

# The Freethinker

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IN THE CONTINENTAL PRESS much attention has been given in recent weeks to the International Eucharistic Congress held last month in that very pleasant, but also very sinister city, Munich, the traditionally Catholic capital of the former Kingdom of Bavaria. In itself, there is nothing very peculiar in such a Congress being held at such a place. For Eucharistic Congresses represent a normal feature in the life of the Catholic world. They are held in various Catholic centres; one for example was held in Dublin during the Thirties. Since Western Germany has been a Catholic stronghold from the days of Charlemagne's inauguration (with papal support) of the now defunct Holy Roman Empire, a still devoutly Bavaria is as suitable a place, from the standpoint of Catholic demography, as could be found for this auspicious assembly.

## Sinister Memories

Charles Dickens, one recalls, once amusingly confounded the words "auspicious" and "suspicious", and we too, are inclined to make the same transliteration in this present context, though not, as did the great novelist, for the purpose of provoking ripples of risibility. For Munich, the city whither came so many Cardinals to Bavaria, is a city of the most pleasant amenities — or so I understand — but it is also a city of the most sinister memories, the most sinister probably in the entire world. For it was in Munich in 1919, that there was founded, amid the turmoil of a just defeated Germany, the National Socialist Party which enrolled as its number seven party member a young Austrian agitator from just over the border, but already long resident in Munich, Adolf Hitler. It was in Munich also, in November 1923, that Hitler along with Ludendorf, Goering and a whole *congerie* of Fascist thugs, staged his first unsuccessful putsch. (It is alleged that the future warlord, Hermann Goering, only escaped by taking refuge in the adjacent toilet of a Jewish lawyer!) Nor did the then abortive Hitler *coup* fail to attract the attention of another almost equally famous leader of the European counter-revolution of that generation, Eugenio Pacelli, then Papal Legate in Munich, later to become Pope Pius XII. For Pacelli, later to become the spiritual leader of the European counter-revolution, along with Hitler as its political leader, was a leading figure in the Munich of that time. He is still commemorated by Pacelli Strasse in the Bavarian capital, and when I was in South Germany in 1956, the local papers were full of the visit to Munich of Prince Marc-Antonio Pacelli, nephew of that former eminent resident in Munich, the former Legate, Pacelli. And, if it were not sufficient for its ill-fame for one city to have simultaneously two such men as Hitler and Pacelli as resident citizens, Munich has since not only entertained other such dubious figures as Mussolini and Neville Chamberlain, but enjoyed in 1938 the rare distinction of adding a new word to the political phrasology of our era. To do a Munich has now become the equivalent of "appeasement", of ignominious capitula-

tion to the forces of evil, even of downright treachery.

## A Clerical Munich

The above catalogue of criminal personalities and of unsavoury memories, is not — or at least that is my submission — of merely academic and purely historical memory. For why, in this year of Grace and of mounting political and ideological tension, should the Vatican have decided to hold its most important International gathering at Munich, a city with the political record that has been briefly described above? For the Vatican, like the proverbial Yorkshireman, does "nowt for nowt"; if it selects Munich as the seat of its most solemn Congress, it must surely have a reason for so doing,

presumably a political reason. For Munich, as far as I who have never been there, know, is not a specially significant religious centre. In any case, as readers know, the Vatican is a political institution to the extent of at least 50 per cent, and nowhere — one can relevantly add — more so than in Germany, the land whence the Holy Roman Empire originated and which prostrated itself before the Papacy at Canossa (1077). Even without invoking memories of so ancient a character, it would surely be well-nigh impossible for any Catholic Congress to meet at Munich without feeling the ever-present and potent inspiration of Pacelli — that astute political Pope who succeeded Hitler as the number one leader of the 20th century counter-revolution. Rome, I repeat, does "nowt for nowt". If it chooses to meet at Munich right under the shadow of the Iron Curtain there must be some valid reason for this. Is a 1960 Munich in the making?

## The Catholic Church versus Co-Existence

The present writer concurs with Mr. Archibald Robertson, that the primary dilemma before Rationalists in 1960, is no longer even the traditional controversy of science versus religion, which itself is now subordinate to the all-important issue that confronts our era summarized as Co-Existence or, put more bluntly, as the problem of human survival. Moreover, since the tragic collapse of the Summit Conference, this problem — and along with it, the actual future of humanity—is at stake as never before. All the atavistic reactionaries (on both sides of the famous Curtain) are now muscling in to destroy it. In the West, the Vatican is still the major enemy of Co-Existence. Cardinal Ottaviani in Rome and his American colleague, Cardinal Spellman, during the course of the Munich Congress, practically asked for a war against the Communist East, and amongst the American Cardinal's hearers at Munich were "Der Alte" (The Old Man), Chancellor Adenauer and many other European political leaders. (I surmise, incidently, that German Catholicism is more powerful now under Adenauer than it was under Hitler). In any case, for the Vatican (represented in Munich by many Cardinals and hundreds of Bishops) to choose such a place as Munich at such a time, appears itself to be deeply significant. This is the more so, since German Catholicism represents not only

VIEWS and OPINIONS

## A Clerical Munich

By F. A. RIDLEY

the most political type in the Catholic world, but equally, the most anti-Russian. The leader of the German Hierarchy Cardinal Frings, (Archbishop of Cologne), goes regularly on the radio to denounce "godless Bolshevism", whilst the German Hierarchy (at their annual reunion at Fulda) were 100 per cent behind Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. At the 1956 Catholic Congress at Cologne, the German Hierarchy unanimously voted support for Adenauer's new *Wehrmacht*, now the strongest army in Western Europe. They would, no doubt, support that "great Christian Statesman", Dr. Adenauer were he to order a "Crusade" to reunite Germany by force. Incidentally, German Catholicism has no desire for the peaceful reunion of Germany since the incorporation of the now Communist controlled Protestant East would put Catholicism in a permanent minority in any reunited Reich the same as it was under Bismarck and the Hohenzollern Protestant Kings of Prussia.

