations it is left for local troops to surmount any unforeseen obstacles, presumably in the hope that there are not too many Vigilants around. Where possible a denominational troop is formed with its own chaplain, but many inter-denominational troops exist (I do not know of any freethinking ones), in which cases "a chaplain seems hardly required," according to Lord Baden-Powell, and Scouts from inter-denominational troops "should be sent to their own clergy and pastors for denominational religious instruction."

The whole movement is riddled with prominent Churchmen, and there is a give-and-take in mutual recruiting. And the War Office rubs its hands in satisfaction, for there they know that "human brotherhood" is taught as having limits both by the Churches and the Scout movement. There isn't enough freethought in either to frighten a mouse. They will rover to their different heavens by the quickest route if called upon to do so. E. CROSSWELL.

# Buddhism and Race

By F. A. RIDLEY

ONE OF THE MOST URGENT PROBLEMS encountered by society in the course of its slow, upward evolution, is that of race, or more accurately, racism, which has produced some of the worst moral aberrations and absurd ideologies in human history. Originating in the primitive conditions of early tribal society, as the American sociologist, the late Ruth Benedict, so aptly demonstrated in her little classic, *Race and Racism*, racist theories assumed, in more advanced societies, the deceptive justification of theological and political dogmas. That such concepts, however demonstrably untrue, are still fully compatible with a technically developed and even superficially scientific society, has been proved in our own time by the monstrous crimes perpetrated by the Germanic Aryan master-race at the expense of such "impure" races as Jews and Gypsies, in Nazi Germany and in Nazi-occupied Europe. Moreover, in case we imagine that either racist dogmas or their practical application in the wholesale extermination of other "lesser breeds without the Law" were invented by Adolf Hitler or Alfred Rosenberg, we have only to walk into the nearest church or synagogue, in any Christian or Jewish community, to read in the Holy Book of these allegedly moral creeds how the Hebrew god Jehovah commanded his chosen race to exterminate with fire and sword the "idolators" of Canaan as an impure race.

As Ruth Benedict so aptly noted, racism, at all times and places, has at its disposal the briefest, most easily understood and most compelling of all human slogans; its universal formula consists of five words only: "*I belong to the Elect.*" By the biological facts of birth and heredity, my bloodstream is pure and noble, and nothing and no one can take this inalienable privilege away from me whilst I live. Similarly, neither intellect nor virtue, neither faith nor works can compensate the rest of mankind for their inalienable inferiority, also a lifelong possession. It was in this arrogant self-assurance that the ancient Jews hewed Agag (and countless others) in pieces before the Lord. And three thousand years later, the German Nazis, endowed with the sacred bloodstream of the noble Aryans, turned the selfsame racist dogma against the modern descendants of the "Chosen Race." Ancient Jericho and modern Auschwitz stand as hideous sacrificial temples to the identical mental concept. For as my friend George Maranz (himself a non-racist Jew) so trenchantly noted: "Both Ezra and Hitler, the ancient Jews and the modern Nazis knew *what* a 'Chosen Race' is. They only disagreed *which* it is!"

The ancient Jews of the Old Testament were not, however, the original promulgators of racist theory and practice. Actually, that distinction probably harks back to some prehistoric tribe of "All-men" whose tribal witch doctors kept on assuring them that it was for them alone that the universe was created. (Rather ironically, the modern French name for Germany is *Allemagne*, derived from such an ancient German tribe, the *Allemani*, or "all men"). However, the first "race" who appear to have created a self-conscious "racist" dogma were the ancient Aryans who conquered India and Iran perhaps about 2,000 years before the present era. The Aryans who conquered under the sign of the sacred Swastika, later created the still current caste-system, a social order in which Indian society is sealed off into water-tight compartments represented by the various castes, hierarchically constituted from the "twice-born" Brahmin priests at the top,

down to the despised "outcasts" at the bottom. This elaborate social hierarchy appears to be of racist origin and to correspond with "pure" Aryans, mixed Aryans and aborigines, and pure or rather impure—outcast aborigines: at least this opinion, which appears to be endorsed by most scholars who have studied the question, also seems to be reinforced by the Hindu name for caste itself—*Varna*—or "colour."

