

# The Freethinker

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WRITING in this column last February the present writer remarked that the death of Mr. Chapman Cohen left his veteran contemporary, Joseph McCabe, as the last of the major Rationalists of the 19th century. It was with the deepest regret that we all learned of the death of Mr. McCabe on January 10 at the advanced age of 87. Elsewhere in this and, no doubt, succeeding issues of *The Freethinker*, will be found personal reminiscences of Mr. McCabe's long life and last days. Here I wish to deal primarily with his long association with the Free-thought Movement and with his formidable intellectual record in connection with aggressive Rationalism.

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

## Joseph McCabe— 1867-1955

By F. A. RIDLEY

It is common knowledge that Joseph McCabe emerged from the Roman Catholic Priesthood to stamp his personality on the annals of Free-thought. As the Reverend Father Anthony of the Franciscan Order, Joseph McCabe had the initial advantage of a thorough training in Catholic theology—a training of which he made excellent use—to the permanent discomfiture of his former co-religionists. Born in Manchester in 1867, McCabe entered a monastery in his earliest youth, and spent there the "twelve years" which he has so inimitably described in his "spiritual" autobiography. His final break with the Catholic Church took place at the end of 1895, after a varied clerical career as, successively, monastic recluse, parish priest, and professor of scholastic philosophy. In the course of the famous "Twelve years," McCabe experienced clerical life from many angles, in several countries, which he has described with penetrating humour in his famous monastic autobiography. He had the good fortune to encounter, and to study under, two of the most famous Catholic scholars of his day, Cardinal Mercier and his Franciscan superior, Fr. David, and he used his opportunities to acquire an insight into Catholic dogma and "apologetics," which was later to rank him amongst the most formidable critics that Catholicism has ever had to encounter. McCabe did not merely make assertions; he knew what he was talking about!

### Why He Left the Church

The first publication of Joseph McCabe, ex "Father Anthony," after quitting the ranks of Rome, bore the self-explanatory title: "Why I Left the Church." It was one of his most brilliant contributions to critical literature, and innumerable students of Catholic dogma, including the present writer, have obtained their first critical approach from that incisive critique. The author followed it up with *Twelve Years in a Monastery*, which elaborated the criticisms expressed in *Why I Left the Church*. Over and above the inimitable survey of clerical life, and of Catholicism as a working creed, *Twelve Years* takes a high place in the critical literature of permanent value, by reason of the masterly critique of Roman Catholic Theology with which the book concludes. Those Freethinkers, and there are, unfortunately, many such in this country who habitually treat Catholic dogma as a mere congeries of supersti-

tion without any logical basis, would be well advised to read, and to re-read the brilliant critical chapters with which "Fr. Anthony" analyses the theological system that he had formerly taught. Mr. McCabe will, we imagine, be longest, and be most usefully remembered, as one of the most effective critics of "The Popes and their Church." His later study of ecclesiastical history and biography are, it may be predicted, the most likely to be remembered, and the most permanently valuable in the vast output of this most prolific of writers.

That the Roman Catholic Church pursued the famous clerical "apostate" with peculiar venom is common knowledge. A personal reminiscence may be relevant in this connection. The present writer was once talking to a Catholic, a former theological student, on the steps of the British Museum, when Mr. McCabe, a regular worker in the famous library, bounced past with that unflinching vigour which characterised him up to the last month of his long life. The Catholic theologian stopped abruptly, pointed towards the agile figure of McCabe as he descended the steps, and remarked in the voice of horror: "He can *make Our Lord*!" For, "once a priest, always a priest." Down to the end of his days "Fr. Anthony" had only to pronounce the liturgical words, "This is my Body" ("Hoc est corpus meum"), with a serious "intention" over the bread and wine, and "Our Lord" Jesus Christ would be present in flesh and blood! No wonder the Church hated the apostate priest! He could "*make our Lord*." And, what was, perhaps, more to the point, he could, and did, unmake many former dupes of "the great lying Church of Rome."

### An Intellectual Encyclopædia

The present writer is of the opinion that Mr. McCabe's most permanent work was represented by his critical analysis of Catholic dogma and of Church history. In my opinion, his best work is represented by his critical studies of Catholicism; *Why I Left the Church*; *Twelve Years in a Monastery*; and his studies of such famous figures in Church History as St. Augustine and Abelard. The last named book, McCabe's critical study of the famous mediæval "modernist," the French theologian, Peter Abelard (11th century), is actually McCabe's best book, an historical classic from a literary point of view. However, Joseph McCabe was not limited to Catholic, or even to theological themes. Contrarily, he was an encyclopedic brain and, perhaps, the most prolific writer of his epoch. Inevitably, many of these works on a multiplicity of themes, were popular, even superficial, by comparison with his major works. Mr. McCabe wrote on a multiplicity of subjects. But such books as *The Social Record of Christianity*, and *The Idea of God*, strike a deeper note. Whilst his monumental "Rationalist Encyclopædia" represents an invaluable and indispensable textbook for the historical survey of Rationalism. Nor should one fail to note the immense value of McCabe's work as a populariser of

modern scientific and historical knowledge, by not only his innumerable books but, also, by his world-wide lecture tours. In the former connection, the numerous popular "Blue Books" published chiefly in America, by Haldeman-Julius, exercised a widely diffused influence.

### A Great Freethinker

Joseph McCabe will, we do not doubt, go down in history as one of the "Immortals," one of the major figures, in English-speaking Rationalist history. He has left no comparable successor. "Comparisons are, proverbially, odious"; but if we said that Joseph McCabe ranked with John M. Robertson and Chapman Cohen in and among English-speaking Rationalists of the 20th century, that opinion is arguable and, it would appear, justified. One might further add that, perhaps, McCabe was less subtle, but more encyclopædic in his knowledge than Cohen, and less encyclopædic, but more readable than J. M. Robertson. At least, it cannot be denied that he was one of the major intellects of world Freethought, and *what a fighter!*

## Mrs. Knight and the Press

By G. H. TAYLOR

THE B.B.C. have stated, according to a report in the *News Chronicle* (January 13, 1955), that letters sent to them after Mrs. Knight's first broadcast were equally divided between protest and appreciation, and that on the occasion of her second "no more than a handful" telephoned in protest.