### True to its Tradition

In the present day world of 1960, one hovering uncertainly on the edge of the most frightful cataclysm in its history, the Catholic Church, German Catholicism in particular, represents on the Western side of the Iron Curtain the major foe of Co-Existence just as the Chinese Communists are alleged to do on the Eastern side. For which reason, the present Eucharistic Congress in Munich may well have a deep significance quite outside the theological sphere; Munich remains true to its traditions. The cloud of black vultures who descended upon the Bavarian capital in August, did not do so merely to worship the transubstantiated corpse of a long-dead Jew any more than the late Herr Hitler went there to seek refuge under Mr. Chamberlain's umbrella. We know now what followed the earlier visit; we do not yet know but we have only too much reason to fear, what may follow the second.

## Report from Vienna

By WALTER STEINHARDT

AUSTRIA, traditionally Roman Catholic, can rightly point to a remarkably liberal tendency during its more recent history. Already in 1781, (between the two great revolutions of the 18th century) Emperor Joseph II granted freedom of the Press and other reforms. Some of these became regarded as premature and fraught with danger to the simple and pious people, loyal to Crown and Church. So they were renounced. But this could only sharpen the rule; nor did it stem the pressure of the middle classes and workers, particularly in Vienna.

Up to more modern times, Austrian authorities insisted upon a written declaration in respect to some religious adherence (any religion being better than none) for all civil-servants, officials or holders of state-paid positions. When the young Albert Einstein accepted the professorship of physics at the Austrian governed German University of Prague, he found himself in a predicament. He had never practised a religion (his father was a keen Freethinker) and no such requirements existed for his previous teaching jobs in Switzerland. Reluctantly (though to the relief of his friends), he wrote the word "Mosaisch" (Jewish) on the application form. During the first Austrian Republic after 1919, no statements of religious faiths were asked for. Dollfuss-Fascism, however, soon abolished this along with other freedoms. So was, for instance, the freethinking husband of the family with whom we stayed presented with a cruel and cynical alternative in 1934: Either to adopt a religion or lose his fairly high position with the State-Railways and face starvation. He declared himself an "Evangelical", registering at least some protest against the Black-Catholic clique in power.

The Dollfuss regime meant the end of the openly organised Austrian Freethought movement. Prior to 1933, there were over 54,000 members, a large number for so small a nation. The organisation was divided into 9 county-associations with 333 local groups. The present total membership, is, alas, only a fraction of the above number. Their difficulties are immense. All their funds and assets, their properties, including invaluable libraries, were lost irretrievably in 1933.

In 1938, Brown Fascism succeeded the Black. Then came the war; Allied bombing, Russian shelling and the most bitter-felt, senseless destruction of bridges, stores etc. by the beaten, retreating maniacs of the S.S. Following Austria's

liberation, in the midst of ruins and after 15 long years of frustration, a few surviving members bravely restarted the Freethought movement. Members are now mainly of the older generation. The present *Bundesoban*, Herr Franz Ronzal, (Federal Chairman) is either 85 or 95 years old but still carries on. Much of the work is done by another old stalwart, Herr Leopold Tichy, the *Landesoban* for Vienna. They try to combine their efforts, with a sort of Humanist Organisation centred in Graz and known as the "Corporation of the Churchless".

The hold of the Roman Church is still very strong, especially with the semi-literate country-folk. The tragic events which nearly ravaged all Freethought, had an opposite effect for the Church. The old Social-Democratic party, once strongly and patently anti-clerical, is now compromised by a "tolerant" (vote-catching) attitude to the Church and its various claims, including those for vast compensations and restitutions. Even Austria's Social Democratic daily, the *Arbeiterzeitung*, refuses to publish readers' letters critical of the clergy.

All this makes the work of the Austrian *Freidenkerbund* doubly difficult — and important. Scientific advances and a general higher standard of living have reduced church-attendances and belief in the other world and the Austrian Freethought movement (incidentally, it was founded in the revolutionary year of 1848) encourages a conscious, reasoned rejection of metaphysical imbecilities. This is reflected in their (too few) publications. Fellow Austrians are earnestly warned of the powers and perils of the new Konkordat. They deal further with the proposed restitution of 100 million A. shillings, plus woodlands to be handed to the Church. These claims are examined historically and legally, and refuted. Open letters are printed to members of the government and parliament, appealing to them to deal fairly with the victims of Nazism first.

The present Federal Chancellor, Herr Julius Raab, attended with his fellow Catholic, Conrad ("God has given us Germans a special mission") Adenauer, the Eucharistic Congress at Munich. There he met "by chance" that other great pillar of the only true faith, the pretender to the Austrian throne, Otto von Habsburg. Raab is reported to have advised Habsburg to sue the Austrian State for compensation of lost crown lands, etc. Quite a few people of

(Concluded on page 300)

# On Controversial Questions—3

By H. CUTNER

WHAT IT IS that makes John Scarne such a valuable critic of psychic and telepathic humbug is that not only is he a great conjuror, but that, unlike so many other eminent magicians, he studied the art of "swindling" over many years in gambling-houses, casinos, and country fairs to an almost unbelievable extent. He found in scores of games of chance and skill irrefutable evidence of the way the most innocuous games can be "rigged" in spite of what that hopeless believer in "spirits", Mr. Maurice Barbanell, calls "strictly rigorous test conditions".