At a later date, the Hindu legal code, the Laws of Manu, codified Hindu society on these ancient foundations which are only now beginning to yield to the expansion of industrialism in the sub-continent. India, however, occupies a special place in the annals of the racial question. Not only did it produce the first theoretically formulated racist theory, but it later produced its antidote in what was perhaps the first cosmopolitan cult in human history: the first world religion, as Buddhism has been sometimes described. For historically, and discounting the legends which later gathered round its origins and enveloped the life of its traditional founder, Buddhism appears to have first emerged as a reforming movement within the pale of Hinduism, aimed at abolishing the not yet fully-developed Hindu caste system and in particular opposed to the growing power of the Brahmins and their "infallible" scriptures, the Aryan Vedas. The origin of Buddhism is usually dated about 500 B.C., some time before the promulgation of the Laws of Manu, which put the seal on the Hindu caste system. Modern scholars do not seem to agree on the actual content of its earliest teachings ascribed to the founder, but it appears to have begun as a Hindu heresy, much as Christianity seems to have started as a Jewish heresy. It seems to be most unlikely that the founders of either cult had any idea of its future cosmopolitan destiny.

The oldest traditions make Gotama Buddha a Hindu nobleman, born in what is now Nepal and, as such, a member of the second or Warrior caste, which is known to have been at that time still restive under the yoke of Brahmin superiority. It also seems clear from the oldest records that Buddha and the early Buddhists took up a quite definitely hostile attitude towards the whole institution of caste. Buddha himself is alleged to have disregarded caste restrictions in his own personal relationships and to have ordained his monks from all castes or none. At a later date, after Buddhism had expanded into a world cult which spread from Japan to Egypt (Buddha is mentioned in a Christian text from Egypt about 200 A.D.), it either abolished caste restrictions or, at least, did not introduce them. It was only after Buddhism disappeared from its land of origin, India, about a thousand years after its inception, that a modified Hinduism, including caste, was reintroduced there. Shankara, the most famous of Hindu thinkers, who promoted the revival of Hinduism and the fall of Indian Buddhism, was himself an ex-Buddhist, and since his day, Hinduism has shown marked traces of Buddhist influence. This, however, does not extend to caste or race.

A timely, as well as important UNESCO pamphlet, has just been issued, which reviews in detail the whole question of Buddhism and the race question. This publication is the work of two Buddhist scholars from Ceylon and reviews the problem comprehensively as part of a whole series designed to consider the contemporary racist question in its

## This Believing World

Whether you like it or not you are going to have "religion" more and more foisted on you through the BBC and TV. "Talent scouts" are going to be posted in various pews to find new parsons who can tell the tale better than the average, and thus bring you a step nearer to Christ Jesus. For something *must* be done to fill the empty pews in churches all over the country, and particularly to counteract the huge following on radio and television which comedians like Frankie Howerd and glamorous ladies like Sabrina invariably draw away from religious programmes and the average service in churches.

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Of course, there are parsons who can enthuse a TV or radio audience—at least, that is what *they* say. The Rev. Donald Soper, for example—according to the *Daily Express*—has always "taken a lot of trouble over TV." It has well paid him, for he can always attract an audience. Whether he has ever converted any "infidel" is quite another matter. John Wesley had huge followers, but who, except his own immediate congregation, follow Mr. Soper?

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Behind the religious drive are the Rev. O. Hunkin, Mr. T. Singleton, Mr. M. Redington, and the Rev. S. Phipps, who, naturally, is always advertised as a friend of Princess Margaret. We have never been sure whether this is supposed to bring in converts, or merely to display the Princess's interest in religion. In any case, we can hardly believe that even all these illustrious names will bring back unwilling sheep to the fold. As for unbelievers, even Mr. Phipps with Princess Margaret's support, can hardly believe that he will ever convert any of them to the dreary, outmoded, Oriental religion called Christianity.

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That preposterous variation of true religion, Jehovah's Witnesses, however ludicrous are some of its teachings, managed to get considerable publicity at many cinemas all over the country in newsreels. Their "Convention" was filmed in detail, and we had some fine shots of its whole-hearted believers getting completely ducked when being baptised. Here again we cannot help wondering, was the Convention filmed to boost up religion, or merely to make cinema audiences laugh at the Witnesses' antics?

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Another variation of Christianity also got a boost-up in national newspapers and the cinema. This was all about the first Mormon temple just built in England which from now on will never allow "visitors." If you want to see what it is like, you must be converted and believe the fantastic rubbish of the Book of Mormon—though from Joseph Smith's belief in polygamy, based on God's Holy Word, modern Mormons hastily disassociate themselves. We wonder whether this is because they fear the law of the land, which only allows monogamy, rather than the wrath of the Father of Jesus who certainly allowed polygamy as a Divine institution.