The second broadcast was given a good straight report the morning after in the *Manchester Guardian*, the *Daily Express*, the *Daily Herald*, the *Daily Telegraph*, *News Chronicle* and *Daily Mail* but not in *The Times*. The *Daily Herald* termed her broadcast "astonishing," an adjective which could be interpreted by both sides according to choice. The *Express* interposed into the report a splenetic attack by the Bishop of Coventry, who openly stated the B.B.C. were quite wrong to permit such unbelief on the air: it was wrong to allow "a lecturer who did not believe in God to use its microphone." He referred to "this brusque" and "bossy female," with her "pernicious performance," and again to her as a "simple-minded female."

Now, whatever adjectives might be applied to Margaret Knight, these are just about the least applicable. So far from being brusque, bossy and simple-minded, she is gentle, deferring and intelligent, and only a fanatical outburst of Christian love could describe her as the opposite.

The *Daily Telegraph* reported "an enormous correspondence," and to its credit published many letters supporting the broadcasts. Its leading article following the second talk was, however, strongly—even wildly—against Mrs. Knight, and even condemned the B.B.C. for allowing her to speak. The complete answer to Mrs. Knight, apparently, was "Who made the stars?" To allow Atheists on the air was to "coddle" them! From which we must suppose that the B.B.C. coddles believers every day of every week. Atheists, said the *Telegraph*, should not be allowed to "affront" the "deepest feelings" of others. From which we presume the only feelings which it is right and proper to offend are those of Atheists. We hesitate to couple the *Telegraph* with the *Sunday Graphic*, but can see little basic difference between its frantic, unbalanced denunciation and the latter's branding of Mrs. Knight, in thick type on its front page of January 9, as a "menace" and an "unholy woman" contaminating "the air we pay for." Not, be it noted, the air which Mrs. Knight and her kind pay for.

### A Great Secularist

Joseph McCabe was one of the Founders of the R.P.A., and most of his working life was spent in that institution. However, towards the end of his life he became dissatisfied with the "oblique approach" which, nowadays, appears to characterise that organisation and its publications. There was nothing of the "Reverent Rationalist" about ex-"Father Anthony." Last year, he attended Mr. Cohen's funeral and, later in the year, joined the N.S.S. Subsequently, he appeared twice in this column, thus taking his place with Cohen and Foote, the latter of whom had already welcomed his secession from Rome in the columns of *The Freethinker* last century. The very last of Joseph McCabe's innumerable lectures would have been given last autumn to the West London Branch of the N.S.S., had not his last illness struck him down; an operation delayed, but could not avert his final passing. The N.S.S. and *The Freethinker* are proud to have had the active co-operation of this great man. We salute the passing of one of the world's greatest scholars, and of a life-long fighter for the mental emancipation of Humanity.

Some Christian correspondents have urged the B.B.C. not to allow unbelievers to broadcast *except* when there is a Christian representative there to refute them. In other words, only Christians must be allowed to speak without opposition. Forum for the Atheist and Coward's Castle for the Christian!

\* \* \*

Mrs. Knight is being posted with this issue of *The Freethinker*, and we most heartily compliment her on her courage and effectiveness. We are not so certain as she is, that Jesus ever lived, or that he was "a great moral teacher," but she has opened the eyes of vast numbers of young people who, if not actually converted to Freethought or Humanism already, have received from her an impetus which, in good time, will bring them to these positions. For that, Margaret Knight earns the admiration of us all.

But there is one last, and important, thing to be said, even to Mrs. Knight. The things she is saying now were said a century ago by Bradlaugh, and three-quarters of a century ago by *The Freethinker*. It is the work of those pioneers which has given Mrs. Knight her chance. By using her chance well she has brought nearer—*our chance*.

### For Liberty

#### 1. RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Every man is a customer and ought to be a producer.

Beware when the great God lets loose a thinker on this planet.

It will never make any difference to a hero what the laws are.

The wise know that foolish legislation is a rope of sand which perishes in the twisting.

If you put a chain around the neck of a slave, the other end fastens itself around your own.

As men's prayers are a disease of the will, so are their creeds a disease of the intellect.

—NEXT WEEK—

We are indebted to our American contemporary, "Progressive World," for the reprinting of what was probably McCabe's last published article prior to his death; an article in which he rationally and wittily contemplates his approaching end.

#### A SICK MAN LOOKS ON LIFE

By JOSEPH McCABE

# The Life Everlasting

By C. G. L. DU CANN.

OUR standard of values changes from age to age and generation to generation. This is so, as regards religious values amongst others.

For example, one of the famous Ten Commandments—No. 5—lays heavy emphasis on the duty of children towards their parents. Not one of those ten commandments even speaks of the reverse duty of parents to their children! (By implication, it might be deduced that the Ten Commandments of God recognise no such duty; or even deny its validity.)

But to-day modern folk trouble very little indeed about the Fifth Commandment (or its promise of the reward of long life). *Per contra*, they heavily emphasise, perhaps even over-emphasise, the claims of the children; and not merely the duty of their parents to them individually but also collectively; the State, both in the forms of national and local authorities, being saddled with a duty to the children also.

This is a transvaluation of values indeed.

Other examples of similar kind might be quoted. Let us look at one: the favourite, once heavily-emphasised, desirability of personal Immortality or Life Eternal or Life Everlasting. Behind the Four Gospels that pleasant theological concept stands as the ardent wish of all mankind. It lends significance to the Resurrection, to the Ascension, and to the Crucifixion.