In *The Amazing World of John Scarne* will be found scores of pages devoted to unmasking swindles of all kinds; and the reader will see why I have in these columns so often insisted that the people who can be very easily bamboozled are most of our scientists, with or without famous degrees. When faced with a "psychic" swindle, they are even more helpless than the average committee drawn from an average audience. These people were Houdini's delight, for they always helped each other in—unknowingly—covering up the swindle.

And it must not be forgotten that even celebrated illusionists like Houdini can be sometimes quite uncertain how some "unexplainable" effect is done. Scarne devotes many pages to a description of the marvellous feats of Rahman Bey, a Yogi, and he does not explain how some of them were done. He never found out—nor did Houdini. So we must not be too hard on scientists, especially those who imagine that their experience in a laboratory is all that is necessary to expose subtle swindling. Even Joseph F. Rinn in his documented *Sixty Years of Psychical Research* avoids mentioning Rahman Bey, though, as he was a great friend of both Houdini and Scarne, he must have known all about him.

What Houdini himself thought of the average "investigators" he told Scarne: "Johnny", he said, "doctors and scientists, especially those who are members of a psychical research society, are easily duped. They seem to fall for anything that is supposed to border the supernatural or psychic side. Why, I know of a number of these doctors and scientists that have been duped by fraudulent mediums. Such men as Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir A. C. Doyle, Dr. J. Hyslop of Columbia University, Dr. I. K. Funk of dictionary fame, and many others too numerous to mention". And Houdini added,

Johnny, it's a well known fact that many intellectual members of psychical research societies play both sides of the fence at the same time. Their duty is to ferret out psychic frauds, but instead, they keep foisting one psychic hoax after another on the public. This is done in order to have a reason to ask for donations to continue the so-called research. This psychical crowd is not only duped by the stage hypnotists, fraudulent mediums, and the self-styled clairvoyants, but are also made fools of by their double-crossing members who are supposed to investigate psychic phenomena but instead keep foisting one hoax after the other upon the credulous seekers of psychic phenomena.

These are weighty words, but naturally are completely ignored by the "suckers" (as I think Barnum called them) who swallow the imbecilities which come from so many mediums in a "trance". And it is one reason why so many people who cannot "explain" Spiritualism are inclined to believe that it may all be done by "telepathy"—as if that were not as big a fraud as the "spirits" of Spiritualism.

Scarne followed the experiments of Dr. J. B. Rhine

almost from their beginnings, and he has nothing but contempt for them. He analyses some of Rhine's deductions in his book *Extra-Sensory Perception*, particularly where Rhine changes "the Theory of Probability" to the "Law of Chance"; and he points out that "in mathematics there is no such term as the law of chance. It is the theory of probability".

Rhine has experimented with dice as well as cards, and Scarne insists that these "experiments are not worthy of being discussed simply because his dice were faulty". On this point—good and bad dice—Scarne could talk with authority, for he saw how "rigged" dice could be manufactured, and he gives full descriptions of their manufacture. In any case, this was not part of the "psychic phenomena" Rhine believed in which Scarne characterises as "a lot of humbug". So is, according to Scarne, Rhine's belief in "psychokinesis"—the art of making some inanimate object obey your will through thought only, like making a dice fall to any number you want in that way.

Scarne made thousands of experiments with dice extending over many years, particulars of which he gives in detail in his book. And they all proved that PK (as it is called) is just pure humbug. He points out that if telepathy or anything else could influence cards or dice, gambling casinos and expert poker players would be ruined. He says, "Let's stop kidding ourselves. If Rhine had one subject who possessed ESP or PK, he and/or that subject could win an enormous fortune in short order".

An American once wrote to me asking how could I explain the wonderful "telepathic" shows on stage and TV put on by magicians like Dunninger, Myrus and many others? And my reply was that I could not explain them as I hadn't seen them; but even if I had, and was quite unable to explain how they were done—this would not mean that they were all due to telepathy or psychokinesis or even "spirits". Scarne claims that all these "psychic phenomena" are "done by trickery", and he has not seen one which he could not "duplicate or surpass".

And so, just like J. F. Rinn who offered 10,000 dollars to any "spirit" photographer who could produce a "spirit" photograph he couldn't duplicate easily, Scarne has wagered 100,000 dollars 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 . . . I will also wager another 100,000 dollars against an equal amount that no person in this world will make an inanimate object move (dice included) either by the PK effect or by some spirit agency . . . So all you believers in psychic phenomena, get it up or shut up.

I am sure that Scarne's challenges will not be accepted—or if they are, the challenger will have to pay up. Britain is packed with needy Spiritualists, believers in telepathy, and other weird cults, all of which depend on the "occult" in some form or other; but they will all boycott this perfectly fair challenge. They know they haven't a chance.

In any case, it cannot be too strongly urged that even if there were such a thing as telepathy, this would not prove the existence of "spirits". We do not know much about the mind in actual fact, and it may still be in the process of evolution. In what way it may involve is a matter of speculation only, and it is quite impossible to prophesy anything about it with something like certainty. All we know at the moment is that so far telepathy has *not* been proven by Rhine or anybody else.

## This Believing World

According to Don Iddon of the "Daily Mail", the democratic candidate for the Presidency of the U.S.A. Mr. John Kennedy, appears to be due for a rough time in the South — the home of the Democrats, And why is the South "cracking"? Because in "the race-tense South religion becomes a hot issue." Roman Catholicism is mostly hated in the Southern states of America, and at the moment, is being viciously attacked.