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There was a time, and that not so long ago, when a religious daily like the *News Chronicle*—albeit a Nonconformist one—would have at once lost thousands of shocked readers through any reference to "birth control" or, as it used to be known, "Neo-Malthusianism." But times have changed, and the other day, Mr. Felix Holt frankly discussed the population question in the pages of that journal. He pointed out that that distinguished grandson of Prof. Huxley (the great "Agnostic"), Mr. Aldous Huxley, in a TV interview, warned us that there were too many people in the world. By the end of the century the

number would be 7,000 million, more than double the present 3,000 million.

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The point to note is that when Bradlaugh, Ingersoll, J. M. Robertson, and other eminent Freethinkers were dealing with the Population Problem in exactly the same way, they were greeted with howls of vituperation—Bradlaugh indeed (with Mrs. Besant) narrowly escaping six months' hard for advocating the "remedy," which now is "decently" called "Family Planning." It must be admitted too that "Parson" Malthus deserves the initial credit, but it was Freethinkers who had to bear the brunt of Christian hatred for advocating, as they did very early last century, birth control.

## "I was an Atheist"

ACCORDING to the *London Star* (August 9th, 1958), the newly-inducted vicar of Christ Church, Lancaster Gate, Paddington, the Rev. C. Anthony Bridge, says in his parish magazine: "Only nine years ago I was an atheist." "I fought every inch of the way," he added, "and I did my utmost to persuade myself and everyone else that Christianity was nonsense, but it was impossible to fight the sheer weight of evidence." Mr. Bridge is the very man we have been looking for and we invite him to share his evidence with us. We ask him to give the reasons for his former atheism and the "sheer weight of evidence" that forced him to abandon it. The columns of THE FREETHINKER are open to him. We understand that the Secretary of the National Secular Society has also invited Mr. Bridge to present this evidence in debate with a representative N.S.S. speaker.

(Concluded from page 275)

relationship with contemporary ideologies, including those of religion. While to a certain extent at least all cosmopolitan cults like Christianity and Islam, must from their very nature—claiming converts from *all* races—be opposed to the essential racist dogma that salvation represents the exclusive property of a particular bloodstream, Buddhism holds much the best and most tolerant record in this respect. Being neither theistic nor a believer in exclusive salvation for its own adherents, this cosmopolitan cult, argue our authors, has not only shown in practice a fine disregard for racist intolerance, but has closely anticipated in theory the modern concept of the equality of man as a single species. Certainly the facts set forth in this attractively produced UNESCO publication should be of great interest, not only to students of comparative religion in its wider aspects, but to liberal thinkers everywhere. For we cannot be certain, even today, that we have heard the last of that dreadful prehistoric illusion of tribal racism to be found in essentially identical forms in the Hebrew Old Testament—in the Book of Ezra in particular—in *Mein Kampf* and *The Myth of the 20th Century* (Hitler and Rosenberg). And also in the ancient Laws of Manu and the modern Japanese cult of Shintoism, the Emperor worship set out in the *Tanaka Memorandum*. Like other hoary illusions, the illusion of "The Chosen Race" dies hard.

[cf. *Buddhism and the Race Question*, by G. P. Malalasekera and K. N. Rayatilleke, UNESCO.]

—NEXT WEEK—

THE CHURCH UNDER SOCIALISM

By F. A. RIDLEY

# THE FREETHINKER

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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 welcome during normal office hours.

## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Midland Institute, Paradise Street).—Sunday, August 31st, 7 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY, "The Catholic Church and World Power."

### OUTDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Every Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: Messrs. DAY and CORINA.

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

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

London (Marble Arch).—Meetings every Sunday from 5 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.

London (Tower Hill).—Thursday, 12-2 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER and L. EBURY.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: G. WOODCOCK. Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, MILLS and WOOD.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Every Wednesday, 1 p.m.; every Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: Various speakers.

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. Sunday, 11.30 a.m.: T. M. MOSLEY. (Mansfield Market Place).—Sunday, 6.30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

Orpington Humanist Group.—Sunday, August 24th: Ramble, Brasted to Sevenoaks. Assemble Orpington Station, 10.30 a.m.

