

# The Freethinker

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ON June 2, 1953, Elizabeth II was crowned as Queen of Great Britain, an hereditary dignity which her ancestors had held before her since the now distant day when the first Hanoverian Monarch, George I "in pudding time came o'er," as the cynical writer who composed *The Vicar of Bray* phrased it in colloquial language. However, whilst Her Majesty inherited the *British Crown*, there was some alteration in her other titles.

Unlike her predecessors, since the flamboyant Disraeli crowned Victoria as "Empress of India" (1876), the young Elizabeth did not assume that imperial title. Instead, she assumed the ostensibly more democratic title of "Head of the Commonwealth." Apart from which title, the Coronation ceremonies pursued their traditional feudal course, with feudal rites and ceremonies untouched since the Middle Ages.

## "By the Grace of God"

Part of this archaic feudal ceremony was the declaration, which originated in "The Ages of Faith" and to which every coin struck in the realm still testifies, that Her Majesty rules "gratia Dei," "by the grace of God." Nothing very democratic about that! Whoever coined the phrase knew little, and cared less, about the "will of the people" and similar political catchwords of the age of democracy. The very words transport us back to the High Middle Ages, when Society, like Nature, was conceived as an ordered hierarchy with God, as the Anglican Liturgy still phrases it, as "King of Kings, Lord of Lords, the only ruler of princes": a typical feudal pronouncement. In the year of grace and of universal suffrage, 1953, the whole procedure sounded a trifle archaic. However, the rest of the ceremonies on June 2 of last year were, we recall, in keeping with medieval conceptions. In particular, the part played by the clergy was so prominent that, had Thomas a Becket or Cardinal Wolsey revisited the scenes of their earthly life on that day they would, no doubt have imagined that they, and we, were still in the Middle Ages.

## The Churches Cash in

The second half of May, 1954, has witnessed an orgy of what we may, perhaps, term "royalism" unmatched, in the merry month of May, since the "Merry Monarch," Charles II, returned from his "travels" in 1660. And, yet again, the Churches have been well to the fore, cashing in on the reappearance of the royal "Defender of the Faith." The Anglican Church, in particular, of which Her Majesty is the royal head. The union of Throne and Altar—what James I pithily summarised as "no bishop, no king"—has been conspicuously evident during the past weeks since the royal pair returned from their "Commonwealth" tour.

## Christianity and the Commonwealth

"Commonwealth"? The description is a new one in English history, at least in connection with royalty. For

the only self-styled "Commonwealth" in English history was the Republican administration formed after, and as a direct result of, the deposition and subsequent execution of Charles Stuart, Charles I (1649-53). A great era, perhaps the greatest of all in English history: the English Republic, adorned by such giants as Milton, Vane, Lilburne and Winstanley, the pioneers of Democracy and of Freethought in Britain; the strongest human types who ever walked beneath an English sky. The current "Commonwealth" to-day is of a less "heroic," of a more ambiguous character. It is a "Commonwealth" headed by an hereditary monarch! Can such a contradictory anomaly last indefinitely?

Though we do not desire to mount the Delphic tripod here, personally, we doubt it. However, for the moment, to judge from the overwhelming reception accorded practically everywhere to the royal visitors, for the time being the Monarchical Commonwealth appears to be secure.

## A Multi-Social Commonwealth

Let us direct a glance at this world-wide "Commonwealth." Unlike its English predecessor, it is multi-racial: it comprises ancient Oriental civilisations, such as India, Ceylon, Pakistan; up-and-coming democracies, with scarcely a century behind them of organic existence, such as Canada, South Africa, and the Australasian Dominions; primitive peoples newly emerged from savagery, such as the Gold Coast, and the tropical islands in the West Indies. In the British "Commonwealth of Nations," as at present constituted, the white races represent a minority, the English a small minority, as, also, the other races who inhabit these islands.

## Religion and the "Commonwealth"

What is the dominant religion of this heterogeneous "Commonwealth"? "A question hard to answer," as the old Latin grammar used ambiguously to phrase it! In one area, Hinduism; in another, Islam; in yet another, Buddhism, with, we may imagine, scepticism galore amongst all the creeds! Christianity is definitely in a numerical minority. Further, though we do not have statistics before us, we regard it as probable that the largest single *Christian* denomination is the Roman Catholic persuasion. It can, in any case, hardly be the small Anglican Church, confined mainly to England, and a small minority even in other parts of the British Isles.

## Why?

Why, we must ask, in a world-wide society in which Christians are a permanent minority, should the official "Head" of the "Commonwealth" be, officially, a Christian? Even so, why *must* she be, not only a Christian, but a member of *minority* Christian Churches, since, at present, by law, the British Sovereign must be an Anglican in *England* and a Presbyterian in *Scotland*. Certainly this itself is sufficiently grotesque. For how can an adult and

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

## Christianity and the Commonwealth

—By F. A. RIDLEY—



thinking human being believe in Anglican Freewill south of the Tweed, and Calvinistic (Presbyterian) Predestination north of it? But, surely, if the "Head of the Commonwealth" is to be truly representative of the many religions comprised within its boundaries, she (or he) must be Hindu in Delhi, Buddhist in Ceylon, Muslim in Karachi, Catholic in Quebec and Malta, and ultra-Protestant in Ulster—a "reductio ad absurdum," if ever there was one!