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The South does not like a "democracy" which wants to give equal rights, or even near equal rights, to negroes — one of the planks of Mr. Kennedy's candidature. And from a hundred Christian pulpits therefore, "Methodists and Baptists are denouncing Roman Catholicism and rejecting Kennedy". In fact, "every newspaper office, including the New York bureau of the *Daily Mail*, is being flooded with anti-Catholic literature." One can imagine John Calvin himself, in the person of a Baptist minister, the Rev. W. A. Chriswell, thundering, "Roman Catholicism is not only a religion, it is a political tyranny . . . Even if Kennedy wins with his separation of Church and State, then the door is open for another Roman Catholic later, one who gives the Pope recognition of one Church above all others in America".

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To all this and much more Mr. Iddon adds, "It is obvious the racial and religious crisis in the South will intensify as the campaign reaches its climax." One thing should never be forgotten about the South. It was always very religious especially during the Civil War. All its great leaders — Jackson, Lee, Davis and the others — were Fundamentalists, and all were enthusiastic champions of slavery. There were of course other reasons also for the Civil War which raged for nearly five years and caused millions of killed and wounded; but the one thing the South wanted more than anything else was the right to keep slaves. And they could always quote the Bible in their support.

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One item of news interested us the other day — two sisters who had lived in the same house 70 years were driven out by "council estate hooligans". The ladies were not the owners of the house, but the *Church Commissioners*; and it would be interesting to know whether they did anything to stop the "hooligans" or, did they know what was happening? One neighbour declared that the sisters were as terrified of the hooligans as he was, but all that one could get from an official of the Commissioners was "the property has now been sold". So Christian-like!

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The Rev. R. Bedford of the "Methodist Recorder" claims that, for Christians, "necking" by young couples should be "out". It is bad manners, it is a bad example, and it isn't fair. Mr. Bedford is "worried" by the "unrestricted necking" so many Methodist youths enjoy, and he objects to all this kissing and cuddling "in the park, in the club, and wherever young people meet each other". One could well imagine, not a Methodist parson talking, but a sex-starved Catholic priest.

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For centuries we have had dinned into our ears how tolerant Buddhists were in almost everything in which Christians were intolerant; so we were not altogether surprised that the lady Premier of Ceylon, Mrs. Bandaranaike, and her Government have banned the building of new churches there without permission. The aim is to stop Protestant and Catholic influence, for this would never

do in a country where Buddhism must remain paramount. Again so like Christianity!

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Like Christianity also is the way the "Science of Astrology" has survived; and probably even more people these days believe in the "influence" of the stars than they do in the miracles of Jesus. We note however — not without a little amusement — a review in *Psychic News of Astrology of the Mysteries* which the reviewer, a more or less Fundamentalist Astrologer, claims has only made "Astrology more mysterious". He himself appears to have no use for Theosophical or Esoteric Astrology; but he does not make clear why his own brand is any better to be trusted than the other kinds. But isn't superstition, whatever it is called, always the same?

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The religious contribution of I.T.V. the other Sunday was a discussion on Spiritualism by three parsons and a Jesuit priest with Mr. Driberg in the chair. As all the four believed in "survival", they found it easier to agree that there was something in Spiritualism than to disagree with it; they appeared quite unable to speak clearly about it, whether it really was God's purpose for a medium to contact people everybody thought were dead. One parson said however that it must be God's purpose. For sheer fatuity, this religious half hour gave as much help to bereaved persons as a multiplication table. Did Mr. Driberg really believe anything else?

### REPORT FROM VIENNA

(Concluded from page 298)

the political (Catholic) right, would hail a re-established monarchy in Austria, and claimant Otto appears quite willing to oblige.

But, I think, beautiful Schönbrunn will remain open to the public.

Walking through the streets of Vienna, I saw large posters showing a pathetic human embryo, menaced by a large hand and captioned: "Thou shalt not kill!" This is evidently part of the clergy's obtuse campaign against abortion. Appliances for prevention of conception are still easily obtainable — much to the regret of the bigots.

I felt that Austrian Freethinkers would welcome an occasional word of encouragement from beyond their borders. They are interested in the work of British Secularism and its publications, notably THE FREETHINKER. They certainly merit our admiration for continuing the struggle under such adverse circumstances.

We had a wonderful time in hospitable, fascinating Vienna.

### The Sinner

Of such strong wickedness I am composed,  
Such Devil's riot runs within my blood;  
Come! look upon your handiwork and laugh  
Oh! unknown Pow'r who fashioned me from Mud!  
Behold th' unnatural vices grown within  
The tangled garden of my scarlet shame.  
The tares and weeds sown there ere I was born.  
Oh! so-called God of justice! say, am I to blame?

L. JARRATT.

### DO YOU KNOW ?

St. Anne, mother of the Virgin Mary, is patroness of old clothes dealers.

### NEXT WEEK

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD  
V. G. DAVIES v. DR. EDWARD ROUX

# THE FREETHINKER

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Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1.

Details of membership of the National Secular Society may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, S.E.1. Members and visitors are welcome during normal office hours. Inquiries regarding Secular Funeral Services should also be made to the General Secretary, N.S.S.

## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

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

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

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Platt Fields).—Every Sunday, 3 p.m.: MESSRS. MILLS and WOODCOCK. (Thursday lunchtimes, THE FREETHINKER on sale, Piccadilly, near Queen Victoria statue.)