Jesus lived; died; rose again; ascended into heaven, and still lives. So may we. That comprises our want and our hope. That—more than anything else—is the attractiveness and the importance of the Christian religion.

Otherwise it is, as St. Paul argued—"a vain thing"—i.e., useless to us all.

Often since St. Paul has this touchstone of "Life Eternal" been applied to Christianity by both its apologists and its attackers. The assumption is that Immortality is indubitably desirable and desired by every son and daughter of man, and that none of us can wish for a temporary and finite existence, ending in nothingness, for our personal individual selves.

Perhaps in primitive communities this may have been true. But we are, perhaps, less convinced of life as a blessing than the men and women of old; and perhaps we fear death less, knowing, as we do, that it is one of the inescapable laws of life. Most of all, we are too sophisticated, too knowledgeable, to think that we, as individuals, matter very much in Nature's plans of fecundity and wastage.

In a word: we moderns neither want nor expect eternal life. If, as Samuel Butler said: "The laws of God" (or Nature) "are the laws of our own well-being," then the kindly law of Death after life and Nothingness before life being indeed right and fitting for all life, human life included, it is the good law.

For what does personal eternity or personal immortality offer us? What indeed? Who wants to be a senile Methuselah, going on and on and on, for the sake of going-on? The body that survives birth, infancy, youth, maturity, old age, and then into senility and decay, is mercifully ended—a worn-out garment. But alas! the mind also goes through these stages and also falls into senility and decay. Then what is there of the individual left to deserve or desire survival through æons and æons?

When a fiction-writer imagines a character like "The Wandering Jew" of Eugene Sue, or "Melmoth the Wanderer" by Charles Robert Maturin, living through the centuries, we perceive the full horror of over-lasting life.

How much more intolerable would be Everlasting Life? To make it the least degree tolerable, it must be something which is not life as we know it, but the unreal existence of perpetual static youth or perpetual static maturity, like the figures on Keats' "Grecian Urn":

"Of deities or mortals or of both  
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady."

Except in such excremental works of man as literature, art, music, or the like, this perpetual life is but a lie and a pretence, I fear. The body is temporary, the mind is temporary, the spirit (which you may call the Ego, the Will, the Governing Part, or, in religious diction, the Soul) is—all too plainly—as fleeting as (and with) the other twain. How curious that man, who can confer long-lasting-life (perhaps even some measure of immortality) upon his work, cannot confer it upon himself!

Driven from the old crumbling fortification of "the Resurrection of the Body," and abandoning with reluctance the outworks of the Resurrection of the Soul, the religionist takes refuge in the hope of some survival of the collective manhood in God. But alas! we carnal sinners find no savour or satisfaction in survival by absorption in a nebulosity. "That leaves the heart high-sorrowful"—and ill-content indeed. If we want everlasting-life, it is our selves' own everlasting life that we want.

How dismally, too, does the concept of everlasting life fall into unattractive crudity at the question: "What can we do with it?" Heaven and hell as vulgarly depicted, are threats of being bored or burned not to, but without extinction. Crowns on our heads and harps in our hands and voices singing in perpetual praise, lauding and magnifying with heavenly (and other) hosts, the might, majesty, power, and glory, of Omnipotence, is a dreadful picture. The "other heights in other lives" of Browning is better—but not all of us have the Browning zest for self-improvement. That injustices of the present may be rectified by justice hereafter—well enough, yes, but it ought not to take all Eternity to do that. Indeed, that delay is too much like the terrestrial justice we have experienced in British law-courts.

Wiser, then, are we moderns, whether religiously or irreligiously inclined, to surrender this chimera, this ancient hallucination, of Life Everlasting. It may have comforted our forefathers. It can hardly comfort us. Rather does it dismay or affright the thoughtful of to-day. Bad as the darkness; the corruption; the silence; the chill of the grave; and the sterile finality of the Inevitable End may be, they are more merciful than the burden of Life Everlasting.

Once we were not—and did not suffer under that strange fact. Yet again we shall not be—and why shall we suffer under the latter any more than under the former? We only suffer now in our living and from our own thought of Death-to-come, and probably not in the experienced Reality at all. We had better emancipate our minds entirely from the theological concept of "The Life Everlasting" and so, like the poet, become more than "half in love with caseful death."

## Miracles

Miracles come of an impassioned credulity which creates what it is determined to find. Given an enthusiastic desire that God should miraculously manifest himself, the religious imagination is never at a loss for facts to prove that he has done so; and in proportion to the magnitude of the interests at stake is the scale of the miraculous interposition.—FROUDE.

## This Believing World

Never has that oft-quoted saying beloved of newspaper men—a dog biting man is not news; a man biting a dog is news—been better exemplified than in the case of Mrs. Knight's broadcast lecture on Morals and Ethics for children. There never was any news value when the B.B.C. religious squad took over the job of giving us scores of religious items over the air every week. The more Fundamentalist they were, the better was it for the hordes of parsons and priests, Jesuits and bishops; and the gullible swallowed without a squirm the supernatural twaddle churned out by the faithful.

On the other hand, Mrs. Knight's lecture was gripping news, and columns of space have been devoted—in most cases—to condemning her lecture in the severest terms. As becomes a Christian gentleman inspired by the "turning the other cheek" business taught by his Master, the Bishop of Coventry referred to Mrs. Knight as "this bossy female of the B.B.C."—"female" being answer enough hurled at a lady who has the temerity to differ from him. In this, he was well supported by Dr. Soper, who said that Mrs. Knight's lecture bristled "with mistakes." As for the celibate Jesuit, Fr. Christie, he could only declare her thesis as "of great antiquity," whatever that means, and naturally that "Nazi, Fascist, and Communist ideologies were born" from it. What a beautiful character must be Fr. Christie!