### The British Monarchy and the Anglican Church

The fact of course, is that the present position represents an anachronistic anomaly. There was some sense in having a State Church in the reign of its effective founder, the first Elizabeth; there is absolutely none in the retention of the institution under the second Elizabeth. In the 16th century probably the majority of the English people rejected, alike, Rome and Geneva, the two extremes, and were prepared to support the *via media* of "The Church of England by law established." To-day, such an official establishment is an anachronism in England, and a positive absurdity in the mainly non-Christian "Commonwealth." For Anglicanism, a minority in England, represents an infinitesimal minority in the whole world-wide "Common-

wealth." It is not only fantastic, it is an insult to every non-Christian, whether he or she be a Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist or Atheist, that Christianity, the creed of a minority, should be accorded special privileges denied to other creeds.

### The Secular State is the Answer

The Secular Movement in Britain puts forward demands, the acceptance of which demands at least the rejection of the supernatural. But not all its aims are of this exclusively rationalistic character. It also makes commonsense demands which can be endorsed by all progressive people, including Christians with, if not a progressive, at least—and we know such—a democratic outlook. The demand we are making here is of this latter, broader character. The association of the State, of the Monarchy, in particular, of the "Commonwealth" with religion—worse, with a particular religious cult, that of an infinitesimal and shrinking minority—is, to-day, an indefensible anachronism. The time has come for the complete and final dissociation of religion from the State and from its official representatives. The only possible alternative is the Secular State.

## Cigarettes and Lung Cancer

By G. H. TAYLOR

ARE cigarettes a contributory cause of lung cancer? Is their correlation real or only apparent? The case is still *sub judice* but it is now possible to get a picture of the position to date. The open-minded inquirer will be aware of two possible prejudices, one for each side. Smokers themselves may approach the problem with wishful thinking, resulting in a tendency to minimise the evidence in favour of the correlation being a real one. On the other hand the suggestion that vested interests will prevent the truth being known may or may not be well founded, but it is not evidence. It would, however, take on the appearance of evidence if all tobacco manufacturers gave up smoking.

First, the facts. Since 1933 lung cancer has increased in the United States fourfold for men and double for women; it has also increased alarmingly in other countries where statistics are available, and in England and Wales it has been detected 15 times as frequently as in 1913. One prediction is that by 1970 it will afflict one man in twelve. In U.S.A., smoking has risen fourfold in 20 years, and generally there is a remarkable parallel between cigarette consumption and lung cancer, leading some physicians, surgeons and medical researchers to point to the cigarette as the culprit.

In an experimental effort to get some confirmation, tar from tobacco smoke has been painted on the backs of white mice for a period equivalent to 30 years of human life. Forty-four per cent. of the mice produced skin cancers.

Now for the other side of the picture. Factors tending to throw doubt on the evidence may be enumerated as follows:—

(1) Lung cancer is a disease of the middle-aged and elderly, and there is a greater proportion of these than ever before.

(2) The backward method of research is unreliable; it is not experimental. To remedy this, the forward method is now being started in U.S.A., and from those under observation 5,000 deaths per year may be expected (from all causes), to give in a few years a more reliable pointer.

(3) Modern improvements in diagnosis and in recording mean that lung cancer is now easier to detect. In other words, the statistics are not reliable because many old death certificates should have had lung cancer on them. In 1913

it was uncommon for lung cancer to be detected at all before death. This was before the bronchoscope and sputum tests were used effectively. Moreover, one expert even suggests that it may to-day be over-diagnosed. There are also drugs used now which make for easier recognition of lung cancer as distinct from some respiratory infections.

(4) The main cause may be air pollution by tarred roads, etc., and to-day many industrial workers are coming in contact with new dangerous substances. The industrialisation of part of Iceland has been accompanied by a rise in lung cancer, though in Iceland smoking *per capita* is at the British level of 1920. In industrial countries, where comparison is possible between urban and rural districts, lung cancer is at least twice as prevalent in the urban, pointing to air pollution as the possible chief culprit. It is well to remember, however, that cigarette smoking is probably proportionately greater in urban districts *per head*.

(5) The experiments on mice may be taken as proving conclusively that mice shouldn't smoke. Moreover, each kind of animal has its peculiarities: for example, a mouse exposed to ultra-violet rays will develop skin cancer, but a rabbit won't. It is noteworthy, too, that there seems to be some evidence that mice are also susceptible to air pollution in the production of cancers.

The case rests. In Great Britain the smokers meet over half the cost of maintaining the Armed Forces.

Should the case go against the cigarette, the problem facing smokers will be: "Are you prepared to smoke at your peril?" Can science find a solution? He wants to smoke but he doesn't want lung cancer. Is there a way out? Investigations are afoot. There are perhaps as many as 70 or 80 substances in cigarette smoke. Is it possible to pinpoint the offender and take him out by a special filter tip? All have to be isolated and tested. Then there remains the possibility that the cancer agent is not in the leaf itself but added in the manufacture. In the meantime, has anyone a light?

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# Doctor Freud on Religion

By BAYARD SIMMONS

I WAS much gratified to read Mr. Jean Toudic's letter (May 14) so heartily commending Dr. Freud's excellent book, *The Future of an Illusion*, the illusion being religion in general. It is, as Mr. Toudic writes, masterly, and by the father of Psycho-analysis. I well remember the impression made on me when reading the first English translation of this fine work, and my pleasure when the then Editor of *The Freethinker* (the late Chapman Cohen) asked me to review it. I did so, and what I had to say appeared in the issue of January 20, 1929. A quarter-of-a-century ago! I am glad it can be reprinted here, for Dr. Freud's message has lost none of its punch. Here it is, unaltered.