## Notes and News

THIS week-end, the World Union of Freethinkers holds a reunion in Brussels, and the General Committee will consider plans to date for the 1959 International Congress which will take place in the same city and commemorate the centenary of Francisco Ferrer's birth and the fiftieth anniversary of his martyrdom. But the present reunion is mainly a social occasion, and will include a banquet and a visit to the Brussels Exhibition. Mr. Charles Bradlaugh Bonner, President of the World Union, leads the British party; the Treasurer and the Secretary of the National Secular Society are also attending, along with a number of other members, including Mr. and Mrs. David Shipper, who were married on August 25th, to whom we send our best wishes.

THURSDAY "lunchtime" meetings of the National Secular Society at Tower Hill, London, now often continue well into the afternoon. The regular speakers are Mr. Len Ebury and Mr. J. W. Barker, and they have spoken to large crowds recently, a good time being had by all but a few Christian listeners. One of these—a Roman Catholic presumably—objected in very strong language to a reference to Christian relics on August 7th. In fact, he

quite forgot himself and swore violently more than once at Mr. Barker. Later the same day the N.S.S. Secretary received a phone call ostensibly from a Scotland Yard inspector who, "could not say why he had phoned." The man wanted to know the name of the N.S.S. speaker that day. Mr. McCall said he would make inquiries; the voice informed him that an official letter would follow. This has not yet been received, but police have taken notes at subsequent meetings.

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WHATEVER one's views on the vexed Irish question, one must condemn the brutal and useless I.R.A. raids and bombings, which often result in the death of innocent citizens. Religious differences, of course, seriously aggravate the North-South problem, and it is probably true to say that the Ulsterman fears unity because of its likely religious results more than for any other reason. There is a great deal in the saying that "Home rule means Rome rule." And Ulster fears are not likely to have been lessened by the discovery last month of an I.R.A. hideout in the vaults of St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Cathedral, Armagh. Three gunmen were captured in a confession after they had planted a bomb at police barracks near the cathedral. A raid followed and a chamber approached by an underground passage proved to be the hiding place.

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WE have spent many, many hours replying to well-intentioned but quite hopeless Christian correspondents. Many readers will know the type of letter we mean: pious, puerile and invariably protracted. It is quite useless to argue; satire would be wasted; yet politeness demands at least an acknowledgment. At last, we think we have the answer. Our guide is the late, incomparable H. L. Mencken, who experienced the same problem—and solved it. "Dear Sir"—he would reply—"You may be right." Not only has it the advantage of brevity; it avoids the necessity of reading the original epistle!

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THE August 18th copy of *Life* contained some magnificent colour photographs of Lourdes, including one taken from the spire of the basilica. Several showed the close proximity of the river, making the discovery of water in the grotto anything but surprising. Once again we saw the tragedy of the crippled; the near comedy of some of the pilgrims in their ridiculous poses. Then, of course, the priests: making the sign of the cross with the Host in a monstrosity "protected by umbrella." There was also a glimpse of the souvenir shops, where one may buy luminous virgins "guaranteed washable," Lourdes water cough drops and "glow-in-the-dark Lourdes neckties."

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A LETTER from Yorkshireman Mr. H. R. Crowther in the *Daily Mirror* (August 11th, 1958) asks what was the outcome of a 1949 petition by a Dutchman named Lobbe calling for a retrial of Christ. Lobbe's 8,000-word petition—the *Mirror* informs us—suggested that the then newly-formed State of Israel had a "moral obligation" to reinvestigate the trial and "correct the official records." This opens up some fascinating possibilities, particularly as London magistrate Frank Powell has declared that neither "legal" nor "natural" justice was done by either the Jewish or Roman courts. Future editions of the Bible might print an addendum giving the new findings. Then there is the all-important question of compensation for injustice done. Who would pay, Israel or Italy? Who would receive? No doubt the Church of Rome would put in a strong claim, but it would be equally strongly contested. All in all, the Israel Government was probably wise not to pursue the matter.

# Science, Religion and Miracle

By Dr. EDWARD ROUX

PAMPHLETS published by the Catholic Truth Society are often cleverly written by sophisticated writers. Starting with propositions acceptable to the most critical, the argument proceeds by stages to the revelation of "Catholic truth." The reader is often not quite certain at what point *non sequiturs* are introduced and arbitrary assumptions made. The pamphlet, *The Catholic Church and Science\**, by P. E. Hodgson, PH.D., B.S.C., may well be examined from this point of view.