With the big fish so passionately voluble are the smaller fry like the Dean of Walthamstow, who thought that Mrs. Knight's lecture was "absolutely shocking," and who has piously protested to the B.B.C. And on their tails we get angry journalists like Mr. Terence Feely in the *Sunday Graphic*, who gave nearly half a page to heading his article, "The Unholy Mrs. Knight," which, no doubt, he thought was an insult, but which the lady, we are sure, felt was a compliment. Mr. Feely perhaps belongs to the Faith—and no doubt whatever, most Roman Catholics in the Ages of Faith would cheerfully have consigned her to a vat of boiling oil, one of the merry methods of dealing with heretics in those consecrated days. That it can no longer be applied in these is due more than anything else to the spread of Freethought.

Swansea bankruptcy Court ought to be ashamed of itself. A witness wanted to take the oath, and—horror of horrors—no Bible could be found. The court was searched in vain, and the Recorder was about to adjourn it when the usher came in with God's Precious Word triumphantly carried in his hand. Here was a scene which would have brought sanctified joy to the Bishop of Coventry, the Dean of Walthamstow, Fr. Christie, Dr. D. Soper, and Mr. T. Feely. They would all have stood reverently up while the witness solemnly kissed the Holy Book. In any case, it was the Lord's reply to Mrs. Knight.

According to the Rand "Daily Mail," the Bantus in South Africa have a thousand religious sects. Many belong to the Anglican, Roman, and Nonconformist Churches, but many others prefer a Church of their own. It appears that millions of Bibles have been sold to them, and any "mountebank" interprets it "to suit his own purpose." One "Church" has 250 members, a bishop, and ten priests. One reason why Jehovah is being increasingly recognised is that the Zulu God Unkulunkulu "has last touch with contemporary life." The poor unfortunate native witch doctor is being ousted, and godly witch doctors from Jehovah's Witnesses or the Four Corners Apostolic Church installed in their place.

Some of these Churches claim that there were ten Virgin Marys, five black and five white. (Personally, we strongly dissent: there were twenty, including five yellow and five red.) Some Bantus think Jesus was black, though we have always contended that, if he ever lived, he must have been brown like the Arabs and the Israelites. All the same, it is a pity that full particulars cannot be had of all the thousand sects. It would be a humble and divine task to compare them with samples of the Bishop of Coventry's religion, to say nothing of all the other devout Christians who have writhed in agonising pain listening to Mrs. Knight.

## Review

*An Atheist Manifesto* by Joseph Lewis. Freethought Press Association, New York, 1954. 64 pages. Price \$1.

AUTHOR of twenty-one books and pamphlets and innumerable articles, in this, his latest work, Joseph Lewis has given us a clear statement of Atheism. In general, Freethought writers rather shirk using the word "Atheism" in the titles of their books. I do not remember even that redoubtable Atheist, John M. Robertson, ever using it and, of course, the word almost makes it certain that the book will be thoroughly boycotted.

Mr. Lewis has ever had the courage of his convictions. His Atheism has always been proclaimed from the house-tops, and it is an Atheism which can be understood, not veiled in metaphysical phrases.

Logically and remorselessly, he attacks religion and the God idea. Man is not a "fallen angel," he cries, but is the product "of an unpurposed evolution." That is a clear statement of fact—of a fact, indeed, that annihilates every idea of a God, and puts Atheism on the map once for all. "The fear of the Lord," is not the beginning of wisdom, "on the contrary, it has made man a grovelling slave." And, "in the name of God" means, "in the name of nothing . . . because there is no God."

Joseph Lewis gives many instances of scientific discoveries like Anesthesia and X-rays and preventive medicines which have bestowed on man the power to relieve suffering, and which have saved millions of people from disease and premature death. These discoveries were often opposed by religion in the name of God Almighty. Indeed, the Church opposed, to mention one particular case not given by Mr. Lewis, giving the public any information to prevent the spread of syphilis. It served a man right if he caught the dread disease—it was God's punishment for being "immoral." And if the Christian Churches are not now quite as ignorant and silly, it is because of the stand made in the name of Secularism and of books in which the "will of God" is ignored.

The reader can ponder over this extract:—

Many ask what difference does it make whether man believes in a God or not. It makes a big difference. It makes all the difference in the world. It is the difference being right and being wrong; it is the difference between truth and surmises—facts or delusions. It is the difference between the earth being flat, and the earth being round. . . . It is the difference between verified knowledge and the faith of religion. It is a question of Progress or the Dark Ages.

*An Atheist Manifesto* was published on November 20 last, the 260th anniversary of the birth of Voltaire, and though that great writer pretended that he was opposed to Atheism, those of us who have read him, and read him "between the lines," would be prepared to say that Voltaire could agree to everything Joseph Lewis has said in defence of Atheism.

H. C.

Without comment: "Lightning Conductors at Church of Our Lady, Birkenhead, by . . ."—advertisement in *The Catholic Times*.

# THE FREETHINKER

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THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, £1 4s. (in U.S.A., \$3.50); half-year, 12s.; three months, 6s. 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.

## To Correspondents

Correspondents may like to note that when their letters are not printed, or when they are abbreviated, the material in them may still be of use to "This Believing World," or to our spoken propaganda.

R. LEWIS.—Glad to have your reminiscences of Chapman Cohen lecturing at the Secular Hall, Manchester, over 50 years ago.  
ELLEN WHITE.—"But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me," occurs in Luke IX, 27. For such references see our *Bible Handbook*.

## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Every Sunday, 7 p.m.: F. ROTHWELL.  
Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: G. A. WOODCOCK.  
North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, January 30, noon: L. EBURY and H. ARTHUR.  
Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Every Friday at 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

### INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, January 30, 6-45 p.m.: H. DAY, "The Blessings of Hypocrisy."  
Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, February 1, 7 p.m.: M. A. MAJID (Editor, *Islamic Review*), "The Essence of Islam, in Relation to Modern Times."  
Junior Debating Group (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Friday, February 4, 7-15 p.m.: J. HUTTON HYND, "The Suppression of Communism in the U.S.A."  
Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, January 30, 6-30 p.m.: H. J. BLACKHAM, "What Reason Can and Cannot Do."  
Manchester Branch N.S.S. (New Millgate Hotel, Long Millgate, Manchester 3).—Sunday, January 30, 7 p.m.: F. J. CORINA, "From Savagery to Spaceships."  
Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare St.).—Sunday, January 30, 2-30 p.m.: P. MYERS, "Educating Our Masters."  
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, January 30, 11 a.m.: A. ROBERTSON, M.A., "Toynbee's Philosophy of History."  
West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1).—Sunday, January 30, 7-15 p.m.: V. E. NEUBURG, "Working Class Literature in England."

## Notes and News

The first announcements of the N.S.S. Annual Dinner and Concert, to be held at the Oxford Corner House on February 26, brought a promising crop of applications for tickets. At 16s. each, the price not having been increased for years, they represent exceptional value. Added to which, occasions when Freethinkers get together for social intercourse are too rare to miss. We hope to have a record attendance.

One consequence of the publicity given to Mrs. Knight's broadcast has been the admission of a number of letters from the freethought side to newspaper correspondence columns. Among these was one from the N.S.S. head office calling for more such talks by "competent exponents of secularism, rationalism and humanism." It gained a place in that organ of British business and conservatism the *Daily Telegraph*. We progress.

## The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

Previously acknowledged, £738 0s. 2d.; W. G. Birch, £2; South London and Lewisham Branch, N.S.S., £3 3s.; Robt. Dixon, 10s.; A. W. Davis, 6s.; F. E. Jones, Buenos Aires, £2; Merseyside Branch, N.S.S., £1; H. Beck, 5s.; A. Hancock, 1s.; E. J. Hughes, 2s. 6d.; M. Marchlewski, 10s. 6d.; Mrs. R. Kurash, 5s. 3d.; A. R. Hill, 5s.; Mrs. A. Shiel, 10s.; Mrs. E. M. Sandys, £1 1s.; A. Ineson, 2s. 6d.; Sqdn. Ldr. A. C. F. Chambre, 5s.; Thomas Smith, £2; H. H. Jones, 17s. 3d.; A. Cook, 3s.; Charles Blee, 10s.; W. Humphries, 5s.; H. Brown, £1; W. P. Adamson, 5s.; S. C. Denning, £1; Robert Lewis, Manchester, 10s.; R. Harley, 2s. 6d.; D. Davies, 10s.; J. Byrne, 10s.; J. Clayton, Leeds, 5s. J. Trower, N.Z., 10s.; J. Adkins, N.Z., £2; W.H.D., 5s.; M. A. Baron, 5s. Total to date, £761 4s. 8d.

Donations should be sent to "The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund" and cheques made out accordingly.

Several readers have asked if it is possible to get proofs of the etching from which we reproduced the portrait of Chapman Cohen in these columns some months ago. It was made by Mr. H. Cutner shortly after Mr. Cohen's seventieth birthday, and he informs us that the copper plate will still yield a good number of excellent proofs before showing signs of wear. It may interest readers to learn that Mr. Cutner is a member of the Society of Graphic Artists, and has exhibited etchings for over thirty years. He has also written a text-book on Etching. If any reader would like a proof signed by the artist the price is 10s. 6d.

## The Margaret Knight Broadcast

We need hardly remind readers that the most important test of public opinion on Freethought propaganda in the whole history of the B.B.C. is now taking place. Our own correspondence is very great, and selections will appear. We are endeavouring to collect, classify and analyse the reactions of national or widely circulating newspapers and journals to the broadcasts. Readers are invited to assist by sending us factual information based on the papers they read regularly, e.g., number of letters printed since January 6 which are (a) favourable, (b) unfavourable, or (c) mixed, and any editorial, or otherwise representative, pronouncements.  
G. H. T.

## Tribute to Joseph McCabe

I was distressed to hear of the death of Mr. Joseph McCabe and would like to express the regrets of our branch.

We knew that Mr. McCabe was far from well, but had come to regard him as being almost indestructible. His death is a great loss to the cause of Freethought: it is the passing of the last of the great figures that our movement has produced. I believe that others will arise, but his place will be very hard to fill. But he would have been the first to say: "Carry on the fight" and that is what we must do.

COLIN MCCALL,  
President, Manchester Branch, N.S.S.

There is something to be said for every error, but whatever may be said for it, the most important thing to be said about it is that it is erroneous.—CHESTERTON.

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

MATERIALISM RESTATED. Fourth edition. By Chapman Cohen. Price 5s. 3d.; postage 3d.

# Design Theory Refuted

By Dr. E. L. DWIGHT TURNER

EVERY person who is born into this world is a living proof of evolution. In inter-uterine life he or she has gone through a summary of stages of evolution from amœba to man, and this was accomplished in nine months instead of ages of time.

Each individual starts as a single cell, developed from the union of a spermatozoon and an ovum. This single cell divides into two cells, the two into four, the four into eight, and so on until there is a multitude of cells, which cells later undergo specialisation.

In the first stage of its development or evolution, the human heart is a straight tube, which by complicated bendings and differentiations slowly takes on its present form.

The ten different ontogenetic stages of the heart's development correspond to the following phylogenetic order:

1. Heart of chordonia (low worms). Simple, spindle-shaped enlargement of the ventral vessel, with alternating blood current. Also found in ascidia—early vertebrates.

2. Heart of acrania. Blood current acquires a constant direction.

3. Heart of cyclostomal animals (round-mouthed). A two-chambered heart, with one auricle and one ventricle, as in lamprey, a variety of eel.

