

# The Freethinker

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THE late Dr. Robert Eisler was chiefly known to his generation as an authority on Christian origins, in particular, as the author of an ingenious though highly questionable theory in relation to the historian Josephus. According to Eisler that Jewish historian gave a detailed account of an armed rising against the Romans led by an historical Messiah named Jesus. Eisler claimed that the Christians had suppressed this passage and had substituted for it in the text of Josephus the passage on Jesus now found there, now admitted by everyone except "Fundamentalists" to be an obvious forgery. However, his studies of Christian origins—which we seem to recall, once provoked some controversy in *The Freethinker*—did not exhaust Dr. Eisler's versatile mind. He was also a specialist in subjects as widely remote from each other as the terrestrial pseudo-science of currency and the celestial pseudo-science of astrology. On the latter subject Dr. Eisler once wrote a most instructive book on *The Royal Art of Astrology* with which, or rather with the "Royal Art," we here propose to deal.

## Astrology and Determinism

The origins of astrology are tolerably well known and it is scarcely necessary to dwell upon them here. Primitive man, who saw around him visible proof of the existence of spiritual animistic forces, naturally saw similar evidences of their existence in the star-spangled sky above his head. It was the stars or, rather, the spirits which animate the stars and direct their motions through space, who also direct human life here below. Like so many other pseudo-sciences, astrology in its origins—the limiting phrase should be carefully noted—was not reactionary, but, within its own terms of reference can even be regarded as definitely progressive since it bore witness to what would now be termed the unity of the universe. Furthermore, as Eisler shows, astrology was rigidly deterministic, man cannot escape the destiny so clearly marked in his horoscope. Long before Calvin propounded his famous formula of divine "predestination"—"some He hath foreordained to eternal salvation and others to eternal perdition"—astrologers had presented an inescapable stellar Fate as the supreme impersonal ruler of the universe. If determinism be, as the late Mr. Cohen so lucidly demonstrated, the essential principle of materialist philosophy, astrology may be described as an early form of determinism and, accordingly, of materialism.

## Christianity and Astrology

That astrological beliefs played a certain part in originating the specific tenets of Christianity seems quite obvious, even though in this, as in other matters relating to Christian origins, the "experts" are far from agreed as to the extent and precise nature of its influence. Was Jesus Christ a "sun-myth" as the late Mr. E. C. Saphin used to demonstrate so learnedly in his Hyde Park lectures? Be that as it may, the influence of astrological beliefs is obvious in the New Testament. The Infant Jesus is adored by the Persian magi, the priestly astrologers, "the wise men of the East."

Whilst the *Book of Revelation* is packed with astrological illusions, the perhaps deliberate obscurity of which has afforded a happy hunting ground for mystics, not to mention cranks, of all denominations and in all ages.

## Astrology and Christian Theology

We think that, historically, it would be correct to state that Christian theology has never quite been able to make up its mind as to the objective validity or otherwise of astrology. The Fathers of the Church were divided on this issue as their successors have continued to be down to modern times. St. Augustine, who had formerly been a believer,

attacked astrology sharply in a famous passage in his *Confessions*, and appeared to regard it as entirely devoid of objective reality and to be merely a hotchpotch of ignorance and fraud. Like other theologians when confronted with a rival ideology, the famous African theologian used a rationalistic technique to demolish his astrological step-brothers. Most of the arguments repeated in his *Confessions* would, we imagine, be endorsed by all Freethinkers. Thus, St. Augustine points to the obvious impossibility of reconciling the careers of people born under exactly the same horoscopic conditions which yet varied completely. Augustine seemed to regard astrology as merely just another pagan superstition incompatible with Christianity. Other theologians, however, accepted at least the objective validity of astrology, and did not, apparently, regard it as a product of diabolical inspiration. At least one Christian theologian of a rank hardly inferior even to Augustine, Albertus Magnus, now also a canonised saint and Doctor of the Catholic Church, was a noted astrologer in his day. Faced with this so widely prevalent superstition the church appears to have acted cautiously and to have refrained from openly condemning astrology, except where its teachings directly conflicted with *fundamental* Christian dogmas. Then it acted. Jacob Buckhardt relates the gruesome episode of the Florentine astrologer who cast the horoscope of Jesus Christ, born on December 25th, and crucified on Good Friday. That was too much for the church to stand. The unfortunate astrologer was burnt alive on the spot.

## Theological Free Will versus Astrological Determinism

The grim episode narrated above actually gives us the key to the fundamental incompatibility between Christianity and astrology. Christianity believes in Free Will in both God and man. It is essential to Christian belief that Jesus Christ, the second person of the Divine Trinity, *chose voluntarily* to redeem mankind. But according to astrology from the moment all men, including Christ, enter the world, their horoscope is cast and the stars rule their fate from the womb to the tomb. If Jesus was born at the precise hour and in the precise astrological "House" which "ruled" his nativity, he had to be on Calvary at the precise day and hour marked out for him. All this, no doubt, was deduced with faultless astrological logic by our unfortunate Florentine

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

## The Royal Art of Astrology

By F. A. RIDLEY

astrologer when he cast the horoscope of Jesus Christ; a fatal deduction as far as it concerned himself. In a sense, one can say that the unfortunate man represented a martyr to the principle of determinism. That is to a scientific principle, however far from being scientific are the deductions drawn from it by the professors of "The Royal Art."