The writer begins by asserting that there is no fundamental conflict between science and religion. His views may be summarised as follows:

Science is the study of the facts of experience from a particular point of view and by a characteristic method known as the hypothetico-deductive method. It is meaningless from the point of view of science to ask whether a particular theory is true or not; we can only ask whether or not it is in agreement with the facts known at present. A wise man does not believe either facts or theories; he accepts facts and he uses theories.

Mathematics is a process by which the consequences of a given set of premises, such as the posits of a scientific theory, may be found. It does not, however, provide any guarantee of the truth of the premises themselves. Thus mathematics *alone*, by its very nature, is unable to tell us anything about the material world.

Various types of geometry have been invented, each based on certain assumptions or axioms. It is meaningless to ask whether a geometry by itself is true.

A distinction is made between philosophy and science. Philosophy is a way of studying the material world by reflecting on the data of experience and on the way in which our mind attains knowledge, hence on the general principles which must apply to every part of Creation.

The facts that are the foundations of science are the facts of the world that God has made for man to live in. Since God cannot contradict Himself, there cannot possibly be any disagreement between these facts and the teaching of the Catholic Church, which speaks in His name.

This is not necessarily the case with scientific theories which are creations of the human mind. When disagreement does occur it need cause us no concern, owing to the tentative and uncertain nature of scientific theories.

Science by its very nature can neither prove nor disprove the teachings of the Catholic Church, since it is concerned with a different level of reality. All attempts to disprove *religious* beliefs from science are therefore misconceived.

I think it is possible to accept most of this exposition as essentially sound. The statement that God made the world for man to live in should be taken as a religious belief and not as a fact. The use of the word "Creation" obviously begs a question. It should also be pointed out that certain Christians known as Protestants question the right of the Catholic Church to interpret God to man.

Let us take the statement on mathematics, and making a few substitutions, re-write it as follows:

Catholic theology (or Catholic philosophy) is a method by which the consequences of a given set of premises, such as the doctrines of the Fall, Sin and the Atonement, can be found. It does not, however, provide any guarantee of the truth of the premises themselves. The various types of theologies or religious philosophies are each based on certain axioms, assumptions or dogmas. It is meaningless to ask whether a religion by itself is true.

If God made the world for man to live in, if he sent his son to redeem the world, if he created the Catholic Church, if he has appointed the Pope as his vice-regent on earth, etc., then if we wish to please God we must do as the Pope says, etc. This may be nearly as irrefutable as a proposition in Euclidian geometry. If a straight line is the shortest distance between two points, then any two sides of a triangle must be greater than the third, and so on.

In this connection it may be useful to quote Charles Smith† on the distinction between certainty and truth:

If these pigs are black, and if this pig is one of these pigs, then this pig is black.

The meaning of words is agreemental. The author appeals to them, not as to truth, but as to meaning. For truth he appeals to nature through the senses, to independent relations between physical things, not to the agreemental association of names with names. He does not mistake consistency for truth.

Truth is never certain and certainty is never true.

The statement above, "that God cannot contradict Himself," is agreemental by definition. Certain oriental mystics might conceivably disagree, but then they would have a different definition of God.

Pigs and hippopotami are considered to be modern descendants of a common ungulate ancestral stock that lived in the Miocene. This is a "scientific" statement. For its truth one could provide geological and zoological evidence. It is not certain but highly probable. The first pigs and hippopotami *might* have been created separately by God in 4004 B.C.

The pronouncements of the Pope (on moral issues) provide certainty for Catholics. Of their truth Muslims are sceptical. It is immoral for a Catholic to have four wives, but not for a Muslim.

Regarding miracles, Dr. Hodgson writes: "Of course, we know that God gave things certain properties which make them behave in a certain way, so it is reasonable to expect that they will continue to behave in the same way. If the properties of things continually changed in an erratic way life would be impossible. But this does not mean that God may not sometimes intervene and alter the usual course of natural events for a special purpose, such as to manifest His power to men and to provide striking confirmation of a spiritual truth. This is the purpose of the remarkable cures that have taken place throughout history at places of pilgrimage and elsewhere from the days of Our Lord to the present time. It is, of course, essential that alleged cures should be critically examined so that the possibility of their being due to natural causes can be ruled out. The examination procedure adopted by the Church is a most rigorous one and even then Catholics are not strictly bound by the final decision. They are therefore quite free to use their critical faculties to the full in all cases."