4. Heart of selachii (Primitive fishes). Bulbus arteriosus arises from anterior part of ventricle.

5. Heart of African mud fishes. Imperfect division of auricle into right and left.

6. Heart of amphibia. Auricular partition becomes complete, and we now have a three-chambered heart, with two auricles and one ventricle, as in the frog.

7. Heart of early reptiles. Imperfect partition of ventricles.

8. Heart of Monotremata. Ventricular partition is complete.

9. Heart of marsupialia (kangaroos, etc.). Auriculo-ventricular valves with their connecting filaments and papillary muscles are differentiated from muscular mass of the heart.

10. Heart of primates, in which animals the heart acquires its oblique position.

What I have said is an answer to critics of evolution who, looking at a fully developed human heart, resort to a supernatural "design" theory, instead of observing the evident gradual natural evolution of the human heart.

The human eye is another organ usually cited by "design" enthusiasts. If these critics of evolution took the trouble to carefully study the embryology of the eye, they would observe, as in the case of the heart, the gradual natural development of the eye from elementary tissues. The human eye is, in most cases, defective. Some children are born blind. Almost everyone has some degree of astigmatism or of myopia or hyperopia. Any cheap camera, invented by man, is (mechanically) a better instrument.

Whittaker Chambers, former Communist, and now an anti-Communist (well paid) writer, looked at his daughter's beautiful ears, and declared that they were an evidence of the existence of God. Some years ago I heard a professor of anatomy, lecturing to his class, call attention to the numerous defects of the human ear. The structure of the external ear deflects more sound than it collects. There are useless muscles around the ear (vestiges of its evolution), and the ear is easily subject to disease. Edison was deaf, but—infidel as he was—he turned out to be a pretty good "designer."

The advocates of "design" will have to admit that their

god (or God) must be responsible for such pests as mosquitoes (especially the carriers of malaria—causing the death of a large part of the earth's inhabitants), tsetse flies (the transmitters of African sleeping sickness), fleas, lice, ticks, bed-bugs, potato bugs, cockroaches, wasps, hornets, locusts, snakes, tapeworms, hookworms, pinworms, flukes (liver, intestinal, etc.), typhoid and a myriad other infectious bacilli and germs; also such dire afflictions as cancer and polio, etc. What a picture this is of "design"!

Of what use are the billions of super-hot suns, and the galaxies, asteroids, meteors and comets? Professors of astronomy know that suns do explode. Is this an evidence of "design"?

In his book, *The End of the World*, Kenneth Heuer gives a detailed exposition of what astronomers and physicists think will happen to our solar system. The sun, which is the source of all our life and energy, will gradually get hotter and hotter and burn up everything on the earth, and then will gradually lose its heat; and our world will become a desert of ice. Nowhere does this author bring in God. The outlook of these astronomers is that man, as we know him, must ultimately be blotted out—at least on this earth, and this is the only inhabited world that anyone knows anything about.

Then there are such "acts of God" as volcanic eruptions and earthquakes—killing thousands of human beings and destroying billions of dollars worth of property, and cyclones, typhoons, tornadoes, and tidal waves, causing great losses of lives and property. Honestly, now, is this the work of a "loving Heavenly Father"? Or, is it the blind and planless and CRUEL operation of the forces of nature, in the course of evolution?

All students of biology know that for many millions of years monsters were lords of this earth. Some of them were hideous, weighing tons in bulk, with almost no brains. Some of them had jaws several feet long filled with ugly teeth. What a picture this of "design"!

Until recently it was widely believed that diseases were sent by God. The black-death, for example, killed millions of human beings. The Church then in power did nothing but "pray"—and that wasn't worth a damn. Science found out what caused this plague—and *got rid of it*. It took 400 years to discover an antidote to syphilis. But science can now conquer this disease.

An alleged God did not make a large part of this earth habitable for civilised men. Partially civilised men did make some of it habitable. Nature frequently spreads a river over a countryside and leaves a morass. Man digs a channel, raises embankments, drains the land, and so creates a field of agriculture.

Regarding the human brain, permit me to remark: the brain can function only when it has an adequate blood supply. Whenever, for any reason, that blood supply has been cut off, the brain then ceases to work, and therefore there is no further presence of mind. It all really boils down to this: No brain, no mind. In other words, immortality is an illusion.

Man, in the course of his evolution, has gone the gamut from slime to smog. He is now living in the age of hydrogen bombs. If some of our militarists have their way (they are working overtime to get us into World War III), a large part of the human race—perhaps all of it—will be destroyed.

So, those of us who are still sane and decent had better spare no time or effort in working for PEACE—while there is still time.—(From *The Liberal*, Philadelphia, U.S.A.).

# Another Quaker Pamphlet

By G. I. BENNETT

A SHORT while ago I wrote about an interesting Quaker pamphlet, "*Christian Affirmations in a Changing World*" by Thomas F. Green. Another is entitled "*One World—One Remedy*," by Eric G. Curtis, its sub-title being "A Call to Quaker Action."

Mr. Curtis, as a member of the Society of Friends, has one thing in common with Mr. Green. He is much disturbed by the spread of secularism. But it may be remembered that in his pamphlet Mr. Green was, if nothing else, fair to the genuine unbeliever. He perceived that the "young agnostics" of whom he wrote were "fine men in the making" destined, if they could not be won over to Christianity, to become "the best type of pagan, exercising a good influence on their fellows by their moral integrity. . ."

Mr. Curtis is not nearly so charitable. He differs from Mr. Green in seeming to deny that high ethical conduct and freethought may be good bed-fellows. I say "seeming to deny" because, at just one place in his pamphlet, he admits that some of "our finest youngsters take the position of a sincere agnosticism arising from sympathy with scientific humanism." But everywhere else he is vehemently certain that "vital religion" is essential to "the maintenance of ethical values."