### Astrology and Astronomy

In the ancient world, astronomy, which actually developed originally from astrology, was not opposed to what we may perhaps call its *step-father*, astrology. Most of the ancient Egyptian, Chaldean, and even Greek and Roman astronomers, combined the practice of the two "sciences." Indeed, the famous Ptolemy, the last, and one of the greatest of the astronomers of antiquity, was equally famous as an astronomer and as an astrologer. In the latter capacity he is still quoted as an authority by the modern professors of "The Royal Art." Even as late as the 17th century of our era we find eminent astronomers of the Renaissance, such as Tycho Brahe and Kepler, actively practising astrology along with astronomy. Kepler's horoscope of the ill fated Wallenstein represents a *locus classicus* of "The Royal Art." What, however, really finally cast astrology out of the respectable company of the legitimate sciences was the discovery of new planets, unknown both to the ancients and to "The Royal Art." According to the rules governing horoscopes, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto, all *bona fide* members

of the solar system, and all quite *unknown* to classical astrology, must have been playing havoc with horoscopes cast in ignorance of their existence and activities. How one can relevantly ask, can astrologers answer *that* one, even on their own logic?

### From the Chaldeans to "The News of the World"

However, despite its now obviously unscientific character, astrology is still very much alive. Indeed, we witness today a rather alarming revival of ancient superstitions, including astrology, the most ancient of all. For, just as the B.B.C. has proved, a (literal) godsend to Christian "Fundamentalists" when in danger of extinction so the Sunday Press has similarly revived the mass cult of astrology. At the name of Naylor many knees bow, if we may paraphrase the Holy Scriptures. Innumerable eyes scan our contemporary, *The News of the World* for reliable information as to *What the Stars Foretell*. They usually get some information, whether reliable or not, it appears to be probable that these mass produced prophecies appear a little dubious even from the standpoint of the accepted canons of "The Royal Art" itself. But then the masses have never appreciated *real art*! If we are to accept the recent estimate of a contemporary "mass-observation" survey conducted by Mr. Geoffrey Gorer, there are now more believers in astrology in this country than there are in Christianity. Shade of St. Augustine!

## Chosen Question

By G. H. TAYLOR

A reader in Partick, himself a Freethinker, asks how we would answer Sir Arnold Lunn, who writes in the *Universe*:

*When I was a young man I often read The Freethinker, the editor of which rejected free will and therefore by implication the possibility of free thought.*

This confusion on the part of our opponents is sometimes deliberate and sometimes genuine, though it is difficult to avoid the suspicion that the wish to discredit Freethought always plays some part, whether consciously or not. Time and again the late Chapman Cohen clarified the matter, but the old fallacy still frequently reappears.

The term Freethought must be understood in its historical connection. It implies that thinking shall be free of pre-conceived dogma. It does not mean that thinking is by nature free of conditions. All thoughts are a chain of events in the brain, having a causal history: they are in fact the emerged product of that causal history, and we can no more divorce them from it than we can think of sunshine without a sun. The Freethinker contends that our thoughts should be our own, and not uncritically absorbed from outside sources.

It is of course inevitable that some information should be taken on authority, but in such cases we have to decide whether the new information violates existing knowledge. If I read of the existence of Napoleon I cannot verify it at first hand, but I can believe it on discovering a host of facts with which his non-existence is incompatible. If I read of the existence of God I reject it on discovering a host of things with which such an existence is not compatible.

Our belief in God was conditioned and had a causal history like all other events. But it contained an element which as Freethinkers we have later discarded, namely, it was an *imposed* belief. It was inoculated from outside sources and uncritically absorbed. With the growth of the

mind the belief was shed. In other words, the development of critical power was the condition under which Atheism emerged. The mind became free of dogma, not free of conditions. It became subject to a *new* condition, the growth of critical thinking. It did not become free of causation: causation made it free of religious teachings, the element of dogma which had previously determined the God-belief, ceased to do so. That is, we arrived at free-thinking, not free willing. We do not "free-will" ourselves to and fro from theism to atheism and back again. Causation is operative all the time, and the new condition thrown into the scale by Freethinkers is to try to educate believers into thinking for themselves critically, instead of going about carrying the medieval lumber with which they were burdened when children.

There is thus no inconsistency in the Freethinker rejecting free will, and only a frivolous play on words can concoct one.

### CHAPMAN COHEN ON GOD

Many believers believe that they personally could be good without God. He is needed to keep other people in order.

The chief reason why many worship God today is that they believe he once did something. He is like a retired official drawing a pension.

If there is a God the only genuine friend he has is the Atheist. He does not hold him responsible for anything. He defends him against the slanders of his worshippers, who refer to every natural catastrophe as an "act of God."

Imagine a number of farmers ruined by a bad season attending a harvest thanksgiving. If the Almighty had a sense of humour he would label them for Hell for poking pun at him.

The clergy would have us believe it is man's chief task to find God. But a still greater difficulty would be to find out what to do with him.

## The Soul

By WILLIAM McCARTHY

(From *Progressive World*)

The idea of the soul originated long before religion, probably before man regarded the sun and moon as deities, but it was not the present conception of a soul. Heaven and Hell had not been invented. Man merely considered himself two personalities, one tangible, the other intangible. He saw his shadow on the ground, his reflection in the stream; they were right there by him but he couldn't touch them; he heard his voice echoed, but there was no one; in his dreams he roamed far afield, hunting, fishing, fighting, when he knew that all the while he was asleep. He buried a dead friend, but at night his friend appeared in his dreams and they roamed about as before. His crude reasoning told him, he was a double, two distinct persons. One could leave his body and return; it was the greater and the other depended upon it. It could be coaxed or scared away, or it might be caught and destroyed.