Marble Arch Branch N.S.S. (Marble Arch).—Meetings every Sunday, from 5 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER, C. E. WOOD and D. TRIBE.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.; Sundays, 7.30 p.m.

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, Nottingham).—Every Friday, 1 p.m., Every Sunday, 6.30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

Sussex Branch N.S.S. (The Front, Worthing), Sunday, September 18th, 3 p.m.: J. W. BARKER and others.

### INDOOR

Glasgow Secular Society (Central Halls, Bath Street, Glasgow), Sunday, September 18th, 3 p.m.: Special Meeting open to members and ex-members. (See Notes and News)

## Notes and News

THERE IS SOMETHING rather special about the poem on page 300, which we think readers would like to know. The author, Miss Lita Jarratt is 81, and in "reasonable health" after struggling to earn her living from the age of 14 in the not-very-lucrative field of music. Now dependent upon National Assistance she yet manages to be "content". Death, she regards as "inevitable". "So why worry?"

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THIS SUNDAY at 3 p.m. in the Central Halls, Bath Street, the Glasgow Secular Society is holding a special meeting for past and present members, to which other Freethinkers in the area are invited. President Mr. R. Hamilton, will be in the Chair, and it is hoped that a revival of interest in the Society — and an increase in its activities — will result.

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WE HAVE CEASED to be surprised by the fanatical racism and anti-semitism of the New York *Truth Seeker*, but its claim to be the oldest Freethought paper in the World remains disturbing. We can only hope that Americans will judge Freethought by some of the excellent younger papers available and not by this perverted one which amends the French Revolutionary slogan to read "Liberty—Quality—Fraternity" and displays very little, if any, of the last. Well might a "veteran reader" point out that "Paine and Ingersoll would likely [we should say "certainly"] disapprove some of the present policies of *The Truth Seeker*" (August, 1960). The paper's comment was typical: "If these two heroes of Freethought had been less like Jesus and more like Voltaire and had advocated the elimination from reproduction of inferior types of human beings and the multiplication of the better

types, they would have employed their genius to save the white race, to prevent the impending debasement of Europeans to the level of Asians and Africans". Corliss Lamont, another item informs us, thinks that *The Truth Seeker* Editor, Charles Smith, is "psychopathic". We leave our readers to judge for themselves whether Dr. Lamont is right.

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WHAT HENRY BRANDON (*The Sunday Times*, 11/9/60) calls "ominous flames of bigotry" are flaring up in the American Presidential election campaign. And—again in Mr. Brandon's words — they are beginning to lap at Senator Kennedy's coat-tails. Anti-Catholicism is now openly preached from many pulpits, and in Gastonia, North Carolina, "a radio station every Sunday issues an hour-long appeal against Kennedy's election" while the desks of newspaper offices "are almost daily inundated by scurrilous anti-Catholic literature". We — as readers know — are as anti-Catholic as anybody — anti-Catholic *Church*, that is — but Mr. Kennedy has stated quite unequivocally that he is not subservient to his Church in the political field; that he will act as an individual. And we repeat our former (much criticised) opinion that he should be taken at his word. Apart from his personal integrity, one very practical reason leads us to this conclusion. Kennedy is young, and in four years' time there will be another Presidential election. Is he likely to commit political suicide by "welshing"? We don't think so.

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NONE OF US CAN hope to read or even hear of all books that are published, but an incredible example of literary and social ignorance was reprinted in the Spring 1960 issue of *Humanist World Digest* from the *ACLU Open Forum*. The full item read: "Florida: When asked to comment recently on the banning of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *1984* from Miami's school libraries, U.S. Commissioner of Education Lawrence G. Dertwick, said, 'I've never heard of those books, and I don't think it would be prudent of me to discuss them'." We ourselves are too amazed to comment.

## Genevan Resolution

THE GENERAL COMMITTEE of the World Union of Freethinkers assembled at Geneva on September 7th, 1960, issued the following statement, after consideration of the situation in different countries:

It is the duty of all Rationalists to examine carefully the grave problems raised with ever increasing urgency by the swift progress of science and development of technical skills.

In the past Freethought has opened to the masses the spectacle of scientific development, demonstrating the necessity of free inquiry and the superiority of objective method. Growth in knowledge remains the sole guarantee of genuine and lasting intellectual emancipation among the people as a whole.

Today Freethought draws the attention of mankind to the danger from clerical and social reaction which is active and dangerous as ever.

All true lovers of progress must unite in an effort to produce a state of durable peace, to put an end to national rivalries, and to do their utmost to bring about complete and general disarmament.

Science must not be the servant of oligarchies, which seek essentially to further their economic and political advantages. On the contrary, Science must be the means of constructing a World based on Social Justice, Liberty and Peace.

# Humanism and Shelley

By DENIS COBELL

THE POETRY OF Percy Bysshe Shelley held much that a humanist would approve of; Shelley was, all his life, opposed to the adoption of fixed ideas—as are all thinking people today. He was sent down from Oxford at the age of nineteen for writing and circulating a pamphlet entitled *The Necessity of Atheism*. Mary Shelley tells us that her husband was eighteen when he wrote *Queen Mab*, and in the notes to this poem Shelley puts forward some very potent criticisms of Christianity—undoubtedly a result of having read Locke. A passage from these notes is worth quoting:

A book is put into our hands when children, called the Bible, the purport of whose history is briefly this: That God made the earth in six days, and there planted a delightful garden, in which he placed the first pair of human beings. In the midst of the garden he planted a tree, whose fruit, although within their reach, they were forbidden to touch. That the Devil, in the shape of a snake, persuaded them to eat of this fruit; in consequence of which God condemned both of them and their posterity yet unborn to satisfy his justice by their eternal misery. That, four thousand years after these events (the human race in the meanwhile having gone to perdition, unredeemed) God engendered with the betrothed wife of a carpenter in Judea (whose virginity was nevertheless uninjured), and begat a son whose name was Jesus Christ; and who was crucified and died, in order that no more men might be devoted to hell fire, he bearing the burden of his father's displeasure by proxy. The book states, in addition, that the soul of whoever disbelieves this sacrifice will be burned with everlasting fire.