Dr. Hodgson up to this point has been trying to demonstrate the independence of science and religion. A good Catholic may, for example, believe that God "willed that life should originate and develop by means of an evolutionary process." In this question of miracles, however, it is not clear where science ends and religion begins, or what precisely is the difference between the natural and the supernatural.

A fair number of the "miracles" performed at Lourdes in the early days were said to be spontaneous cures of pulmonary tuberculosis. Now that X-ray identification of T.B. prior to the "cure" is demanded, miracles of this type no longer occur. What appeared to be "supernatural" has now become "natural." Recently Dr. D. J. West has reported on the eleven miraculous cures authenticated by the Church since the so-called "triple test" was adopted in 1946. On good medical grounds he has cast doubt on all of them.

If God purposely set aside the "laws of nature" and cured the sick at such places as Lourdes in order to mani-

\*Published by the Catholic Truth Society.

†*Sensism*, by Charles Smith, New York, 1956.

fest his power to men, why does he not provide clearer evidence? If scientific investigation casts doubt on the "supernatural" nature of these alleged miracles, in cases where the medical data is fully available, does not this strike at the roots of religion itself? In other words, the "conflict between religion and science" can be avoided only so long as the Church refrains from making pronouncements or propounding hypotheses which may be subject to scientific examination.

The real trouble is that Catholicism is not a pure religion. A pure religion is one, like Unitarianism, which confines its pronouncements to strictly religious and moral issues. "God is a spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." No scientist could suggest an experiment to confirm or disprove this proposition.

On the other hand, the Catholic assumption that a power, called God, sometimes actively intervenes to prevent matter behaving in its customary way, becomes subject to empirical (*i.e.* scientific) investigation as soon as the Catholic points to a particular occurrence and says "This is a miracle."

## Religious Laws in the U.S.A.

By D. SHIPPER

(Concluded from page 271)

TURNING to American Sabbath laws, we find that Georgia forbids "all trade," Iowa "all labour." West Virginia decrees "no labour or trade," and Washington "no labour, sports or amusements," South Dakota "no business, no sports." Arizona forbids only "barbering and boxing," and Wisconsin will not permit boxing. This State declares an employer must grant one day's rest in seven but does not mention Sunday. New York prohibits Sunday labour and legitimate shows (unless there is another rest-day), boxing and wrestling; concerts, cinemas and baseball escape this ban if approved by the town. Ohio forbids labour, but allows films and baseball in the afternoon. In Louisiana, Sunday is a statutory holiday and business is prohibited, but theatres and amusements may open. Colorado forbids theatres, circuses, boxing and wrestling. California prohibits acts of a "secular nature" and will not allow boxing, while Nevada declares Sunday a holiday and forbids "all secular acts." New Mexico forbids labour, but allows films; forbids sport, but allows baseball and theatres. In Illinois, labour and amusements are banned. Sunday is a legal holiday in Oregon, and Wyoming State law empowers towns to close businesses on Sunday. Montana permits sports, but will not allow racing, dancing or theatres. Missouri prohibits "all forms of labour," but allows athletics. Alabama allows films, golf and tennis where the population exceeds 60,000. Elsewhere permission must be sought from local authorities. In Delaware football is prohibited as "worldly employment." In Indiana one's usual vocation is forbidden and although baseball is permitted, it must not be played within 1,000 feet of a church (in North Dakota this distance is 500 feet, but the game can only be played between 1 and 6 p.m.). In Nebraska film-shows have been held to violate the law forbidding keeping a store, shop or place of business open on Sunday. New Jersey forbids labour, sports and films (by a court decision). On the other hand, Oklahoma, while forbidding sports and labour, permits films on the basis of a court decision that such work is not "servile labour." South Carolina allows golf "as exercise or pastime," but it is illegal for professionals and instructors. Several States permit those whose religion has a rest-day other than

Sunday to "break" the Sabbath laws. I believe readers will now agree that the British Isles do not have a monopoly of legal absurdities.

Burstein, in his chapter on "Religion in the Courts," tells us that early American jurisprudence tended to disqualify atheists or non-believers as witnesses, being "without belief in God or in ultimate punishment," but all the States except Arkansas, Delaware, Maryland, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and District of Columbia, have now made atheists competent witnesses. Burstein tells us that "in the States lacking such laws no person without belief in a Supreme Being or in divine punishment may testify," although it is "always possible for a trial judge still to decide on the competency of a witness."