It was Dante, was it not, who in his *Inferno* depicted the Lord of Hell, somewhat after the style of the triune chief of the other department, as having three heads. Each of these heads was engaged in an everlasting cud-chewing of the three greatest sinners. The Iscariot was naturally one, but memory fails me—it is years since I read the melancholy stuff—as to the others. At a hazard, they were the personal antipathies of the poet, for it was his pleasant little way to consign his political and personal enemies to some form of exquisite torment. No wonder Beatrice turned him down.

The devising of hells and of utopias has ever been a popular recreation of mankind, and in this sport the Christian has his share. Whom, one wonders, would the Twentieth Century Christian regard as the three greatest of modern sinners? Lenin, Wilhelm Hohenzollern, Bradlaugh? Perhaps; but if they were intelligent and well-informed, I think their choice would have to fall on Copernicus, Darwin, and Doctor Freud. For these three men have done more than all else to undermine those pleasing illusions which pander to man's vanity, and on which Christianity and other religions are based.

What Copernicus and Darwin did is, of course, well known to Freethinkers and other educated persons, but, for the sake of comparison with Dr. Freud's contribution, their work may be summarised here in a sentence or two. They began the process of putting man in his proper perspective. Copernicus proved that the heavenly bodies, the moon excepted, did not revolve around the earth; that is, he shattered the homocentric view of the cosmos. Darwin showed that the Lord of Creation was biologically at one with the beasts over which he had dominion. Man ceased, in fact, to be the only pebble on the beach, an illusion which his religions had always fostered.

I am not sure that the most deadly of the onslaughts on religion does not come from Dr. Freud and his new science of psycho-analysis. I do not, of course, wish to suggest that the Viennese professor, any more than the other two gentlemen, was animated by a deliberate hostility to religion. Their business was to establish truth, and truth established has done its work in the usual way. What Dr. Freud and his fellow psycho-analysts have done is to show the irrational basis of most of man's thinking, and how closely allied the so-called sane are to the so-called insane. Their study and demonstration of the illusionary nature of man's cherished beliefs has naturally included the greatest illusion of all, religion.

The foregoing paragraph is true for almost the whole of Dr. Freud's considerable literary output. (Incidentally, what a fine literary style the man has, even in translation). But his last book, *The Future of an Illusion*, written on the brink of the grave (for the great man's end is, as he tells us elsewhere, approaching from an incurable malady), is a

purposeful examination of religious illusions and a definite expression of the hope and belief that when mankind is *educated to reality* that illusion will pass away.

The position that Dr. Freud takes up in this book is somewhat as follows. He considers human culture, or civilisation; refines it; and analyses it. By culture he means all those respects in which human life has raised itself above animal conditions and in which it differs from the life of the beasts. Dr. Freud disdains to separate culture and civilisation; for the purpose of his thesis he regards them as one. He analyses this culture and finds that it consists of and can be considered under two aspects. There is, first, all the knowledge and power that men have acquired in order to master the forces of nature and win resources from her for the satisfaction of human needs. The second aspect includes all the necessary arrangements whereby men's relations to each other, and in particular the distribution of the attainable riches, may be regulated. Put in other words, the aim of our culture is, first, to produce wealth, and, second, to divide and distribute this in certain ways.

The foregoing states the basis of civilisation in economic terms, but, since men have minds, psychological problems immediately arise. The price man pays for his civilisation is heavy. Although men are scarce able to exist in isolation, they nevertheless feel as a heavy burden the sacrifices that civilisation expects of them in order that a communal life may be possible. As Dr. Freud so strikingly puts it, every individual is virtually an enemy of civilisation, the same institution that man collectively supports. Culture, therefore, has to be defended against the individual, and its organisation, institutions and laws are all directed to that end.

Every civilisation in this queer world is based on compulsory labour and instinctual renunciation. It must be left to Communists and others to argue whether they should be; here this is merely asserted as an existing fact. Man's wealth does not fall like manna from the skies, and such instinctual wishes as incest, cannibalism and murder must be renounced in communal life. The repression of these instinctual desires is at first purely an external compulsion, but as civilisation grows older this external compulsion is gradually "internalised" and becomes instinctive in its turn. We can witness the process in every child; it is only by this means that it becomes a moral and social being.

From out man's dissatisfaction with his civilisation has arisen his desires which could not, *ex-hypothesi*, be granted. A frustrated desire, as every psychologist knows, if held long enough and strongly enough, finally fabricates a substitute formation, or, technically, a "wish-fulfilment." An all-loving Heavenly father; paradise; hell for his enemies; all these are wish-fulfilments that compensate man for the frustrations of his imperfect civilisation. Dr. Freud regards the whole stock of religious ideas as such, and thinks that mankind is passing through a more or less distinct phase of neurosis, in the same way as every child does on its path to adult culture. But the child grows up, and in most cases overcomes spontaneously these neuroses. Religion, says Dr. Freud, is "the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity," and he claims that, if this be a true analogy, "one might prophesy that the abandoning of religion must take place with the fateful inexorability of a process of growth, and that we are just now in the middle of this phase of development." It follows from this, says the writer, that we, *i.e.*, the enlightened, should form our

(Continued on page 173)



## This Believing World

The B.B.C.'s attempt to combine "religion" with "philosophy" for children is certainly taking a ludicrous turn. The latest expositor is Mgr. R. A. Knox, and it would be difficult to imagine anything more boring for schools than his attempt to explain "King" Jesus and what he "taught." Mgr. Knox naturally knows exactly what "our Lord" thought, and what he said, and why he said it, and why the Church (that is, *his* Church) must tell the world all about Jesus and God and miracles, and so on.