The soul was material, but invisible—a little invisible man living in the visible man. Sickness and death came if it remained away too long. If death, food and drink were put out and supplicating requests for its return were repeated. (Even the Japanese, to this day, place food and drink upon the graves.)

If the souls of the dead were detained by enemies, all manner of exorcisms were performed to scare the enemies into releasing them. Some thought sickness was caused by the soul's effort to escape. Some savage tribes put fish hooks about the patient's mouth and nostrils to prevent the soul's getting away. Some natives of the South Pacific Islands upon leaving a burial, beat the air with sticks, and a sorceress runs about waving branches to chase away the living souls. They fear stray souls may fall into the grave, be covered up, and their owners die. In the Loyalty Islands, the souls of the dead may steal the souls of the living and carry them off. When a man falls sick, the medicine man—soul doctor—gathers a concourse of people at the grave. The men play musical instruments, while the women whistle and softly call for the soul. When satisfied that the stolen soul has escaped its captors, they march to the sick man, gently pushing the rescued soul ahead of them with the palm of their hands, the men playing and the women softly chanting and whistling. On arriving at the patient's house, all, led by the soul doctor, cry in a loud commanding tone for the soul to rejoin its owner.

Primitive people all over the globe still have similar beliefs: The Esquimaux, Hurons, and the Nootkas of America, and certain Malay tribes, are among them. Many savages believe all animals have a little animal within them for their guidance and control. The Japanese believe animals have souls, and make sacrifices and supplications for their benefit. An Australian black will tell you he has a little body in his breast that goes into the "bush" or sea at his death.

In many parts of Germany, the people believe the soul escapes through the mouth in the form of a bird or a little white mouse. In Transylvania, children are not permitted to sleep with their mouths open else the "mouse" or "bird" escape and not return.

Some savages believe their souls perform precisely as their owners' dream. If one dreams of fighting, of falling, or being hurt, it reflects his soul's actions while he slept. Other savages will not waken you quickly, your soul being away might not have time to get back, and you'd become sick. If you must be awakened, it is done very gently and slowly to give the soul time to return. Neither is it safe to change the sleeper's appearance, for the soul might not

know its owner.

Death to semi-savages, is the escape of this little man, or its failure to return. A Fijian, taking a nap in Matuku, was dreaming of being in far off Tonga; suddenly he was awakened. Instantly he became frantic, began screaming for his soul to return. Deathly frightened, he probably would have died, had not the missionary with much effort allayed his fear by calling his soul from Tonga. The calling back of souls has been common to nearly all peoples.<sup>1</sup>

In some countries Medicine Men make a business of trapping souls and selling them to the sick; others keep an asylum for strayed souls, and sell them to anyone who has lost his. These fakers have as much power in such matters as a priest has to make holy water, or forgive sins, and they get about the same pay. The soul dealers and controllers have a kind of caste, or closed profession,<sup>2</sup> generally hereditary from father to son, as was the Hebrew priest-craft under the Tribe of Levi. They have long, weird initiations to induct the young to the mysteries of the profession. They teach the young member how to catch and control souls, and from these rites; he gets powers just as priests get theirs from their ordinations. His fingers become hooks with which he catches souls, and retainers, such as hollowed bones, are pow-wowed over that he may hold them when caught.

Some people believe devils influence souls, even entice them away and replace them with demons. The demon causes the man to have fits and convulsions, as narrated in the Bible. Christ so believed.

As souls never died, they multiplied into countless numbers. They were everywhere, in everything. When man developed sufficiently to make comparisons, he divided them into two classes, good and bad. A good man left a good soul; a bad man, an evil one. Good and evil are the controlling influences in all religions. The idea was firmly fixed with all semi-civilised peoples centuries before the Hebrews embraced it. The latter got it from the Egyptians and Babylonians: The doctrine was old when Zoraster,<sup>3</sup> about one thousand years before Christ, inspired (?) the Iranian bible, *Avesta*. The god, Ormazd (good) was in constant conflict with Ahriman (evil). The same idea appears in ancient Greece. Prometheus, the liberator of man, gave us fire, the foundation of civilisation, to free man. Zeus, to counteract man's freedom, chained Prometheus to a rock and called the vultures down upon him. We might carry the thought further by substituting science for Prometheus, and the Church for Zeus. Science seeks to liberate man from the chains of superstition and fear; the church has ever sought to tighten the chains.

The belief that man has a soul sustains the Christian religion, feeds the priests, and supports their temples.

(to be continued)

1—The raising of the dead, as narrated in the Bible, is a throw-back to the primitive doctrine of recalling the soul. Our religions go back to the savage belief that men and animals are kinsmen, both having two personalities, one tangible, the other intangible. A correct translation of the Bible as stated in the text gives souls to both men and animals.

2—The modern ceremony of ordaining a priest is a survival of this barbaric custom.

3—Some fix his birth about 680 B.C.. After investigations and reading the *Avesta* literature, we are convinced he lived several centuries before 680 B.C.

## This Believing World

So at last a move towards Rome is being engineered by the Rev. H. R. Williamson with a number of Anglo-Catholics as pious as he is. They appear to be very angry at the theological differences between the Church of England and Church of South India and feel that only in the bosom of Rome can one be safe from everlasting perdition. Just as Newman could find no rest, no peace, for his eternal soul except in Rome, so our Anglo-Catholics are finding the freedom of thought in the English Church intolerable and insist on the purest brand of religious Totalitarianism. We hope that the Church of England feels as we do about seceders—good riddance!

