

# The Freethinker

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THE BRITISH PRESS, or at least that not inconsiderable part of it devoted to sensationalism, has a habit of elevating molehills into mountains. This appears to be a reasonable description of the reception accorded to the now notorious article of Lord Altrincham on the British monarchy as at present constituted. On the Continent, where I happened to be at the time of his Lordship's criticism, the stir was, if possible, even greater. Yet the famous article really only amounted to a frank statement of the obvious fact that the British monarchy in 1957 is an institution which lags far behind the times and retains an archaic atmosphere, burdened with obsolete traditions that even most other monarchies have long discarded. This is a commonplace even in Germany, the traditional breeding ground of royalty—including British royalty—in the past. Lord Altrincham is no republican—he actually said so in a letter to a member of THE FREETHINKER staff—but the fact was obvious from his article. One could even argue that Lord Altrincham is the best friend of the Monarchy at present: he draws attention to the long overdue need to bring up to date this venerable, but somewhat mouldy, institution.

## The British Monarchy

Actually the present anachronism represented by the Monarchy in Britain is a by-word and a laughing stock on the continent. The British Monarchy is there described as a "perpetual circus" which keeps up a caste-like seclusion from ordinary mortals. The old defunct monarchies of Spain, Austria and Russia were somewhat similar in their elaborate court ritual, nowadays apparently confined to Windsor and perhaps pre-democratic lands like Iran and Ethiopia. The other surviving European monarchies have learned how to move with the times. The King of Sweden, returning from a State visit to Britain, travelled in an ordinary passenger plane, whilst His Majesty of Denmark and Her Majesty of Holland can be seen in their respective capitals moving about like ordinary mortals. The children of the King of the Belgians play on the sand at Ostend like normal children; whilst the Grand Duchess of Luxembourg lives in the main street of her delightful capital with trams passing her door and a cinema immediately opposite. Only the British Monarchy continues to exist and function in Brahmin-like exclusiveness, remote from the ordinary life it is supposed to represent; cluttered up with the ceremonies of bygone centuries and permeated with notions of the old, now happily obsolete, British caste system.

## Lord Altrincham and the Monarchy

If the present Queen and her entourage wished to disprove the critique of Lord Altrincham, they would make him a Knight of the Garter—or whatever is the fitting reward for conspicuously valuable service to the institution. After all, the personal deficiencies of the Queen are not of a kind to surprise anyone. Other monarchs have been bad speakers—for that matter it is on record that George I, the founder of the present Dynasty, could not speak English at all but had to converse with his Prime Minister, who spoke no

German, in dog Latin! Queen Elizabeth's now almost canonised ancestor, Queen Victoria, was in any case, hardly a genius. Some of her most eminent subjects even considered that she was *subnormal*; whilst it is, in any case, nowadays generally known that the Queen who gave her name to the era of Darwin, Spencer and Mill, herself much preferred the novels of Marie Corelli to the great classics which have conferred such posthumous honour on the "Victorian" age. A statistical survey would probably disclose that the average monarch is a man or woman rather *below* the normal, a person with unusually limited knowledge of the world. There have, of course, been exceptions, but only probably the type that

prove the rule. Monarchy is an *institution*. It is as such, and quite apart from the temporary idiosyncrasies of its titular representatives that it ought to be assessed.

## The English Republican Movement

Today Republicanism, at least in the precise sense of the existence of any organised republican movement, is largely at a discount. The Communist Party is presumably republican in its ultimate aim, though even there the "Red" Dean of Canterbury has, I believe, taken his stand in defence of the Monarchy; yet another example of the age-long alliance between Throne and Altar. Apart from which a few, at present not very significant politically "left" groups in England, and nationalistic movements in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, display current republican tendencies. In the past, however, even within the past century, there have existed in Great Britain republican movements of a much more substantial character. We, in the Freethought movement, are the least likely to forget this fact since the founder of the National Secular Society, Charles Bradlaugh, was not only the leading English Republican of his day but the author of that 19th century political classic, *The Impeachment of the House of Brunswick*, that glaring searchlight on the misdeeds of the early Hanoverians and their regime. Northampton, Bradlaugh's constituency, was referred to in the current Tory press as "a stinking den of republican cobblers." And before Bradlaugh there was the perhaps even more redoubtable Thomas Paine. Since his day we have had such notable republican Freethinkers as G. W. Foote and John M. Robertson; the last-named in particular turned his devastating logic on to the institution of Monarchy with deadly effect in his pamphlet *Royalism*. It was the outward and visible sign of the subsequent decline of republicanism in the present century that its author eventually ended up as a member of His Majesty's Honourable Privy Council! Actually the long reign of Queen Victoria was marked by great vicissitudes; the old Queen ended in a blaze of glory and popular esteem but there were times when her personal unpopularity and neglect of her public functions proved potent advertisements for republican propaganda.