During many ages of misery and darkness this story gained implicit belief; but at length men arose who suspected that it was a fable and imposture, and that Jesus Christ, so far from being a God, was only a man like themselves. But a numerous set of men, who derived and still derive immense emoluments from this opinion, in the shape of a popular belief, told the vulgar that if they did not believe in the Bible they would be damned to all eternity; and burned, imprisoned, and poisoned all the unbiassed and unconnected inquirers who occasionally arose. They still oppress them, so far as the people, now become more enlightened, will allow.

Shelley goes on later to ask, "If God has spoken, why is the universe not convinced?"

Compare the following verses written by Wordsworth and Coleridge, two fashionable contemporaries, with those from Shelley.

First, from Wordsworth's *Funeral Service*:

Man is as grass that springeth up at morn,  
Grows green, and is cut down and withereth  
Ere nightfall—truth that well may claim a sigh,  
Its natural echo; but hope comes reborn  
At Jesu's bidding. We rejoice, "O Death,  
Where is thy Sting?—O Grave, where is thy Victory?"

Then from Coleridge's *The Knight's Tomb*:

The Knight's bones are dust,  
And his good sword rust;  
His soul is with the saints, I trust.

And from Shelley's *On Death*:

This world is the nurse of all we know,  
This world is the mother of all we feel,  
And the coming of death is a fearful blow  
To a brain uncompassed with nerves of steel:  
When all that we know, or feel, or see,  
Shall pass like an unreal mystery.

I think the reader should notice a distinct difference between the first two and the last verse. They are all concerned with the subject of death, but only Shelley's verse reveals his beliefs in life on this earth, as opposed to the dreams of the other poets about a life beyond the grave. Shelley was, to a certain degree, always a pessimist, but he was one great poet who did not allow his aesthetic temperament to inculcate the rationale of life.

Shelley's repugnance for Christianity was not merely a negative axiom, he was outspoken upon many matters of social and individual injustice in the manner that humanists are today. In November 1817 we find him protesting against the execution of three artisans in Derbyshire for a small insurrection. He writes in the preface to his long poem *The Revolt of Islam*:

The poem which I now present to the world is an experiment on the temper of the public mind, as to how far a thirst for a happier condition of moral and political society survives, among the enlightened and refined, the tempests which have shaken the age in which we live.

In Shelley's day the pendulum of life had swung towards the acceptance of immovable doctrines in politics and religion; although he toured the continent of Europe chiefly for health reasons, he would undoubtedly have come up against personal persecution if he had remained in England. As it was, his writings attracted much attention from those who disagreed with him, and there was frequent difficulty in having them published.

One of Shelley's early poems *To Wordsworth* shows his admiration for the "rock built refuge" but continues:

... thy voice did weave  
Songs consecrate to truth and liberty,  
Deserting these, thou leavest me to grieve,  
Thus having been, that thou shouldst cease to be.

A critique of Wordsworth's *Peter Bell* reached Shelley at Leghorn in 1819 and suggested to him the writing of *Peter Bell the Third*. This poem is not a criticism of Wordsworth's poetic qualities, for Shelley still admired them, but it depreciates a man of genius who, as Mary Shelley writes, "quits the glorious calling of discovering and announcing the beautiful and good, to support and propagate ignorant prejudices and pernicious errors". *Peter Bell the Third* is a cynical poem that takes long and deep laughs at the consideration of death, the devil, sin, grace, and damnation; it contains many of Shelley's views with regard to the errors into which the wisest have fallen.

Shelley did not believe that evil was inherent in the system of creation and he thought that mankind had only to will that there should be no evil and there would be none. In his preface to *Prometheus Unbound*, described as "A Lyrical Drama in Four Acts", Shelley writes, "I had rather be damned with Plato and Lord Bacon, than to go to heaven with Paley and Malthus. But it is a mistake to suppose that I dedicate my poetical compositions solely to the direct enforcement of reform". Farther on in the same passage he writes, "My purpose has hitherto been simply to familiarise the highly refined imagination of the more select classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence; aware that until the mind can love, and admire, and trust, and hope, and endure, reasoned principles of moral conduct are seeds cast upon the highway of life which the unconscious passenger tramples into dust, although they would bear the harvest of his happiness".

In remembering Milton in this same preface, Shelley reminds the reader that this protestant was also a bold inquirer into religion and morals. Shelley was a great poet who sought justice and reason in his work and examination of other poets. He enjoyed poor health and lived a short life, but fulfilled the laws demanded by his conscience, in his respect of human beings and the reproof of erroneous, degrading ideas that were common in his time. In later life he came to recognise God as a spirit

within the universe, but he denied God the Creator an existence; his reverence for Christ's personality was coupled with his admiration of Plato, upon whom, much of Christ's teaching was founded. Shelley may have been forgotten by humanists, but he is a source of logic and reasoned thought on many topics worth considering. I think he is at his finest when writing of a child taken to see an atheist burned. He writes in *Queen Mab*:

His death-pang rent my heart! the insensate mob  
Uttered a cry of triumph, and I wept.  
Weep not, child! cried my mother, for that man  
Has said, There is no God.