The distinctive feature of Mgr. Knox's address was, however, the beautiful way in which he avoided everything resembling any *criticism* of the Gospels. There they are, every word is true, and every comma is inspired by Almighty God; and that there was such a thing as heresy was not even hinted at. If the Salvation Army's new "General" were to broadcast for children, we should have the same naive beliefs; and, of course, equally so from the Rev. B. Graham. Considering that they all believe in this infantile way—why is there so little unity among all-believing Christians? Why do they all *hate* each other's beliefs?

In the meantime, however, there are still some people who feel that the Bible has not said the last word on everything in spite of Mgr. Knox and his Christian friends. We congratulate the Worcester City Council on making it possible for people to play all Sunday in the local parks and recreation grounds. Naturally every effort was made by Sabbatarians to keep the Lord's Day "holy"—without, of course, any Bible sanction; but they were heavily defeated, it being held that if people could play on Sunday in private grounds they should not be prohibited in public grounds.

Recently in a "Round Britain Quiz" on the radio, the four eminent "contesters" were unable to say who was "Timothy Sparks." They must have been surprised when told that it was a pseudonym used by Charles Dickens as the author of *Sunday Under Three Heads*—his anti-Sabbatarian pamphlet which hurt his Christian admirers so much that his official biographer, John Forster, preferred completely to ignore it. Dickens always insisted that he was a Christian, but no English writer was a more thorough Secularist than he was—man must help himself, he insisted, not God, was his creed.

In case "Sunday Dispatch" readers were not sufficiently impressed by Mr. W. J. Brown's wonderful discovery of the Holy Shroud of Turin with its infallible photograph of Jesus, he reproduced for us recently the equally marvellous description of "our Lord" which can be seen in the Church of St. Nicholas of Myra, at Worth Matravers, which, he tells us, "is not generally known." It is actually one of the most blatant forgeries known in Christianity.

It is supposed to be written by "Publius Lentulus" to the Roman Senate and describes Jesus in the most glowing terms "as the most beautiful of the sons of men." We are sure that it will be news to Mr. Brown when we tell him it is such a rank forgery that even the Catholic Encyclopedia treats it with the utmost contempt. It declares that "Lentulus" is "a fictitious person." But will that prevent naive writers like Mr. Brown from believing it is all true—true as Gospel? Not on your life—and behind him will be a solid phalanx of *Sunday Dispatch* readers.

Continuing his personal investigations into religions—"Men seeking God"—Mr. Christopher Mayhew, M.P.,

gave TV viewers pictures and information on Buddhism and Judaism. The Buddhist interviewed, while declaring his "unbelief" in a God, proceeded to pray and grovel as if he were the most convinced believer. On the other hand, the Rev. I. Levy detailed his beliefs clearly, stressing the fact that Judaism was not a missionary religion, that it sought no converts, and opposed no other religion which found God in some other way. Unlike believers in Islam and Buddhism—and, of course, Christianity—Jews were not required to grovel.

But as an orthodox Jew Mr. Levy believed everything in the Bible—even that Jews were God's Chosen People. It was all in the Torah—the Pentateuch. And, as in the case of Mgr. Knox, not a glimmer of the fact that the Pentateuch had been riddled by criticism was allowed to be mentioned in the interview; though it was admitted that there were "Agnostics and Atheists" among Jews even in Palestine.

The truth is that religious rituals, forced on to children at a very early age, have done more to keep religion "undefiled" than anything else. Ritual is the backbone of religions—even such absurdities as a Jew having to wear a hat in a synagogue, a Christian having to take off his hat in church, and a Muslim having to take off his shoes before entering his mosque. Multiply this kind of nonsense a hundred times, instil it all in children as a paramount duty in life, and is there any wonder that religion has become so powerful?

## A Chronology of British Secularism

By G. H. TAYLOR

(Concluded from page 166)

1953—(continued).

The N.S.S. Constitution and Rules are revised. Secularists, ethicists and rationalists unite in protest meetings against the B.B.C.'s pro-religious policy. F. C. C. Watts dies. Death of Percy Ward in America.

1954. Chapman Cohen (b. 1868) dies.

The *Literary Guide and Rationalist Review* are now published apart.

Having completed the factual account perhaps one may be permitted a few reflections. First, if I may anticipate an obvious criticism, it is open to any secularist of long standing to complain of omission from the account I have given, and I am ready to believe such criticism would have much to commend it. I can only point, in defence, to the extent of the period dealt with.

Moreover, what I have attempted is not a history of the movement. It is, if you like, a potted history or diary of events. As such, it is deliberately flat, cold and generally lacking in colour. It is the bare bones, the skeletal structure, the mere scaffolding of the movement. Its progress is recorded in terms of its outward appearance only. Behind the event lies the struggle and the joy, the heroism and the suffering: at times, too, the impatience and even bitterness of one freethinker towards another, inevitable in any body of eager reformers.

An episode told in a line hides years of frustration and hardship. The exaltation of achievement is covered by a sober date and fact. There is to-day a forgotten cell in Holloway gaol, whose right to wear a plaque exceeds that of countless other far less distinguished but decorated dwellings in the land.

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# THE FREETHINKER

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## To Correspondents

DONALD W. (19).—Cutner's *Sabbath Day* will provide you with a good basis for your debate.