A witness having religious scruples against taking the oath may affirm, but such scruples "must be based on belief and not on disbelief in religion" in States which refuse testimony from an unbeliever. Burstein also tells us that blasphemy laws are being removed from statute books, and are seldom enforced. Blasphemy has been defined as "maliciously reviling God and religion," but only attacks on *Christianity* have provoked action.

A Massachusetts court declared: "In general, blasphemy may be described as consisting in speaking evil of the Deity with an impious purpose to derogate from the divine majesty and to alienate the minds of others from the love and reverence of God. It is purposely using words concerning God, calculated and designed to impair and destroy the reverence, respect and confidence due to Him, as the intelligent Creator, governor and judge of the world . . . understanding the statute against blasphemy as we do, and as we have already explained it, that it is not intended to prevent or restrain the formation of any opinions or the profession of any religious sentiments whatever, but to restrain and punish acts which have a tendency to disturb the public peace, it is not repugnant to, but entirely consistent with, this second article of the Declaration of Rights" (37 Mass. 206).

Sixteen States still have specific penalties for blasphemy, varying from 30 to 1,000 dollars fine, and from 30 days to three years in prison.

In regard to marriage laws, either a civil or religious ceremony is sufficient, but in Delaware, Maryland and West Virginia a *religious* ceremony is required by statute.

Many States prohibit "mixed marriages"; marriage between negroes and whites is forbidden in the Southern States, and a dozen States add "Oriental or Mongolian" to the ban on negroes.

Whereas in two States six weeks' residential qualification is enough to sue for divorce, another State prohibits divorce altogether. In some States refusal of cohabitation on religious grounds is not sufficient grounds for divorce. Other States recognise this as cruelty (Kentucky after five years!). Divorce laws (and legal marrying age) differ from State to State (see *Law of Marriage and Divorce* by Richard V. Mackay, LL.B., in the Legal Almanac Series).

## A Catholic Mother's protest

HAVING summarised Mrs. James R. Cronin's protest at certain happenings in the St. Philip Neri (R.C.) School in Chicago (THE FREETHINKER, 8/8/58), I ought to mention subsequent correspondence published by *Time* magazine (11/8/58). There are, of course, the usual private letters ("We know parents who . . . have not mentioned complaints": "Regarding spending \$26.40 for the school play, Mrs. Cronin got off easy"; etc.) but these are relatively unimportant. The one that counts is from Msgr. William

E. McManus, Superintendent of Catholic Schools, Chicago. I give it here in full:

Thorough investigation, including conference with Mrs. Cronin, shows her complaints largely result misunderstanding St. Philip Neri School policies and practices. Examples:

Complaint: Questionnaire re children's appraisal of their parents. Fact: Questionnaire was part of sociological research study not under school sponsorship. Concede, however, mistake in giving questionnaire to pupils.

Complaint: Textbooks underplay Jamestown and Puritans. Fact: More emphasis and space given to Jamestown, etc., than to Catholic settlers West and Southwest.

Mrs. Cronin well intentioned, sincere, writing provocative article. In letter to parents school invited parents to discuss in person any complaints or grievances. Offer still stands.

Readers will notice the significant absence of any reference to the worst features in Mrs. Cronin's protest, selling seats by auction. Msgr. McManus, of course, has confined himself to "examples," but he would surely have denied these practices if Mrs. Cronin's complaint were unjustified. In fact, the Monsignor hardly improves on Sister Ransom's pitiful attempt to reply to the protest. His "well-intentioned, sincere" echoes the Sister's "Bless you," and if Mrs. Cronin's complaints are largely [the] result [of] misunderstanding" he has done little to clear away that misunderstanding. C.M.C.C.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### N.S.S. AND POLITICS

Is it due to a Christian unbringing that Mr. G. I. Bennett does not realise the dishonesty of using a Secularist Society for the propagation of his political views, thereby avoiding subscriptions to the Party which exists for this purpose?

Secularists with no political axe to grind wish to use the organisation for the purpose for which it was formed but the door is slammed against us by politicians. Genuine secularists have no quarrel with those who wish to fight what they consider a colossal and lunatic evil, provided they use the proper platform. This would make it possible for the doors of the N.S.S. to be opened to the thousands of us now prevented from entering. All secularists wish to make this world a better place for all to live in by the elimination of supernaturalism. W. E. HUXLEY.

### CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

It would be interesting to point out the innumerable errors of fact in the article "On Christian Science" by H. Cutner in your June 13th issue, but this would take more of your time and more of my patience than so curious a mélange of ill will and naïveté warrants. However, I will give a brief illustration. He writes in regard to the Milmine biography of Mary Baker Eddy, from which he draws most of his charges, that it "sold very well" and then "suddenly disappeared," and he gives this as a sinister case of "suppression."

The Milmine biography first appeared in *McClure's Magazine* (New York) in 1907-1908, was published in book form in 1909 by Doubleday, Page and Co. (New York), and could be bought freely by anyone who wanted it until 1915, when it went out of print, the commercial demand for it having practically ceased. As we are informed, the publishers then offered the plates to the author, Miss Milmine, who showed no interest in acquiring them. Subsequently they were destroyed. Compare these pedestrian facts with Mr. Cutner's account, and the question becomes: who suppressed what?

I might add that in 1906, at the time when two reporters were helping Miss Milmine accumulate the highly coloured material for her forthcoming series of articles in *McClure's*, the editor of the *Concord Patriot*, in the city in which Mrs. Eddy had been living for over fifteen years, commented editorially on the visit of these two reporters:

"The men who came to Concord did not have for their purpose the ascertainment of facts; they did not want the truth as known to Concord people, but ardently desired to have preconceived notions affirmed and slanderous insinuations and statements endorsed. A citizen of Concord, a trusted and honoured official, said to one of *McClure's* representatives after some questions had been asked and answered, and the bent of the interviewer's mind had been made apparent, 'There is little to gain by continuing this conversation; you are not after what I know; you desire that I should approve your guesses. It is clear to me that your purpose is to write Mrs. Eddy down regardless of what her neigh-

bours and those who know her best may say.'"

It is regrettable if fifty years later and three thousand miles away that same comment should seem to have relevance to Mr. Cutner's shopworn array of old charges.

GEITH A. PLIMMER, District Manager,

Christian Science Committees on Publication.

[Mr. Cutner writes: "There is practically no reply in the above to my criticism of Christian Science. My 'shopworn array of old charges' dealt with a more than shopworn old woman who amassed a fortune by sheer plagiarism and fraud. These charges have been made before—but have never been answered."]

### DR. DUHIG REPLIES

I should like to reply to Mr. O'Donoghue. The casuistical distinction between fast and abstinence is totally irrelevant to the issue I raised and to me is of as much importance as if the gentleman told me Catholics are required to stand on their heads three minutes every four hours the first Friday and the third Tuesday of each month. The brutal, inescapable fact is that an Irish or Sicilian gangster would much rather shoot a policeman than eat meat on a Friday. I did not say that miraculous medals, etc., absolve Catholics; my whole point is that they think they do and act accordingly. The standards of the Church may be too high, and to judge by Catholic crime figures, apparently they are. It is time the Church did something effective about it. At present Catholic morality is a shameful byword throughout the world. Catholics mistake the form for the substance and their morality is bound up with drivel about lamb's blood baths, theophany, parthenogenesis, the utterly impossible Trinity, posturings and genuflections, sacerdotal fancy dress which would do credit to a Congo jungle medicine man, holy water, fake miracles, etc., and all this rubbishy ritual and dogma is top moral priority to the exclusion of decent behaviour. The holy Christian Brother who tried to seduce me at night went to Communion in the morning as did the college Principal, who had sexual intercourse with the school Matron three or four times a week. This dreary and squalid sort of hypocrisy is rampant amongst Catholics. That criminality, so excessively common amongst Catholics, occurs in slums may be true, but one year the Auditor-General of Queensland found only six solicitors in the State with trust accounts out of order; all were Catholics, four from my old school; they lived in luxury, not in slums. As to political crimes in Russia and Hungary: they were no worse than those of Cardinal Stepinac, Franco and Salazar. Stepinac encouraged and approved the notorious Ustachi assassin Ante Pavelich in the murders of Orthodox Serbs who objected to forced conversion to Catholicism. World-wide statistics leave no alternative to the view that there is a positive correlation between Catholicism and crime. (Dr.) J. V. DUHIG.

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