## The British Monarchy and the Commonwealth

The British Monarchy is a composite institution, feudal in form but imperialist in substance. Its present popularity

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

## Lord Altrincham and the Monarchy

By F. A. RIDLEY

dates, not from the distant past, but from the imperialist revival of the 1870s in Britain. Prior to that the Monarchy was decidedly unpopular. What John M. Robertson termed the cult of "Royalism" may be said to have been effectively founded by Disraeli, that flamboyant political genius who crowned Victoria, Empress of India—and whose death, incidentally, coincided almost to the day with the initial publication of *THE FREETHINKER* in 1881. Nowadays, the former cult of Imperialism which attained its zenith in the old Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 1897, is more or less extinct. In its stead, however, the Monarchy has acquired a new status as "Head of the Commonwealth," a novel position which seems to reinforce Lord Altrincham's demand for modernisation.

#### Republicanism and the Monarchy

Secularism has always tended to identify itself with Repub-

licanism. For, apart from its traditional association with religion and its frequent claims to Divine Right in the past, any hereditary institution must inevitably affront democratic sentiment. Speaking personally, I cannot consider that the recent association of the Monarchy with a more or less democratic Commonwealth affects the case against the Monarchy. In the 20th century, perhaps even more than in the 19th, the institution of Monarchy is an anachronism, the titular symbol of an outdated system. Surely the Conference of Commonwealth Prime Ministers could meet each year and elect one of their number as President for the ensuing year, much as do the Swiss Cantons. Perhaps this will come in time. Meanwhile we watch with interest the repercussions which will follow Lord Altrincham's daring attempt to apply a new coat of paint to the hoary fabric of the House of Windsor.

## The N.S.S. and the Royal Marine

By COLIN McCALL

THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY was recently instrumental in ending the illegitimate interference by a Commanding Officer into the personal affairs of a Royal Marine. The case deserves to be publicised as yet another example of Christian impertinence.

The Royal Marine joined our Society earlier this year when he was in England; then he was posted overseas, but he kept in touch with us by letter. In one of these he asked us if he had the right to affirm before a military court: he had made the request when appearing as a witness, but it had been refused, and he had taken the oath under threat of disciplinary action. In our reply we informed him that he had the right to affirm, but we also raised the matter of his religious registration. If he was registered as a Christian the request to affirm would be inconsistent.

Some weeks passed before we heard from him again. Then he wrote in mid-July that he had taken up this point. "At the beginning of this week"—he said—"I made my third application (the previous two having been rejected) for my service certificate to be changed, so that religion, now reading 'Congregational,' should read 'Agnostic.'" This was refused, he continued, because "I am under 21 and my parents don't approve of the idea." And he added: "I have written hoping you can give me some advice on where I stand legally, as I wish to make a further application if I am on the right side of the law."

The Society immediately wrote to the Admiralty stating the case anonymously, asking for a ruling, and remarking that important matters of principle were involved. First, the man's right to be registered as *he* thinks fit; second, the falsity of his present registration. By 'phone and then in a confirmatory letter which we requested (August 1st) the Admiralty asked for the Marine's name, rank and official number "in order that the matter can be investigated."

Three weeks later the case was satisfactorily concluded. The Admiralty reported that: "The Commanding Officer . . . is now satisfied that Marine —'s beliefs are sincere, and his request to change the religious denomination noted in his Service certificate has been granted."

No doubt the Admiralty has to cover its officers as well as it can; hence the explanatory note on its findings: "On 26th June, 1957, Marine — applied to change his religious denomination, but in view of his age (18 years 9 months) and undeveloped character, his Troop Commander wished to satisfy himself as to the sincerity of the

beliefs held by a young man who had only recently left the influence of his parents and might not yet know his own mind. Marine — was accordingly requested to obtain evidence that his parents were aware of, and had no objection to, the change of denomination."

It must be confessed that the Troop Commander emerges as a tender father-figure, deeply concerned for the welfare of his young charges who have only recently left the shelter of their parents' wings! In fact—as remarked earlier—this was purely and simply a case of Christian impertinence.

A Troop Commander wishing "to satisfy himself as to the sincerity of the beliefs" held by the Marine! Was there any attempt to determine the sincerity of the original registration of "Congregational"? Would there have been any such attempt to be satisfied about sincerity had the proposed change been in reverse—from "Agnostic" to "Congregational"? Answers to both these questions would almost certainly be No! We suggest that a Troop Commander so concerned about sincerity of belief might consider how many of the young men under him really believe the nonsense they hear during religious services and not wait to interfere until one man has the courage of his convictions. And it should not be forgotten that the Marine had made three requests for the change—indicative, one would think, of sincerity, even if the Commander had the right to "satisfy" himself on this point, which he hadn't!