He is distressed, as we all are, about the lunatic and criminal folly of nations in arming themselves with evermore deadly weapons of mass destruction. He views with increasing dismay, as we all do, the way in which science is being diverted from its legitimate and beneficent function of labouring for the prosperity and happiness of mankind and used for infamous ends. But why use this situation, about which you and I are as concerned as Mr. Curtis, for an attack upon freethought? Why declare that "it is not the humanist but the Christian who has the key to the problem . . . The humanist or scientist as such is powerless"? Why assert that "humanism, scepticism, and unbelief . . . are weak philosophies, not really tenable in the face of knowledge and experience"?

The bone of Mr. Curtis's contention is that—to employ the simile he uses—ethical civilisation that has not roots in the soil of Christian tradition is "a cut flower civilisation."

"In a modern world," he says, "we are expecting to keep cut flowers alive. The Christian comment is that, not only is a good society impossible without ethics, but that ethical values are only effective by derivation from a basis of vigorous, organised religion." And from this follows his conclusion that only active faith can stem the floods of barbarism that threaten to engulf the whole world.

It would be interesting to hear from Mr. Curtis wherein ethical values derived from religious belief differ from ethical values of humanistic origin, and how they come to be so inseparably bound up with religious belief that they die if divorced from it. His saying that "Christ is the Way," and that through Christ a "loving God" is revealed, does not enlighten us. Seriously to suggest, as our pamphleteer does, that only in Christianity can we strive to live in a state of high moral awareness is not merely unfair to devotees of other faiths, without the co-operation of whom peace and goodwill on earth are never likely to be achieved. It is false to the memory of the many fine men and women that have lived who found their inspiration elsewhere than in revealed religion.

Another point occurs. It may be that Quakers are generally good, honest people, whose record of social service is long and exemplary. But there is no such thing as a distinctively Christian outlook on life. The Christian

outlook, in fact, differs markedly between denomination and denomination. And while the Society of Friends may be socially earnest and traditionally pacifist, much that passes for Christianity is morally callous, bellicose, and reactionary.

One ironic feature of the so-called Christian West is that, in trusting in God, it is unpersuaded that its safety lies in anything but the strong right arm. And certainly history will record of it that it was first to visit upon mankind the horrors of atomic destruction. Clearly, goodness and faith in Christ Saviour do not necessarily go hand in hand!

To create a happier and kindlier united world out of one rent and torn with distrust, bigotry, and hatred calls for more than Quaker action against what Mr. Curtis is pleased to name "outworn 'realism' and ignorant unbelief and indifference"; it calls for more than "a new vigour and vitality in the Christian Church." What is needed is a broad, humane vision that looks above and beyond narrow allegiance, whether religious, political, social, or racial, and seeks the help of men and women everywhere in working for a world into whose darkest corners a little sunlight can be brought.

Crusade by all means, Mr. Curtis, against "indifference," if by that you mean apathy and selfishness, but please not against secularists *as such*. For do you not know that they are, and have ever been, the staunch friends of humanitarian causes?

## PIETY AND PROFIT

NOWHERE, perhaps, in Europe can the philosophy of this development of fetishism be better studied than at Cologne. At the cathedral, preserved in a magnificent shrine since about the twelfth century, are the skulls of the Three Kings, or Wise Men of the East, who, guided by the star of Bethlehem, brought gifts to the Saviour. These relics were an enormous source of profit to the cathedral chapter during many centuries. But other ecclesiastical bodies in the city were both pious and shrewd, and so we find that not far off, at the Church of St. Gereon, a cemetery has been dug up, and the bones distributed over the walls as the relics of St. Gereon and his Theban band of martyrs. Again, at the neighbouring church of St. Ursula, we have the later spoils of another cemetery, covering the interior walls of the church as the bones of St. Ursula and her eleven thousand virgin martyrs; the fact that many of them, as anatomists now declare, are the bones of men does not appear in the Middle Ages to have diminished their power of competing with the relics of the other shrines in healing efficiency.

(A. D. WHITE, *Warfare of Science with Theology*.)

### THE YEAR'S FREETHOUGHT ARMOURY

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## Correspondence

### INTELLIGENCE AND RELIGIOUS BELIEF

Are believers intelligent? A good question—for a laugh. Being irrational, humourless and prejudiced, how could they be? They argue with their emotions, by trumpet and drum, and "praise" the so-called maker of the universe. The modern name for this is "infantilism." We're so used to it that it gets by. Religion is just another form of dramatics: the affliction of people with a weak sense of reality.

G. K. Chesterton was a good case for discussion. His reason for "going over to Rome" was that he needed an anchorage in life. Safety first. Nothing about a search for truth. Just live for "pie in the sky." What a philosophy of life!

The believer doesn't want the truth, only heaven. Is that intelligent? It's human—as human as "God." The Rationalist thinks that sort of thing belongs to our primitive past when we knew no better. So as a Rationalist, I cannot allow real intelligence to the believer, only prejudice.—Yours, etc.,

JIM KIRKHAM.

Toronto, Canada.

### SPREADING FREETHOUGHT

What do readers do with their old copies of *The Freethinker*? I usually pass mine on to a friend or to a believer.

American readers of *The Liberal* (a Freethought and Rationalist journal) leave their old copies lying about in public places—on buses, trains, doctors' and dentists' waiting rooms, etc. Why not do it with *The Freethinker*; also small, inexpensive pamphlets like "Mistakes of Moses," Chapman Cohens' "Pamphlets for the People," and the like.

I think in this way our ideas would reach a wider public than they do at present.—Yours, etc.,

C. H. HAMMERSLEY

(Leicester Secular Society).

### G.P.O. NO ANGEL

A news item in the *Stratford Express* last week prompted me to write to the rector of Little Ilford for a copy of his parish magazine.

In this he says: "How joyful that time of Christmas is for Christians. . . . What a sheer mockery and humbug it is for non-Christian people to give presents to keep Christmas Day and Boxing Day as holidays, for to them Christmas means nothing spiritually. . . ."