"O.A.P."—The N.S.S. is freethought in action.

R. SAUNDERS. — No one seems to know who Mimnermus was. Can any old reader enlighten us?

W. DAVIDSON. — The production of living organisms from non-living material is the sober expectation of biochemists based on what is already known and what can already be done.

H. R. J.—We agree that "religion can only flourish in mental darkness." Your conversion to our views at 57 is not so "odd."

ANTI-DIAMAI.—Neither *The Freethinker* nor the N.S.S. has an official philosophy in the academic sense.

MARTIN BARRETT.—"X-ray eyes" should fool nobody. Take the cloth away from them and let it cover the object itself.

Mrs. W. H.—The Christian Bible is no friend of animals. Not a single precept encourages kindness to them, and there are many passages abounding in God-sanctioned cruelty.

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

*Correspondents are requested to write on one side of the paper only and to make their letters as brief as possible.*

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## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

- J. CLAYTON'S Lectures: Friday, May 28, 7-30 p.m., Worsthorne; Sunday, May 30, 3 p.m., Platt Fields, Manchester; Sunday, May 30, 7 p.m., Blackburn Market; Tuesday, June 1, 7-30 p.m., Padiham.
- Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Every Sunday, 3 and 7 p.m.: F. ROTHWELL.
- Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Every Sunday at 7 p.m.: HAROLD DAY and others.
- Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle St.).—Every Sunday at 8 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER, E. MILLS and others.
- Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: G. A. WOODCOCK. Every Sunday, 3 p.m., at Platt Fields: a Lecture.
- North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, noon: L. EBURY.
- Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Every Friday at 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.
- West London Branch N.S.S.—H. ARTHUR, W. J. O'NEIL, L. EBURY, C. E. WOOD, G. H. TAYLOR. Hyde Park, every Sunday, 5 p.m.

### INDOOR

- Junior Discussion Group (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Friday, May 28, 7-15 p.m.: HECTOR HAWTON, "The Strategy of the 'H' Bomb."
- South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Sunday, May 30: Dr. HELEN ROSENAU, "Utopian Visions."
- Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Café, 40, Cannon Street, off New Street).—Sunday, May 30, 7 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY, "G. J. Holyoake, Father of Secularism."

## Notes and News

It is hoped that members of the N.S.S. will make an effort to be present at the Annual Conference at Manchester on Whit Sunday. Motions submitted promise an interesting discussion and interchange of views on such matters as self-government of the coloured peoples of the Commonwealth; laws relating to the homosexual; disarmament; the terms of the Leicester affiliation; the relation of Atheism to Communism; the Grand National horse race; the Cohen gramophone record; McCarthyism; possible extensions of N.S.S. branch activities; the policy of *The Freethinker*; the com-

parative reliability of scientists and theologians; and other matters. The historic gavel will sound at 10.30 prompt in the conference room at the Grosvenor Hotel.

On Monday, June 7, the day after their annual tussle with the problems of organised Secularism, those delegates and visitors to the N.S.S. Conference who do not have to rush home will enjoy the relaxation of a bus trip to Lyme Hall, with its park and gardens: one of those estates of the "Old Nobility" that have come under the ownership of the National Trust for the general benefit of the public. Arrangements are in the hands of Mr. W. Collins, President of the Manchester Branch. The distance from Manchester is only some fourteen miles, the cost of the journey and lunch is estimated at about 7s. 6d., and a return can be made in time to catch trains to take members back to all parts of the country.

## Dr. FREUD ON RELIGION—

(Concluded from page 171)

behaviour after the model of a sensible teacher who does not oppose this development but, on the contrary, seeks to further it. At the same time I must record the fact that Dr. Freud expresses the view (which I think is true *under present conditions*) that by accepting the universal neurosis the believer is spared the task of forming a personal neurosis.

It is said that over the entrance to a famous shrine in Moscow the present rulers of that city have caused to be painted these words: Religion is the opium of the people. This is not quoted by Dr. Freud, but he agrees with this dictum, for he writes that "the effect of the consolations of religion may be compared to that of a narcotic." Quite seriously he writes that the effort in America to deprive men of all stimulants (tea, alcohol, tobacco, etc.) is to promote religious piety by way of compensation. An interesting sidelight on the land of Fundamentalism and Prohibition!

I have written enough to show to Freethinkers the value of this little work. In this closing paragraph I would like, however, to make just two quotations from the book, to give you a taste of Dr. Freud's quality. "He who humbly acquiesces in the insignificant part man plays in the universe is irreligious in the truest sense of the word." Again, "Where questions of religion are concerned, people are guilty of every possible kind of insincerity and intellectual misdemeanour." How often have we "vulgar Atheists" said the latter of our Christian fellows, and with what indignation has this been denied. Will they accept this "hard saying" more readily from a great scientist and genius? I hae ma doots.

May I add by way of postscript that I received a personal letter from the old *maestro*, in his own handwriting, thanking me for sending him the article. He went on: "I am glad the poor thing has found grace in the eyes of the Freethinkers. As for the effects to be expected, I absolutely share your doubt." He goes on to explain that "the incurable malady I am said to be suffering of is, of course—old age, but that is sufficient." I am glad for the sake of the world that the Herr Doktor lived another ten years and added, during that period, much to the corpus of his works, including his last, widely-discussed, book called *Moses*.