However, we may note with satisfaction that, after three times refusing the Marine's request, the Commander was—rather suddenly it seems—satisfied on the question of sincerity on or about the time that the Admiralty investigated the case. Coincidence? Perhaps! Whether the parents have equally suddenly given their approval is quite irrelevant. Indeed, the idea of the Commander seeking the parental approval is ludicrous. We are prompted to ask one further question. Did this thoughtful Commander seek parental approval before posting overseas this young man whose character was "undeveloped"; "who had only recently left the influence of his parents"? We doubt it!

In conclusion, we would like to commend the determination—even courage—of the Royal Marine in question. We hope that this brief report will remind other readers in the services to check up on their religious registration and to have it altered if it no longer expresses their sincerely held beliefs.

# We All Must Die

By G. I. BENNETT

MANY YEARS AGO—back in 1917—there was published a novel of which I have elsewhere expressed my hearty appreciation.\* Entitled *The Rationalist*, by Hubert Wales, it contains much dialogue that even now must make delightful reading to people of open and intelligent mind. At one point in this novel the chief character, Sir William Wrestlour, F.R.S., distinguished biologist (who is "The Rationalist"), has an incidental conversation on the subject of pain with a young local physician by the name of Every. Wrestlour opines that pain is "immeasurable," and goes on:

"It's a great unplumbed deep of simple tragedy. It's preventable, most of it, I'm sure of it, if only knowledge were sought. But not a soul is working to prevent it, purely to prevent it. Every man who might be devoting his energies to this obsession, this saving of life—which cannot be saved, but only prolonged." "When you put it that way—" Every began, patently out of politeness, and went no further.

"Take your own profession," said Wrestlour.

Every stirred his second cup of tea in acquiescence.

"There is no limit, I fancy, to the amount of pain you will permit yourselves to inflict if you can save life, or think you can save life?"

"I don't think there is," said Every with his mouth full of cake.

"You will perform an extremely distressing and disfiguring operation in order to prolong life for a year or two, even for a few months?"

"We certainly will," he answered, munching, "if the patient consents."

"The patient generally does consent?"

"I never knew a refusal."

"He wants to live?"

"Always."

"However old and infirm, he will go through agonies for life?"

"The older they are, the keener they are to live, in my experience," said Every. . . .

"The instinct is tremendously strong," said Wrestlour, *sotto voce*, "and inexplicably persistent."

And to the rational mind of Wrestlour, the saving of suffering, especially in the aged and incurable, seemed, as it seems to me, more important than prolonging life. But there are many who do not apparently think so; and that is why in my article, "A Plea for a Rational Approach," I made reference to this matter. Since I wrote it, I have come across an interesting piece in *The Reader's Digest* (July 1957), which, under the title, "Why Doctors Fight Death," is a selection of readers' letters penned in response to an article by a woman (she wrote anonymously), which *The Reader's Digest* previously published. She had lived through the agony of watching doctors fight for the life of her pain-racked husband and saw his death, not as a defeat and a tragedy, but as a merciful release.

What of the letters called forth by the expression of such a sentiment and attitude? The five published are all from women—a fact not without significance when one considers their content and basically similar reaction. But these are only five of many received, which *The Reader's Digest* describe as "of unusual quality" and as "poignant testimony on a vital subject." Well, search as I may, I find nothing remarkable in these letters. Their writers, including a nurse who writes of her patients, all tell of experiences in the Shadow of Death—of themselves or of a dear one. They are all fervently certain it is right to save life in any circumstances and at any cost. And they are all, I think, governed more by emotion than thought in this matter.

Says one woman who was told by a brain specialist that he feared her boy's life could be saved only at the expense

of mental impairment: "In that moment of agonising shock the one word that blazed on my consciousness was 'life,' not the dreadful word 'idiocy'. . . . It shows that in a sudden crisis, when the mind is too stunned to reason, even to think of the future, one instinctively turns to the chance of living. At whatever cost, all cost, even lunacy." Now that boy was her son; but these are terrible words, especially the last. Actually, her son lived and his brain was unaffected. But had her worst fear been realised, could she have written them? I am certain she could not. "We (women)," she concludes, "carry life within us and, in the final analysis, will always serve life." But life, if it is clouded existence, has no joy in it, and is an infinitely worse reality than death.

Another woman says of the endeavours to save the life of her aged mother that she seemed to be in "a maze of pain which had no beginning and no end. The doctors gave me what assurance they could, but my heart was filled with scepticism and man's old, eternal question 'Why?' Why not let her die in peace?" Medical skill, however, finally pulled her through, and her daughter goes on to write that "whether efforts to stop or delay the journey (towards the Valley of Death) are successful or not, the effort *must* be made. . . . We must do our utmost to tip the scales against death."