Those two Nonconformist stalwarts, the Rev. Donald Soper and the Rev. Leslie Weatherhead, had a delightful back-slapping turn on the TV the other Sunday evening, vying with each other in the way they answer "unbelievers"—most of the unbelievers actually being Christians unable to understand Christian "difficulties." Samples of these difficulties were freely discussed by the reverend gentlemen without in the least elucidating them—and it need hardly be said that not a single freethought argument was even hinted at. And both are considered to be champion "infidel slayers"!

How our religious converts and fanatics love to exploit the halt, the blind, and the sick! We read regularly of the hundreds of thousands of ill people who flock every year to Lourdes—and come away if anything worse than when they went. And the fact that Catholic "miracles" of healing these days rarely if ever occur—there were hundreds at Lourdes before sceptical investigators took a hand in discussing them—still does not deter the "pilgrims." Can anything be more pathetic than the picture of a little crippled girl taken by Group-Captain Cheshire, V.C., to be touched by the Turin Shroud—one of the biggest forgeries and swindles in the Roman Church?

Of course, 100 years or so ago, the poor child would have been allowed to touch the Shroud, and would have jumped off her invalid chair completely cured. The Church these days is just a little too wary. Too many questions are asked about "miracles" of healing. So it was far too dangerous to allow the little child to touch the Shroud and *nothing happen*, and Group-Captain Cheshire's request was firmly but politely refused. Naturally, the child herself felt a little better, but did she jump off her chair with her legs absolutely restored? In sober truth, it is a ghastly shame that any expectation of health should be roused in this way.

The Red Dean of Canterbury is not the only parson who is absolutely certain that Christianity and Communism are the same—just as the early Christians found that true Christianity had to be Communistic. In Blackheath, a fiery Congregationalist, the Rev. W. E. Allen, insists that "the Bible and Marx tell the same message" and he calls Communism "primitive Christianity." The *Kentish Mercury* has devoted a column and a half to his "story" and happily points out that Mr. Allen does not "find anything strange in frequent purges." As Mr. Allen says, "Deviationists, careerists and opportunists follow in the footsteps of Judas." Christ in fact, would find "much to commend in Communism if He came back today." As a true

Christian, Mr. Allen not only believes in Jesus as a God, but believes in Judas as a "traitor." And the only two books he reads in turn are the Bible and Marx.

It is quite a mistake to think that the precursor of Christianity, Judaism, never has its troubles. Lots and lots of people are anxious to reform it, and some have so far succeeded that they have reformed it out of existence—as Judaism. In America, Dr. Hollender—who is a mere layman—is considered to be Judaism's chief "reformer"; but it appears that this is mostly because he contributes so largely to all philanthropic objects. In an interview with him in the *Chicago Daily News*, there is not word about religion or what it is he wants to reform. Perhaps he will find out one day that the only reform worth reforming in all religions is to reform them out of existence.

### BERTRAND RUSSELL on "FIRST CAUSE"

It is maintained that everything we see in this world has a cause, and as you go back in the chain of causes further and further you must come to a First Cause, and to that First Cause you give the name God. That argument, I suppose, does not carry very much weight nowadays, because, in the first place, cause is not quite what it used to be. The philosophers and the men of science have got going on cause, and it has not anything like the vitality that it used to have; but, apart from that, you can see that the argument that there must be a First Cause is one that cannot have any validity. I may say that when I was a young man, and was debating these questions very seriously in my mind, I for a long time accepted the argument of the First Cause, until one day, at the age of eighteen, I read John Stuart Mill's Autobiography, and I there found this sentence: "My father taught me that the question, Who made me? cannot be answered, since it immediately suggests the further question, Who made God?" That very simple sentence showed me, as I still think, the fallacy in the argument of the First Cause. If everything must have a cause, then God must have a cause. If there can be anything without a cause, it may just as well be the world as God, so that there cannot be any validity in that argument. It is exactly of the same nature as the Indian's view, that the world rested upon an elephant and the elephant rested upon a tortoise; and when they said, "How about the tortoise?" the Indian said, "Suppose we change the subject." The argument is really no better than that. There is no reason why the world could not have come into being without a cause; nor, on the other hand, is there any reason why it should not have always existed. There is no reason to suppose that the world had a beginning at all. The idea that things must have a beginning is really due to the poverty of our imagination.

(Why I am not a Christian.)

In our day Jehovah has been outgrown. He is no longer the perfect. Now theologians talk, not about Jehovah, but about a God of love, call him the Eternal Father and the perpetual friend and providence of man. But, while they talk about this God of love, cyclones wreck and rend, the earthquake devours, the flood destroys, the red bolt leaping the cloud still crashes the life out of men, and plague and fever still are tireless reapers in the harvest fields of death.

INGERSOLL.

—NEXT WEEK—

THE BASIC CAUSE OF WAR

By R. READER

# 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.

## 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.

D. V. Morgan. See Views and Opinions. Mr. Cutner has certainly read many standard books on Astrology—hence his unbelief.

## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Every Sunday, 7 p.m.: F. ROTHWELL.

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Every Sunday, 7.30 p.m. Sunday, August 7: GEORGE CLEBROOKE and other speakers.