## Marcus Aurelius

By G. I. BENNETT

(Concluded from page 296)

SO GOOD A MAN HIMSELF, I doubt whether any person has ever been more soulfully stirred by the goodness he found in others than Marcus Aurelius. In the *Meditations*, opening with what the late F. H. Hayward calls "the most beautiful thanksgiving in literature", the emperor remembers gratefully all those whom he has known from youth onwards by whose fair qualities, acts of kindness, and sound example he feels he has profited, been instructed, been broadened in thought and enlarged in spirit. There is no priggishness here, no—in Hayward's words—"cataloguing of his own achieved virtues". A fine modesty pervades the whole.

An object of very real admiration with Marcus is the man of transparent honesty "whose words are writ on his forehead", and whose character "dawns clear in his eyes". He courted simplicity in all things and eschewed artificiality and ostentation; he distrusted the man "with a great flow of words". He had all the qualities of the Quaker without his belief in Divine Revelation. Milton's "last infirmity of noble mind"—the desire for fame or after-fame—he pushed aside as vanity, with the remark that the passing years, engulfing all, finally bring "oblivion" and "complete forgetfulness". Man's "last enemy"—death—he composed himself to meet as a deliverer from the trials and pains of life; and he could ultimately smile on death, as Renan says, because it had lost unwelcome meaning for him. He was "a Roman, a statesman, a soldier, awaiting the bugle to sound the recall". He did not account suicide wrong; it was the honourable alternative to bearing pain without hope of cure, to shouldering burdens that had become too great, to living under conditions that had become oppressive. This may, perhaps, seem to us a rational attitude in certain circumstances. But with the Stoics it was more: they believed it to be a matter of self-respect not to break under the strains and ills of life, be demeaned by the ways of unprincipled men, or yield to unworthy temptations. To live as a master of self was the serious concern of the dedicated Stoic, and if he could not, then it was well that he should abdicate life.

"Until philosophers are kings", wrote Plato in his *Republic*, "or the kings and princes of the world have the spirit and power of philosophy, and political greatness and wisdom meet in one . . . cities will never have rest from their evils—no, nor the human race, as I believe".

These words, according to Capitolinus, were often on the lips of Marcus Aurelius. He was the living embodiment of Plato's dream—a philosopher on the throne. He and his benign predecessor, Antoninus, together gave the far-flung lands of Rome over 40 years of benevolent government. Troubles there were in those times, as Marcus in his reign, bearing the heavy responsibilities of State, unhappily knew; but for the general populace they

were good days. Pay tribute to Antoninus and Marcus for this—but don't forget Hadrian, that many-sided man of quicksilver intellect who had throughout his reign laboured with a visionary's zeal to establish a world-empire based upon the principles of universal peace. My mind glows whenever I think of the public service of these three men, among the brightest stars in the firmament of enlightened rulership. Alas! tyranny had not been permanently banished; it would raise its ugly head again. But for some 60 years the world was to flourish under the government of men who, in private outlook and by public declaration, were pacific and devoted to the work of peace.

Yet the reigns of Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius were not distinguished for radical social change. The spirit of both men was humanitarian, but they were not reformers.

"To reform a world, to reform a nation", declared Thomas Carlyle writing in a Scottish journal some 130 years ago, "no wise man will undertake; and all but foolish men know that the only solid (though a far slower) reformation is what each begins and perfects on himself".

The sage of Rome would have agreed with the sage of Ecclefechan. For him the beginnings of wisdom lay in accepting men as they were. If they could be influenced for the better, good; but if not, then why nurse fruitless regret? The truth is, he didn't believe it was possible by political action or social legislation to reform men in the mass. The only reform he knew was that which a man sets out to bring about in his own life and conduct. And this is the real theme of the *Meditations*. In this little work is to be found the best of a philosophy that had the power to move men to dedicated life seventeen and more centuries ago.

Now it is easy to be hard on those who have a view of life with which we are not in sympathy. But to be fair, it is perhaps no small thing if a person *with the help of theology* succeeds in living a worthier life than those about him. The *Meditations*, however, was the work of a man who *without theology* lived a worthier life than those about him—how much worthier is revealed by the known facts of his life, and on almost every page he wrote. Only those whose minds have been obstructed and closed by salvationist dogmas will ask, "Why should he so live if there is neither heaven nor hell, if virtue isn't rewarded and sin isn't punished?"

But most of us, I think, will honour the memory of a man who as a thinker upheld, and as a man lived up to, a fine moral code. It is not a whit inferior to the best ethical elements in the mainstream of religious thought, and for me it gains much by being independent of theistic justification. The pity is, our western world is so overlaid with the preconceptions and prejudices of nearly twenty centuries of Christian culture. This influences opinion and strait-jackets thinking on many things. It forces even men who reject its tenets to acknowledge that the Bible is "great literature" -- a statement it would be difficult to maintain at the bar of literary analysis. But for this weight of Christian tradition, I think that the twelve Books of the *Meditations*, which a Stoic emperor once compiled for his own reference and instruction, would, far from being today a little known and rarely read classic, occupy a valued place in our cultural heritage.

### SOMETHING TO SING ABOUT

In Christian Britain four times as much is spent on bird seed as is given to all the Church Missionary Societies, the Provost of Bradford the Very Rev. John Tiarks, says in the *Bradford Cathedral Magazine*.