—NEXT WEEK—

REPORT ON A MIRACLE

By C. G. L. DU CANN



# "The Claims of Materialism"

By H. CUTNER

UNDER the above title appears an article in *The Faith* for May by the Rev. D. Ebejer, O.P., in answer to the one I recently wrote in which I affirmed my belief in "mechanistic" Materialism. Mr. Ebejer has my congratulations on his temperately written article in which he deals with arguments and avoids personalities.

*The Faith* is a Roman Catholic journal published by "St. Paul's" Apologetics Circle in Malta, and I am glad to put on record that Mr. Ebejer is content mostly to deal with Materialism as "a philosophy which relies so much on Evolution" instead of confusing the issue by talking about it as if it were only "caring too much for the things of this world," as so many "antis" do. When I deal with Materialism in these columns, it is as a philosophy, and one which has been held by some of our greatest thinkers. The question of ethics is quite another problem, though they are often confused—deliberately; just as Christian ideals deal, we are told, with man's conduct to man when, in actual fact, the things which distinguish this religion from other religions have nothing to do with ethics as such. Islam and Judaism both teach "love" and "mercy," for example.

Mr. Ebejer accuses me of "slipshod thinking." The reason is that I pointed out that, if one believes in Evolution, then this world of ours was once a gaseous mass—that is, "matter," upon which life, as we know it, could not exist. Therefore I contended "matter" came before "mind," which was a "manifestation" of matter under certain conditions and was not an "entity" at all. In addition, I insisted that there was no "directing mind," no evidence whatever for anything "spiritual," as Christians love to say.

Mr. Ebejer replies to me: "The stupidity of this argument is blatantly clear." And he indignantly points out that I reject "beforehand" not only God, but the "possibility of a Directive and Creative Mind." Of course I do. I haven't the ghost of an idea what is a "God," or "a Directive and Creative Mind," and when I look around me I find nobody else has. I admit, of course, that lots of people say they know—like the Rev. B. Graham or Dr. F. Buchman. But none of these people has been able in the least to explain what they mean, or where their "God" resides, or what he is doing, and where. They impress the "vulgar," that is, their dupes, with what they say, but the least examination of their assertions proves them hopelessly confused and contradictory.

Let me ask how many books on Theism have been written to date? If acceptance of a "God" is so "blatantly" clear, why have these books been written? Why is it that Theists cannot agree exactly what is the "design" argument, or why some Theists throw it overboard entirely in favour of the muddle of the argument "a priori"? Is God Allah or Jehovah or Iahv or Al or El or Elohim or Jesus Christ or Brahma or Siva or Krishna or Jupiter, or what or who? Does anybody in this welter of Gods know anything about them except that most people throw overboard the particular Gods they are taught *not* to believe in?

Who or what is the "Mother" of God? Is it (or she) Mary or Venus or Isis or Juno or Astarte or any of the other ladies whose names have come down to us? Mr. Ebejer has been taught by his Church to "believe" in a form of "God" which to me looks sheer nonsense and, in addition, I utterly deny even the *possibility* of such nonsense as a reality.

He claims that it is "absurd to state that all these manifestations of life (in the Universe) came about by changes

of matter brought about by pure chance." I haven't the ghost of an idea what "pure chance" is when it comes to trying to understand the Universe (or Matter). All we know is that certain things happen under certain conditions. "Pure chance," like a "Directing Mind" (even with capital letters), adds nothing to our knowledge. I look at a tree in my garden which is, at the moment, in full bloom, and later will bear fruit unless killed by frost or disease, and I say that all I know is that this tree will bear fruit—I see in it neither "pure chance" nor "a Directing Mind"; and I cannot explain the *modus operandi* except by saying that it is a plum tree, and will bear plums and not cabbages. Mr. Ebejer says that he, a practising Catholic, can explain it. "God does it," he tells us. And I submit that this is no more an explanation than if I said "Abracadabra does it." It is a completely meaningless phrase—except to people like the Rev. B. Graham or a Salvation Army girl or the Pope. They know what they are talking about, of course.

So thoroughly befuddled is Mr. Ebejer with similar meaningless phrases that he tells me that "even if Materialists postulate that in primeval matter there existed a teleological urge to follow well defined (or for that, less defined) routes towards evolution, the existence of such an innate 'bias' or tendency in crude or gaseous matter has to be proved." Well, I know nothing about any "teleological urge" in his sense at all. Under certain condition matter behaves in a certain way. The "why" or the "how" or whether there is an "urge" or not is completely invalid. But note how Mr. Ebejer wants me to "prove" something which we never assert. Again and again we have to tell these people that all we know is "experience," and that all around us we see how many forms "matter" can take, without in the least "explaining" them. And when we are told about the "Directive and Creative Mind" words are used by Christians which are completely unintelligible to us and, what is more, "explain" nothing whatever.

Mr. Ebejer takes up six columns of his paper to talk "learnedly" about "life," which he defines as "the intrinsic principle of self-motion." Whether this is as good a definition as any other really does not matter, for one definition may well be as good as another. But does he know now—after his definition—any more about life than I do? What is an "all-embracing Mind," one of the meaningless phrases he and all Christians love to use? I know "mind" only as the resulting condition of certain forms of matter in the course of Evolution. Apart from these forms of matter, I find no evidence whatever of Mind, "all-embracing" or not. To use such words as "all-embracing" or "all-powerful" or "all-mighty" may be all right for priests with their unthinking sheep to follow them—but why try to use them against a Materialist who has had to deal with such nonsense all his "materialistic" life?