After this, I was pleased to see a letter in to-day's *Stratford Express* explaining the pagan origin of the festival.

All these Christians and their Christmas cards have made this week's lesson for the Catholic Enquiry Centre late. They should employ angels—not the G.P.O.—Yours, etc.,

J. DOWDING.

### STILL ON CENSORSHIP, I'M AFRAID

Will Mr. H. Cutner please prove that there is less censorship and more freedom in England than in (a) Denmark, (b) Netherlands, (c) Switzerland, (d) Scotland, (e) Ecuador, (f) Samoa?

W. AULD.

### MENACE OF POLITICAL ECONOMIC RELIGION

It is hoped that the Freethought congress was not influenced by the spurious political argument put forward by Marshall J. Gauvin. "Religion," said that great Freethinker Karl Marx, "is the opium of the people," and it seems evident that Marshall J. Gauvin, although he seems anxious to abolish the superstition of Christianity, is very anxious that his particular brand of political superstition shall be substituted in its stead. In regard to his illusion that U.S.A. has the highest standard of living on earth, he should travel a bit in the middle west where millions of wretches are living in wooden shacks with no social service, with plenty of the Billy Graham dope to keep this inarticulate herd in the condition which it has pleased God to place them.

PAUL VARNEY.

### WHAT IS RELIGION?

In the issue of December 10, G. H. Taylor tabulates varying views. One left out is: "Religion"—Parsons' Profitable Profession. I am unable to quote the origin of that description and am wondering whether any reader can tell me.

B. DUPREE.

### INFORMATION REQUIRED

As a fairly new member of the N.S.S. I feel I must express my appreciation of *The Freethinker*. Without it each week life would be much less inspiring. Mr. Cutner's review of "Man in the Universe" is a gem, and Mr. Taylor's "Science Front" is just the sort of writing our magazine needs. I have just been reading "The Comforts of Unreason," by Rupert Crawsley-Williams, and as it is such an excellent book I am wondering whether you are aware of exactly who and what he is. I think his book would interest all Freethinkers. It seems to be almost a "manual of freethought."

PETER E. J. JORDAN.

### MANY THANKS

I am most grateful to the many readers who have written me with advice, particularly to two who sent pills and a prescription. I regret I am not well enough to answer each individually. It shows a fine spirit amongst readers of *The Freethinker*—this willingness to help a brother in distress.—Yours, etc.,

W. KENT.

### THE FREETHINKER

Journals like *The Freethinker* have many difficulties of publication. They are starved by the neglect of advertisers, and they are subjected to a boycott which prevents them finding their way to more than a fraction of their potential purchasers. They are perpetually between the proverbial devil and the deep sea, and their very existence at all is a more marvellous miracle than any related in all the sacred books of the world.

As an example of the difficulties of conducting advanced publications, it is no secret that over nine thousand pounds was spent on *Justice* during twenty years, and it fell on evil days at last. The arresting personality of H. M. Hyndman could not make the paper a commercial success. The *Clarion* had a much larger circulation than *Justice*, but even Mr. Robert Blatchford's great gifts and deserved popularity, could not make his paper pay without subsidies from his readers. Stewart Ross, a poet and writer of distinction, had a heartrending struggle in conducting the *Agnostic Journal*, and it failed at his death. Let us see that the paper of Foote and Cohen has a secured future.—Yours, etc.,

MIMNERMUS II.

### POINTS FROM LETTERS

Those who have expounded birth control and world population limitation have done far more for human happiness, peace and well-being than all the ghost debunkers on earth.—R. L. HUMPHRIS.

I cannot reconcile Mr. Bennett's stoical outlook with any desire to change the world. It is the least militant of all attitudes.—M. H. BARRETT.

### KINGSWAY HALL MEETING

The somewhat more intelligent type of young Christian—full of ardour, argument and astronomy—was encountered at the Kingsway Hall, London, when Mr. Ebury presented the Secularist view of life to the Kingsway Association before an audience of some 50 people split equally as between Secularists and Christians.

Limited to half an hour, he admirably contrived to present a sizeable target for the Christians to shoot at. The shots came high and wide, especially wide, and the speaker indulgently followed his critics into the fields of history, physics and theology. The Christian arguments, one feels, failed to produce God, though one gentleman did his best with the mathematical properties of an empty box.

Materialism was again exploded, this time by the atom bomb—surely an all-time recorder breaker in explosions of Materialism. Will all future exponents of Materialism please note they now really have something to beat.

Mr. Ebury's closing speech constituted a welcome return to the subject under discussion, which he finally managed to rescue from the obscurations of Christianised science.—Yours, etc.,

G. H. T.

## N.S.S. Executive Committee, January 19

Present: Mr. Ridley (in the Chair), Messrs. Ebury, Griffiths, Taylor, Hornibrook, Tiley, Johnson, Cleaver, Draper, Arthur and the Secretary. The Secretary apologised to members who had been inconvenienced by his postponement of the meeting owing to an influenza attack. The President welcomed Mr. Cleaver, returning to the Committee after a year's absence, and Messrs. Draper and Arthur, attending for the first time. Thirteen new members were admitted to the Parent, Bradford, Manchester and West London Branches. Good results from an advertisement in the *New Statesman* were reported, and it was agreed to approach *The Listener* with a view to advertising. Membership figures for 1954 were submitted, showing a small total increase, with losses in a few areas. The President reported on his lecture engagements, and a fraternal message he had sent to the forthcoming Indian Rationalist Convention was approved. Other reports of meetings were given by Mr. Ebury and the Secretary. Mr. Taylor said that press reactions to Mrs. Knight's broadcasts would be dealt with in *The Freethinker*. The Secretary reported that a number of enquiries about the Society had come in following the appearance in the *Daily Telegraph* of a letter on the subject of broadcasting. A time-table for speeches at the Annual Dinner was approved.

P. VICTOR MORRIS, Secretary.