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

Manchester Branch N.S.S.—Every Sunday, 3 p.m., Platt Fields: 7.30 p.m., St. Mary's Blitzed Site: Speakers, Messrs. MCCALL, MILLS, or WOODCOCK. Every weekday, Deansgate Blitzed Site, 1 p.m.: G. A. WOODCOCK.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Every Wednesday and Sunday at 8 p.m. Messrs. PARRY, THOMPSON, and other speakers.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Every Friday at 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY and H. ARTHUR.

West London Branch N.S.S.—Every Sunday at the Marble Arch from 4 p.m.: Messrs. RIDLEY, EBURY, O'NEILL and WOOD.

The Freethinker on sale at Marble Arch.

## Notes and News

THE European Regional Conference of the International Humanist and Ethical Union will be held in Antwerp, August 27th to 31st, by kind invitation of the Belgian Humanistisch Verbond. Members of the Conference will be received at the Town Hall in the afternoon, and during the evening will hear short reports on each nation represented. A public meeting will be held on the following morning. During the next two days the Conference will discuss the four subjects (Philosophy, Personal Life, Social Life, Organization) as presented in the papers prepared last year by five member-organizations. Each discussion will be opened by a designated speaker, and the four speakers will report the consensus of the discussions for adoption by the Conference on the last day.

The Ethical Union at their annual conference at Hoddesdon this year will discuss:

- (1) Trial and Error in East Africa.
- (2) The Difficulties of Unbelief.
- (3) The Further Education of the Young Worker.
- (4) Social Institutions and Human Individuals (a psychologist's view), and
- (5) The Future of Rationalism.

The R.P.A. will hold their annual conference at Oxford on the general theme "The Arts in Society."

By a law passed in 1953, in California churches and certain other organizations must make an annual declaration

## The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

Previously acknowledged, £897 8s. 2d.; J. M. W. Ward, 3s. 9d.; Mr. and Mrs. Sunley, 5s.; R. Burbridge (Canada), 12s. 1d.; H. Grundy, 4s.; J. Wilson, £2; A. Hancock, 1s.; E. C. Smith, 2s. 3d.; H. G. Blewett, 4s.; B. Foxhall, £1; Total to date, £902 0s. 3d.

of "non-disloyalty" in order to qualify for tax exemption. Protests have been made and a number of cases are being brought to court. So far two cases have been won and one lost. In one case there was an unanimous declaration by five judges that the law was unconstitutional, and in the other successful case the state has appealed against the decision.

In the same court, however, the judge found that the First Unitarian Church of Los Angeles had no case in contending that the law was contrary to the federal and state constitutions in that it violated religious freedom, freedom of speech, and the principle of equal application, and threw the claim out. The First Unitarian Church is preparing an appeal.

This year a new Bill has been introduced by the author of the original Loyalty Oath law, aiming to deny tax exemption to any church which "knowingly permits the use of its premises by any person connected with or by any of the organization named on the Attorney General's list." Thus churches which have signed the non-disloyalty declaration in their tax return would have to investigate not only every member and prospective member but also every guest speaker and every organization renting a church room for a meeting. Every occasional visitor who came to worship would similarly have to be screened. One might visualise a permanent inspector posted at entrances to make sure that no "subversive" person would by "using the premises" cause the church to lose its tax exemption.

The Nation (N.Y.) comments: "The fight against the loyalty oath is still far from won. Court contests are long-drawn-out and expensive, and the few brave churches which have entered on them must bear the burden of a greatly increased budget. In the form of state property taxes they are paying the price of continued religious freedom. What the British two hundred years ago called 'the destroying taxing power of the state' and succeeded in abolishing by gaining tax exemption for churches is exercised in California at this moment."

We have to remember that churches, not only in U.S.A., enjoy a tremendous amount of tax-free property, and this is the equivalent of a gift from the Exchequer.

WE are pleased to learn that Mr. Harold Day has happily recovered from his recent illness and is convalescing on holiday. On his return he hopes once again to take his place on the N.S.S. platform at Broadway Car Park, Bradford, with a number of promising younger speakers. We have no doubt that the "new blood" will vigorously attack the old superstitions.

The Bible Handbook (10th Edition). By G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball. Price 4s. 6d.; postage 3d.

Historical Jesus and the Mythical Christ. By Gerald Massey. Christianity—its debt to Ancient Egypt. Price 1/-; postage 2d.

## Review

BELIEF AND UNBELIEF SINCE 1850 by H. G. Wood. Cambridge, at the University Press. 1955. 12s. 6d. net.

This book, which consists of some lectures delivered by the author at Cambridge, seems to have strayed into a wrong title. It should have been called *Belief and Unbelief* for there is precious little "unbelief" in it. Whether Dr. Wood knows much about unbelief is difficult to say but, as a guess, I should say very little indeed. He says in his preface that he has "deliberately refrained from discussing Scientific Humanism and Marxist Communism" but there is a world of Freethought which could have been discussed, and which should have been thoroughly dealt with under the heading of "Unbelief."

Fancy anyone—even at Cambridge—lecturing on *Unbelief Since 1850* and never mentioning Bradlaugh, Ingersoll, Foote, and J. M. Robertson! It seems incredible. I think I am right in saying that Dr. Wood never uses the word "Freethought" and he certainly has not pointed out the part *The Freethinker* and the books published by the R.P.A. have played in fostering unbelief—and I mean by that word *real* unbelief, not the slight variations from orthodox Christianity which can be seen in such books as *Essays and Reviews* and *Lux Mundi*—both of which made a big impression when they came out, and which are now deservedly forgotten.