And why drag in Paul? If in the Epistles there are gleams of sense amid gleams of esoteric twaddle, it only proves that Paul, or whoever wrote these, had to be human sometimes. The Christ Jesus of Paul is just as mythical as the "God within you," or the "Kingdom of God," or Angels, or Miracles, or Devils, or all the nonsensical paraphernalia which surround Christianity and similar Oriental religions.

If there is no "Directing or Creative Mind" in the Universe, and if Evolution is true, as I believe it is, what else can there be but "mechanical" Materialism?



## INTERVIEWS WITH N.S.S. SPEAKERS

## J. W. Barker

AT one time Mr. J. W. Barker was principally concerned with the political field in which he contested Basingstoke in the 1931 by-election. He came to lose all confidence in political leadership, finding the average politician more interested in his seat than in the ills of society. To-day his reformist energies are concentrated on the Freethought Movement. The climax came when he encountered clerical interference with peaceful political meetings, and he soon found in the N.S.S. a movement which commanded his full sympathy and support, and in which his abilities could be used to the best purpose. Since 1937 he has been the chief speaker of the Kingston Branch. He is here interviewed by G. H. Taylor.

*I'll begin with one or two questions about platform tactics. What do you consider the ideal length of an open-air speech?*

Let it depend on the size of the crowd. The bigger the crowd the more questions will be forthcoming, and it's a good plan for the speaker to cut himself short in order to accommodate questions. If the questions don't come, go on speaking for twenty minutes or so.

*Do you chiefly attack Christian doctrines or Christian practices?*

Both, but we should lose no chance of showing how Christian practice gets its sanction from Christian doctrine.

*In other words, bible-banging and creed-shattering for a definite purpose?*

Yes, we must link up such attacks with social implications.

*By ridicule if necessary?*

Ridicule is a most disturbing feature: it can cause Christians to laugh at themselves, and that's an important step in their education.

*Now I'm going to play the part of a Christian questioner. Here goes. What have you to put in the place of religion?*

Brotherly love from a humanitarian standpoint without religion.

*Then where are your hospitals?*

Spread throughout the country, built by decent-minded people who thought they were Christians and discovered they were humanitarians, actually engaged in keeping people out of heaven!

*Don't you realise Christianity is not mere churchianity?*

The Church has been a necessary part of the system.

*If there's no God, who made you?*

Nobody; man develops from the operation of natural causes.

*But isn't his free will his own?*

There's no such thing as free will. We have no choice in coming or going, and other powers with little interest in us lay down rules and regulations as to how we shall be taught, what we shall eat and so on, even to what we shall own.

*From what section of Christians do you get the most violent opposition?*

From Jehovah's Witnesses and Elim Foursquare, and also from various theological students.

*Not from clergymen?*

No, in spite of repeated invitations they remain very shy, and this applies also to their followers. Following an advertisement in the local press of a meeting to establish the truth of Christianity I attended to hear an ex-comedian base his case on a mighty attack on Buddhists and Moslems. Our branch invited him to discuss the matter publicly against opposition. We are still waiting.

*Your comedian evidently doesn't feel equal to facing a tragedy. How do you deal with the man who points to the "good" done by the Salvation Army?*

I inquire into any actual case where the person is judged to have had help. I can then go into the history of the Salvation Army.

*Has the N.S.S. any particular claim to support, in preference to that of political parties, which would commend itself to intelligent people?*

Yes; people are realising more and more the frustration of political creeds. We can make a complete exposure of the political activities of all parties. They have had leaders who have become "bleeders." We have suffered from too much leadership. Man must realise that if he really wants a better world it must be done by himself, convincing others of its importance.

*We have some good new speakers coming along in the movement and we shall be getting more. What have you to say to them?*

To the speaker who is just beginning I would say, Be yourself. Don't try to imitate someone else, however good he is. After all, you may turn out to be even better than he is, so why start with an inferiority complex? And there is plenty of good propagandist literature at your disposal. You can arm yourself, for instance, with the *Bible Handbook*, Ingersoll's essays and Cohen's pamphlets.

## The Man from Ectoplasm

By DR. CARL H. LOEB

*(Concluded from page 163)*

Earth people set sexual functions apart from other functions like eating, breathing or elimination. They observe strict rules, and sex function, like defecation, is demoted and frowned upon. A permit to practise sexual intercourse must be obtained from an authorised officer, and it is limited to only one specific partner for life, and can be revoked only at great expense and loss of time. Intense religious fervour, I noted, is quite often caused by sexual frustration or sadistic or masochistic tendencies of the practitioner; however, they are rarely conscious of this fact and violently resent and object to any allusion that it might be one of the motivating forces in their peculiar activities called religious practices.

Earth-people are regimented and trained to accept without analysis or question statements made by certain people dressed or masquerading in a certain uniform or flowing bag-like robes, embellished with symbols like embroidered instruments of torture used by Earth-people to inflict pain or death on their fellowmen. The most prevalent torture instrument displayed on the robes of their religious leaders is the cross; while the original followers of Jehova prefer ferocious animals like lions or the six-pointed Star of David. He was a king and poet of a sort, but basically a very immoral and criminally-inclined character; while as a king he had the right to possess any female in his domain; he caused one of his officers to be murdered after he became infatuated with the officer's wife as he observed her making her toilet on her roof-garden. But the Jewish kings, like their God Jehovah, were permitted all kinds of monstrous and anti-social conduct as a prerogative of their royal or godly office.