## CORRESPONDENCE

## PAINÉ PLAQUE

The other week I passed through Thetford and noticed that the Thomas Paine Memorial Plaque attached to a house was very insecure. Bolts for attachment to the wall at the bottom were missing and I formed the impression that the plaque might easily be removed. I knocked at the door of the house but was unable to get a reply.

A. MACKAY.

[The General Secretary of the National Secular Society has written to the Town Clerk of Thetford in connection with the above and has received assurance that the Borough Engineer "will take steps to replace the bolts in the plaque and generally have it overhauled to ensure that it is securely attached to the wall".—ED.]

## STANLEY KRAMER

Your This Believing World item (26/8/60) on Mr. Stanley Kramer, producer of the Tennessee Monkey Trial film, reveals very little understanding of the situation. Mr. Kramer is a film-producer, and as such he has one major concern: will this story make a good film? Secondly, the I.T.V. programme, *About Religion*, is not the place where he is most likely to express strong anti-religious views, even if he holds them.

J. GOODMAN.

## "PONTIFICAL"

I read Mr. Jones's pontifical comments on my article on Royalty with some amusement. Comrade Jones appears to take life seriously! "Emotional tirade" "Verbal tantrum". Come come, Mr. Jones that's unkind. Irony and satire appear to be lost on G. M. J.

I thought it was fairly obvious that I was letting off steam at the false Gods of 1960. However, let it pass. Buffoonery — albeit serious — would not appear to be my strong point. Earlier in the year I tried to amuse a few readers of that first-rate journal, the *Humanist*, by poking fun at 19th century Dorset parsons who exterminated rare birds. I was accused of vilifying religion for my pains — yet I never once mentioned the subject. I give up.

A. O. SNOOK.

## A WAY OF LIFE

It is very wrong of Mr. W. E. Huxley to ask the Editor whether he holds my views. I am simply a contributor to THE FREETHINKER alone responsible for the opinions expressed. I am naturally pleased if others can share my point of view; but it is the right of any to disagree with me, as I with them. My plea is simply that their disagreement be reasonable and considered, not full of rant and fustian.

The difference between Mr. Huxley and me is a whole way of life about which nothing can be done. What he calls freethinking I call bigotry and intemperate speech, and what I call freethinking is for him a spineless and ineffectual kidglove treatment of religious people whose views he abominates. It is because of this difference of approach that I can, for instance, see the merit in the last three sentences of Fr. Paris's reply to Mrs. Ebury (in the August 19th issue of THE FREETHINKER). A mind so schooled in scepticism as mine will never accept the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church (or, for that matter, of the Protestant Anglican Church, which I actively dislike for its smug narrowness). But I see there are ethical and spiritual values in life that are beyond the power of disputation to affect.

G. I. BENNETT.

## DEATH AND OLD AGE

"We know that we shall die, but we do not believe it", says the French proverb. Death is one of those things which come to other people until one day we realise that he may be waiting near for us too. But surely a freethinker has no need to fear death, only perhaps intense regret at leaving this warm, beautiful world which we seem to love more as we near the time for leaving it; for losing touch with dear friends who have helped to make life beautiful and worth while; for lost opportunities or work still undone. Regret in short for all that life has to offer us in spite of so much that is painful or unhappy. Old age? We do not believe in that either, for ourselves, till we find one day that our limbs are stiffening, our mind not so nimble, people whom we knew as little children now leading out their own families, and then we do perhaps begin to fear, fear of losing sight or health or of being left dependent on others for our daily needs, or of the loneliness which is the bane of so many elderly folk. But while old age is as inevitable as death many of its drawbacks can be alienated and others removed under a more enlightened public conscience. It is the duty of all the community to work to this end and to do what is humanly possible to lift this fear or at least the greater part of it from the hearts of many.

Mrs. G. MATSON.

(National Federation of Old Age Pensions Associations)

## POPULATION AND POVERTY

In your issue for September 2nd., in his article on Henry George, W. Hartley Bolton tries to ridicule what H. Cutner wrote on the subject. No doubt Mr. Cutner is well able to "fight his own battles". But I would like to ask Mr. Bolton to answer two questions

1. Can science or any just and sound economic system increase World food supply every generation and go on doing so in perpetuity?
2. Can human beings increase their numbers every generation and go on doing so in perpetuity?

No doubt a far better and more just World economic system, to include all lands and all Colours, could be evolved, but it would be ruined by excessive births which can only be avoided by contraception in some form or other. It is cruel, brutal, and inhuman to deny these means to any person, and it can only lead to "work-slavery" and to universal war

RUPERT L. HUMPHRIS.

## OBITUARY

In theory one should not be surprised at the death of a man of 87. In fact, the death of W. G. Wilkinson ("Wilkie" to his friends) came as a great shock. He seemed indestructible.

Wilkie was a dynamic, effervescent little man, who had lived a lively and varied life; who still dashed — or rather skipped — about in search of new places, new ideas. He was forthright in his Freethought, as in everything else, and he will be missed at our Sussex Branch meetings, which he always attended; by those who met him occasionally or like F. E. Papps of Redditch, corresponded with him regularly; we shall certainly miss his cheerful visits to the office. But there are consolations: he lived life to the full, and he died as he would have wished — quickly, after a heart attack on the Continent, where he was seeking fresh impressions. Indomitable as ever, he got home, but the strain proved too much and he died in hospital shortly afterwards.

Mr. Papps writes: "I shall always remember him as a very alert and active 87 years; an outspoken and fearless atheist, with a large fund of humour and of generous impulses."

C. McC.

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