Dr. Wood sprinkles his pages with quotations and ideas from a large number of Christian authors, and can only mention—on the rare occasions when he does so—Darwin and Bertrand Russell with something like a sneer. He is "learned" enough to know that if Darwin is right, that is, if the general principles of the evolution of man are accepted, there is literally no room whatever for any God or Saviour. Granting Evolution, the Messiah business, which Dr. Wood and his like try their utmost to justify, is just so much nonsense. If Man has slowly evolved from something like protoplasm in the course of millions of years, if there exists nothing but what we term the Universe—then all his tearful plea to accept his Jesus as the Messiah or as the Teacher or as the Saviour is too silly to argue about.

Most of these lectures are about what Fairbairn or von Hügel or Hort or Church or Jeremias or Schweitzer or similar writers say or think, but carefully selected by Dr. Wood so that he can either say how right they are, or give excuses why they do not always agree with him. They are nearly all out-and-out Christians though, with the wide latitude that all the Churches except the Church of Rome allows its followers, they do not always agree with each other in "interpretation." The only thing that matters to Dr. Wood is that everybody should or must believe in Jesus as an historical personage and also as God Almighty "incarnated."

This has been his attitude ever since, as a young theologian, he used to bombard John M. Robertson with criticisms of his Myth theories. I had the privilege of meeting Dr. Wood myself in a futile debate before the war—futile because, obviously, if anybody believes as earnestly in God Almighty as he does, in a God who can do anything, why should there be any disbelief in a Son of God also able to perform miracles? If one believes in one big absurdity—the existence of a God—it is nothing surely to believe in such a little absurdity as a Son with Miracles complete. Dr. Wood has declared that the Gospels are "historical documents"—that is, he believes that the aerial flights of Jesus with a real live Devil are historical, and for him, the wholesale resurrection of a crowd of dead Jewish "saints" really occurred. To argue with this type of mind is as hopeless as it is with the reverent Rationalist who implores

us to believe in and "save" Jesus of Nazareth as a Man—not as a God, but as a Man.

For those who wish to see how Christians can repeat the dear old shibboleths in favour of Christianity in more modern terms, and how thoroughly unconvincing they can be, I strongly recommend *Belief and Unbelief*. For those who want to know something about *Unbelief*, that is, the rejection of Christianity as completely outdated, Dr. Wood's book is quite valueless. It can appeal only to those who are already "converted," who were, like Billy Graham's "converts," always Christians.

H. CUTNER.

## An Anthropologist and the God-Making

GREGORY S. SMELTERS

Motto: "The occurrence of a word in the common speech does not prove that anything in the so-called reality corresponds to the word."—Fritz MAUTHNER.

*Atheism and its History*, Vol. I, p.31, 1924.

*Question.*—What is your opinion of the mental attitude occasionally obtruding on us in a modern scientist or a politician as exemplified by the following quotation: "Whether we are laymen or scientists, we must postulate a Lord of the Universe, give him what shape we will." (Sir A. Keith the Rationalist anthropologist, in *Forum*, U.S.A., September, 1930.) ?

*Answer.*—It is a plain and unashamed proposal to adopt a downright fiction after a hackneyed pattern. But by precisely proposing the word "Lord," the "shape" (meaning) has already been given, namely, that of "a feudal, slave-driving master and possessor," with all the attendant properties. It is then contradictory to "give him what shape we will." Anyway, there are already innumerable varieties of "a Lord of the Universe" among the religions. Such a proposal to add another variety in our days, when the very principle of explanation of nature by personal agents instead of by laws of functional connection (generalizations) has long been completely abandoned even in our primary education,—is plainly a reversion to pre-scientific mode of thinking. By "functional connection" is meant the explanatory formula: "If A—then always B" (for large-scale events) or "If A—then, in a certain percentage, B" (for sub-atomic particles). (See Prof. H. Reichenbach, *The Rise of Scientific Philosophy*, page 164.)—Now what always amazes me is the brazen insolence with which a Lord or Architect or Mathematician or Creator of the Universe is flaunted in the face of the plain fact that a purposely acting Supreme So-and-So is never a final explanation of anything. His "purposes," of course, again need an explanation! As Bertrand Russell has wittily remarked, "We should have to suppose the Creator created by some super-Creator whose purposes He served" (*Hist. of W. Philos.*, p.87), and so absurdly *ad infinitum*!—Actually, as Professor C. J. Ducasse of Brown University (U.S.A.) has shown, "purposive" explanation is no logical opposite to mechanistic explanation, and the two fundamental components of a purpose, "belief by the performer of the act in a causal law, e.g., that 'If X occurs, Y occurs'" and "desire by the performer that Y shall occur" need again to be, after all, explained, and explained *causally*. (See *Readings in Philosophical Analysis*, p.573, New York, 1949, and Professor Haldane, in *The Rationalist Annual*, 1955, p. 76.) The generalization, that is, the functional (causal)

connection between, at least, two events, and not a purposeful agent (person), is therefore the essence of an ultimate explanation. Apart from the ecclesiastical humbugs, a modern scientist or a politician who quite seriously and sincerely proposes the utter absurdity of "a Lord, or any other So-and-So, of the Universe"—if persistent—should be branded what he really is—a latent schizophreic, who is criminally muddling, not wisely educating, the public opinion (of *Encyclop of Aberrations*, ed. by E. Podolsky, London, 1953, article *Schizoid Manœuver*).