In comparison with Jehovah, King David was a petty criminal, as we shall soon realise when we examine the



exploits of the God of Israel who, if he actually ever existed except in the beliefs of his followers, must have been most malevolent and devoid of any feeling, compassion or sense of justice or decency. I wish to go on record, however, that to date I have not found a scintilla of evidence that there ever was or is a Jehovah, or, as he is also called, Ato Schem, Adonai, Yaweh, Elohim, the last of which is really a plurality; so let it be known that I am only condemning the reputation of this monster described in a Scroll called the Torah, a highly irrational and contradictory recitation of ridiculous unlife-like and unscientific stories of the supposed origin of the planet Earth and Earth-men.

This fiction in book form is also alluded to as the Bible. The author's title is given but not his name: his title is God. Sometimes a cult fathered by a Jewish young man named Jesus, whose followers call themselves Christians, refer to this book or the Torah as the word of God, but they also refer to this young Jew, Jesus, as God, who was nailed to the Cross and executed by the Romans while he was rather young. By some illogical and mysterious process he was sired by Jehovah and the wife of an elderly carpenter by the name of Joseph; a very confusing story especially in the light of the people where this Jehovah was held responsible for creating the Earth by a magical command, and then manufacturing man from mud and giving him life by blowing air into him. It appears from this that Jehovah must be an air-breathing mammal with lungs, and he must have changed his process of manufacture when he fashioned what is called his son. Why he complicated instead of simplified production of a Jesus, by gestation instead of command by word of mouth, like he did originally in making man, is still subject to further research.

Earth-people get their beliefs of their origin in most instances from this so-called word of God, or the Torah if they are Jews; or the Bible if Christians. There are many more people who interpret their past from the Koran and a variety of other books. None of them agree, and none have any scientific basis, but solely assume self-styled authority. The formula is the following: "It is a fact because I say so, and I am infallible."

The Torah states no origin, sex or description of Jehovah. Let us call him God for short, but it is the God of Israel we refer to until further notice. Out of nowhere he appears and begins to command. From all accounts he was suspended in mid-nothing; there was not yet air—he had to create it! First he created light by command. No description of the type of radiant energy is given; from circumstantial evidence it appears that Day or Sunlight is meant. All of this supposedly happened less than 6,000 years ago; a physical impossibility because there exists a tremendous amount of scientific evidence that the Earth is as old as most other planets. Possibly we have no numerical system available to designate its age, but we know it is more than millions of years, which is sufficient to prove that the biblical age of the world is wrong.

Jehovah created the world and everything in it in six days. Apparently he was not used to talking, because he had to rest on the seventh day; he was tired from those few commands, inflating Adam, and performing a surgical operation by removing a rib from him to manufacture the first human female of the species. Apparently Jehovah is somewhat frail, and fatigues readily by Ectoplasmian standards, and while he is alluded to as wise or all-knowing, he seems to be ignorant of spontaneous self-energisation without rest, practised by us on the Planet Ectoplasm if we do not want to, or don't have the time to indulge in sleep for pastime or enjoyment.

—(Reprinted from *Age of Reason*.)

## Life and Death

By CHARLES H. SMITH

THE majority of biologists hold that at some time far in the past living organisms came into existence from dead material through the working of natural processes. Matter preceded life, not life matter. For it is clear that life can only exist within a very narrow range of temperatures, and all scientists agree that for a long period in the earth's history the temperature was so high that no living organism could develop. Only as the earth's temperature fell would this become possible.

Since there was a time when there was no organic life on the earth, which now teems with highly developed species displaying mental as well as vital qualities; and since all such species are known to have evolved from the simplest living forms: what is more likely than for a change to have occurred from inorganic to animate existence on the part of compounds of Carbon, Oxygen, Hydrogen and Nitrogen (the essential constituents of living organisms) when earthly conditions at last made this possible? What other logical and feasible explanation is there?

Among the many thousands of organic (carbon) compounds is it surprising that colloids and unicellular living organisms are found, branching into plant-life sustained by chlorophyll, and later into animal forms independent of its aid?

Anti-materialists used to say that this was impossible, because the old idea of matter was that in the final analysis it was composed of dead, inert atoms of some ninety-six different kinds. That life and soul could eventually arise from such unpromising stuff was, they said, inconceivable. Modern nuclear physics has destroyed this purely rhetorical argument by revealing the tremendous resources of force and energy stored within the atomic structure. Here, along with the potentiality of vast physical and chemical activities, may well be the core of all forms of existence, including the living and mental phenomena that material organisms display on the biological and psychological levels of being. It will not do for the mystics and transcendentalists to scoff at this suggestion. They must advance superior explanations, but these their barren religions and philosophies consistently fail to provide. Consequently, the materialist conception of life and death as products of change holds the field.

As life has arisen and persists in the changing conditions of the earth, so death comes in the changes to which living organisms, simple or complex, are subjected. All are born, all die, as part of nature's inexorable law of change.

That so many supposedly educated people fail to grasp the simple logic of the materialistic presentation of the life and death process is due to the mingling of much irrational instruction with the scanty scientific fare, usually confined within very narrow limits, available in schools and universities. When one hears them discussing whether there is life on the stars, and gasping when told that the earth would, if thrown into a star, burn up like a piece of greasy paper, one realises the educational advances that will be necessary before most people can be expected to attain to a sane attitude towards life, death and the problems that these phenomena pose to mankind.

**THE BIBLE HANDBOOK.** By G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball. Price 4s.; postage 3d. (Tenth edition.)

**ROME OR REASON? A Question for Today.** By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 1s.; postage 2d.