



SCIENCE— A GOD?

by T. A. DAVIS

FOR MANY PEOPLE God and science are well-nigh synonymous. We do not mean by this that they call science God or think of it that way. But absence of a label need not alter the contents of a package. For even though men do not have temples dedicated to the god of science, many nevertheless regard science as being virtually supreme, all-wise and infallible, attributes which belong to God.

In his book *In the Name of Science*, H. L. Nieburg states that science is "the first universal religion, shared alike by Christians, agnostics and Marxists."

In the minds of many science has replaced Christianity absolutely. Sir Richard Gregory, for many years editor of the British scientific journal *Nature*, once wrote:

"My grandfather preached the gospel of Christ,

My father preached the gospel of socialism,

I preach the gospel of science."

Why has science taken such a high place in the minds of educated people, and of many not-so-educated people? Two reasons occur to us. One, religion, as our forebears knew it, has been shredded and cast aside. It is regarded as being outdated, outworn and "unscientific." Two, science has been giving the appearance of being the saviour of humanity.

Consider, in a broad way, the accomplishments of science. It has made life vastly easier, and more pleasant, more livable. It has extended life by decades over the past few years, in many cases. It has been a saviour from many formerly death-dealing diseases. It has fabulously extended our know-

ledge over that of our forebears. It has placed in the hands of humanity powers of which it never dreamed before.

But there are those who think that the blessings science has given us with its right hand are neutralized, or worse, by those which it passes with its left. Does not the destructive threat of the nuclear bomb offset all the good things we have been given? they ask. What is the use of science saving millions of lives on the one hand, only to have them blasted into oblivion on the other.

Today some scientists themselves are asking other grave questions as to whether science is taking us.

Recently the American Association for the Advancement of Science met and pondered some of these questions. For example, E. W. Engstrom, chairman of the Radio Corporation of America, warned that "there is a new urgency today to the question as to whether our society can maintain effective control of the technology that continues to multiply in speed and power.

"It is necessary for us . . . to ask whether we, as scientists and engineers, are prepared to do all we must to prevent our creations from getting entirely out of hand," the *Science Digest* reported Mr. Engstrom as saying.

This question, Mr. Engstrom asserted, is no longer a theoretical one. Then he went on to refer to areas in which man's over-confidence in his technical systems has led him to catastrophes and to the upset of nature.

Continuing, Mr. Engstrom said, "The proliferation of motor vehicles,

jet aircraft, and other exhaust-producing machines has contributed to massive pollution of the atmosphere. Uncontrolled disposal of industrial waste and the widespread use of chemical pesticides and weed killers have tainted water supplies and affected marine life.

"The introduction of a new technology without regard to *all* of the possible effects can amount to setting a time bomb that will explode in the face of society anywhere from a month to a generation in the future," Mr. Engstrom stated.

The fact, as Mr. Engstrom seems to emphasize it, is that science is a sort of deceitful benefactor. He proffers gifts which seem to bless, but which often have in them hidden potentials for unhappiness, destruction and death.

We see in these things one more proof of the inadequacy of the wisdom of men, for no system based upon human wisdom has yet stood. Inherent weaknesses built into the structure have served to erode and undermine, until it crumbled into the dust of history.

Today man seems to be building upon the Everest of human accomplishment. But it will be with this structure as with all the rest. There are weaknesses within which man has not foreseen and cannot foresee. And these weaknesses doom it to failure.

We are reminded of the exhortation of the prophet Jeremiah: "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might. . . . But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me. . . ." Jeremiah 9:23, 24.

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