*Question.*—Do you consider it at all arguable that the notion of deity pre-dates, or occasions, god-making?

*Answer.*—Definitely, no. Psychologically, a notion, that is, "the general concept under which particular things may be classed" (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 1954) comes, both in child's and mankind's intellectual development, late on the scene. The mythologies of ancient Assyrians, Hungarians, and Letts plainly demonstrate that the generalized notion of "deity," that is to say, the generic noun "deity" or "god" had developed at a later stage of mental evolution out of individual names. The Assyrian word for "goddesses" was "ishtars" after the proper name Ishtar, the chief female deity (*Dict. of The Bible*, ed. by J. Hastings, 1899, article *God*). The Hungarian modern term for "gods" is "ishtenek" after the proper name Ishten, the ancient chief male god (*Encycl of Relig. and Ethics*, ed. by J. Hastings, 1913, article *Hungarians*). The present day Latvian designation for "god" is "dievs," introduced probably during the 18th century, after the ancient individual name of the chief god, Dievs, pre-historically meaning "sky" as suggested by its occurrence in the neighbouring Finnish idioms as a loan-word still meaning "heaven" (Professor P. Smits, *Lafviesumitologija*, p. 14, Riga, 1924.)—Anyway, in pure logic, a class notion can never pre-date or occasion the particular things, members of that class notion, respect the individual (proper) names. That is the incontrovertible reason for denying the question.

*Question.*—Is the idea of supernatural Power the precursor of all gods, or is it immediately referred to by a proper noun?

*Answer.*—The only relevant sense of an individual (personal) "Power" in this question is the concrete sense of it, given in Christian theology, and there it is synonymous with either "God" or "an angel of the sixth order." Now "God" in Christian theology is, as a translation of the biblical *elohim* and *theos*, a misspelling, and should have always been written "the god." Then, if we restore "god" in place of "Power," the question, of course, makes sense no more. Logically, the general idea of "god," that is to say, the word "god," cannot be the precursor of all particular gods, that is, their proper names. Now what is referred to be the proper noun to a god? As gods are fiction, the proper name of a god does not refer to an actual individual, living or dead, but only to another word or phrase, such as "the principal Jewish-Christian god" which is the immediate and only referent of the proper name Yahweh. How did gods arise? Again, extant mythologies plainly indicate that what a god was, that is, a proper name of a god, had developed out of an everyday generic noun for an everyday object of sense perception: "Anu, the highest of the (Mesopotamian) gods, was god of the sky, and his name was the everyday word for 'sky'" (H. Frankfort, *Before Philosophy*, p. 150, Pelican Books). This fact would have long ago been manifest in mythological discussions, had the writers had, from the very start, adopted the correct linguistic way of writing "the god sky (Heaven)," as is the literal case with most languages such as Greek "Uranos" and Latin Diespiter ("Father Heaven"), instead of the

misleading "a sky-god X." It was misleading in that it led one to believe "a sky-god X" and "the god Sky" are different expressions whereas they are identical.—In Chinese, "T'ien is really used in two senses, (a) sky and (b) god" (A. C. Bouquet, *Comparative Religion*, p. 179, Pelican), no doubt the second meaning being derived from the first. In most Indo-European languages the proper name of the principal god derives from the everyday generic word for "sky" or "daylight," only written with a capital initial, as seen from the Latvian specimen. And in most cases of sun-gods it is literally the god Sun (as in Greek, *Helios*) or the goddess Sun (as in Latvian, *Saule*). The same evolution applies to other everyday—both concrete and abstract—words, such as moon, earth (in Latin, *Terra Mater*), sea (in Latvian, *Mother Sea*), thunder, death, wisdom, etc. Even "break" had developed, in Christianity, into the living, speaking god (Holy) Breath (Greek "pneuma" meaning "puff of breath") mistranslated as Holy Ghost (Spirit). Likewise, "the great Egyptian goddess Isis was originally, the deified throne . . . the 'mother' of the king." (*Before Philosophy*, p. 26).

Thus the evolutionary stages of god-making, that is, of the principal divine proper names, appear to be as follows: (1) There is an everyday generic name for an everyday object of sense perception. (2) The generic name, after the personification (deification) of the object, becomes a proper name of an alleged person (god or goddess). (3) The proper name of the chief (personal) deity, in some cases, later develops a double, a new, class, name for all such similar beings, and in writing the double name become artificially distinguished by initial letters only or the plural number. Only the English language presents rather a queer, grammatical, fourth stage in the funny fashion of the ancient Latin god "Speakus Talkius" (*Aius Locutius*), a god fancifully made out of two verbs! The Anglo-Saxon generic word "god," according to the Oxford Dictionary, developed a reverse double, a new proper name by taking on a capital initial, "God." This was apparently due to the Christian pious fraud of obliterating the Hebrew formula "Yahweh elohim" (= the deity Yahweh) and mistranslating it as "the Lord God" (see: *The First Jewish Bible*, by the Rev. R. L. Smith, p. 27., New York, 1954). In such a fundamentally different conjunction "God" seemed to be a proper name and "the Lord" an attribute of it. The ancient universal taboo, under death penalty, on pronouncing "Yahweh" only enhanced this illusionary use of "God," and thus Christians and unbelievers alike never came even to suspect that "God" is really "the god" and "the Lord" replaces "Yahweh." Once this greatest pious fraud in Western history, still millionfold repeated in our own days, is debunked, the whole of Christianity fades away as palpable Yahwist mythology: Father Yahweh, son Yeshuha, holy Breath, devil Satan, cherubs, etc.

## New Zealand Calling

By ARTHUR O'HALLORAN

(Vice-President, N.Z. Rationalist Association)

WE learn that religionists in the U.S.A. are making persistent attempts to carry religion into the public schools. Similar moves are afoot in this country. To succeed, however, it will be necessary for the clerics to get Parliamentary sanction; in other words an amendment to the Education Act. Members of the Government would seem to be divided on the subject—a thorny one for politicians. The pressure groups are at work and it will not surprise Rationalists if a Bill comes before Parliament in the present session. Then we shall see who is for "God and his angels" and who

among our politicians, have the courage to disassociate themselves from the "Christian Principles—Christian Values" prattle, with its specious claim that in religion lies morality, virtue and good conduct. At this juncture it is gratifying to know that the N.Z. Educational Institute, at its recent conference, said it would oppose the "introduction of any system which requires teachers to take religious instruction in schools and any move to extend religious teaching in State Schools beyond the provisions of the present Nelson system."

\* \* \* \*

At present a Monetary Commission is sitting in New Zealand. Set up by the Government, it is presided over by the Judge of the Court of Arbitration. The executive of the Social Credit League had a plan which we thought would have been welcomed by the churches as a preliminary to the opening of the Commission. It was that the churches should ask for Divine Guidance in special prayers to Almighty God. The League's suggestion was turned down by the churches and in the opinion of one of the Social Crediters "the refusal had caused a tremendous amount of feeling."

\* \* \* \*

A week or two ago the boys at a New Zealand school were urged to talk to God as they do to their earthly fathers. The religionist responsible for this hogwash must surely have forgotten that the modern boy lacks the respectful approach to his parents characteristic say of the Victorian Age. From our reading of the Old Testament (or the New Testament for that matter) Jehovah might quite easily fly into one of those rages he was allegedly addicted to, and one does not know what condign punishment might be meted out to the lad "coming across" with a smart one. So the New Zealand boy would be wise to treat cautiously some of the pieties urged upon him.

## Which Three Books?

QUESTION: Which three books have played the greatest part, or had the most influence, in making you a freethinker?

ANSWERS:

E. H. GROUT: Primarily and basically, first the Bible. Secondly, Paine's *Age of Reason*. Thirdly, Blatchford's *God and my Neighbour*.

MOLLY ROCHE (Mrs.): (1) The Bible; (2) *The Great Secret* (Robert Macmillan); (3) *The Liberation of Mankind* (H. W. van Loon).

F. H. PANTLING: I am hard pressed to name the exact order, but my trio would comprise Cohen's *Grammar of Freethought*, Vivian Phelps' *Churches and Modern Thought*, and my first bound volume of *The Freethinker*.

C. LEONARD: My first laugh at religion was in *Penguin Island* (Anatole France). When I had laughed I was free. I then profited greatly from many books, notably Mencken's *Selected Prejudices* and Draper's *History of the Conflict*.

H. FIDDIAN: Mine were Edward Clodd's *Primer of Evolution*, a very ordinary school chemistry book, and Shaw's *Man and Superman* (The Scene in Hell).

F. E. SCHOFIELD: As a McCabe fan I take, as the three books which most influenced my freethought, his *Riddle of the Universe Today*, his *Existence of God*, and *The Popes and their Church*.

HANNAH H. DAVIES: If a man die, shall he live again? That is the all-important question in religion, and so my three books would be Chapman Cohen's *Other side of Death*, Corliss Lamont's *Illusion of Immortality*, and *The Question* (Clodd).

J. D. G. LIDGAR: After much elimination (regretful) I believe I would select, in answer to this interesting poser, Freud's *Future of an Illusion*, Llewellyn Powys's *The Pathetic Fallacy*, and J. M. Robertson's *Pagan Christs*.

## Correspondence

### TOWARDS FREETHOUGHT

Sixteen years ago, as a result of chancing upon Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason*, my tentative adolescent footsteps were firmly set on the Freethought road. After reading Paine's blistering exposure of the "infallible Holy Scripture," I felt that the so-called "impregnable rock" was more closely akin to a quicksand!

Later I read, in Chapman Cohen's *Primitive Survivals in Modern Thought*, a masterly analysis of the social origins and backgrounds of all religious ideas. Cohen's witty and ironical comparison of the technique and paraphernalia of the African ju-ju man with that of his European brother, the Archbishop of Canterbury, is superbly done.

Later still I came across Spinoza, the great seventeenth century Jewish thinker. For me, Spinoza's great definitive work, the *Ethics*, integrates and synthesises all the various Freethought, Rationalist, and Humanist notions into one monistic, deterministic, logical system. In Spinoza's system, all finite and particular existences are integral parts of one self-caused, self-creating, unique substance. To this all-inclusive totality, Spinoza gives the name "Deus sive Natura" (God or Nature). In Christian terminology God is the Creator; in Spinoza's system "creator" and "creation" are one and the same.

S. W. BROOKS.

Man's first necessity is to eat. Hunger makes the first demand upon the world. Nature's mouth is always open. To find something to eat is every man's imperative duty if he would live; and something for those to eat who are dependent upon him, if he would keep them alive. Life can be continued only by its demands being supplied. How to get this supply is the foremost problem of mankind. Everyone is born with an appetite for food and drink, if for nothing higher. —L. K. Washburn.

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