This person, too, writes in the comfort of the knowledge of what medical science has achieved in the treatment of her mother. But had her mother's life been prolonged only for it to have become a bed-ridden and savourless existence, how then would she have written? This applies to the others whose views appear in *The Reader's Digest* article. The cases they cite belong to the successes of medical science—including that of the writer who, though now recovered, is "not at all sure my life was worth saving," but who somewhat inconsequently declares that, if stricken again, she will "rush" to her doctor and expect him "to use every means to prolong my life."

One cannot, of course, know for certain in advance whether medical science will make possible a return to reasonable health and activity. Where there is a sporting chance, well and good. But to fight for the life of a patient, whose life in any event will be a drag on him for a few miserable years more, does not seem to me humane. The happiness of the sick person and his (or her) desire to go on living ought, I think, to be ever uppermost in our thoughts.

It is a truism that, from the moment of birth, we are all under sentence of death; we may postpone the sentence, but we cannot rescind it. It is salutary to remember that. We all must die: what do we ask of life while we live? Different people have given different answers; and opinion on this matter will vary according to the temperament, experiences, and upbringing—religious or secular—of the individual. But I personally conceive *usefulness*, broadly interpreted, as an essential ingredient of a tolerable life. It almost certainly is where gifted or dedicated people are concerned. J. S. Mill in his last hours said "My work is done"; and he was content to die. Cecil Rhodes, of South Africa, on the other hand, dying at 48, was heard to murmur just before he expired: "So much to do, so little done." In his death, as in the death of all men and women whose specific work remains unfinished, there is personal tragedy.

\*In my article "A Novel with a Difference," published in the South Place Ethical Society *Monthly Record*, November, 1956.

## This Believing World

One of the very angry young men we are—to put it mildly—cursed with is still more angry because a play he has written was rejected. It actually took him *three months* to write which, for Mr. Colin Wilson, whose book *The Outsider* had more than a success, is a lot of time to waste on any play. We would not, however, have noticed him or his play but for the fact that it is entitled *The Death of God*, though, curiously enough, it is not about the death of Jesus at all. Now God is, as is well known, a mixture of God, Jesus, and the Holy Ghost—so the death of God could only mean the death of the Three, the death of the Trinity. Gods have lived and died, but if Mr. Wilson's God is not the Holy Trinity who the outsider is he?

★

It is most interesting to note that attacks on the Queen are not confined to noble Lords. Here, once again, we have the dismal Lord's Day Observance Society gloomily objecting to Prince Philip or the Queen taking part in any sport on Sunday—or even watching it. Even their son, Prince Charles, its journal despondingly notes, “has under the influence of his father been thoroughly accustomed to such Sabbath-breaking.” We have an idea that Prince Charles will learn lots more than mere Sabbath-breaking at his new school.

★

But it is not only the Royal family which gets it (in popular parlance) in the neck. The L.D.O.S.'s journal turns its doleful, funereal attack on to the Churches. “We bear in mind,” it moans, “the faithless, shameful silence and inconsistency of most of the principal Church bodies in this matter.” Perhaps the Churches themselves are wondering how any “God of Love” could endure the L.D.O.S. even for a moment. But perhaps they recognise it as one of the “crosses” they have to bear.

★

It obviously paid the Rev. B. Graham (more familiarly known as Billy) to “evangelise” London, so he now is planning to enliven the Midlands in 1959 with his sacred presence. He insists that modern methods of publicity must be used to gain converts—and cash, of course—they are all sound from the psychological point of view. Moreover, he is a thorough believer in religious programmes on television. Will our Midlands respond? You bet it will. But whether Billy will bring anybody who is not a Christian to Christ is another matter. The people he converts are always Christians.

★

According to the French journal “Le Monde” there appears to be a great deal of uneasiness in the bosom of the Society of Jesus. Recently, it had a big conference in Rome and the Pope received in person 166 out of 186 delegates and gave them a severe talking to. He fulminated against their lack of “discipline,” their lack of respect for the hierarchy, and many other things which the Catholic Church would not tolerate. Only blind obedience to the Vatican would be allowed.

★

The Pope insisted that the Society of Jesus must obey without discussion; it must be humble, it must disassociate itself from any ideas of “false” liberty, and so on. In fact, the Pope spoke in a most unaccustomed tone, hard and severe, like a ruthless general of a ruthless army. We cannot help wondering what the outcome will be? One Pope, Clement XIV, actually suppressed the order in 1773, though Pius VII in 1814 restored it to almost its former glory. The Society of Jesus will either have to fight for

whatever liberty it possesses or be swallowed up by the Vatican.

★

We were very pleased to see that ITV can even provide sheer, delightful entertainment on its very religious programmes. Two beaming Doms from Ealing Abbey and two devout teenagers discussed recently “the nature and activities of the angelic world”; and it was literally surprising how much in this year of grace, 1957, they all knew about angels—and for that matter, about devils—that is, fallen angels—too. Angels are, of course, “spiritual beings” created before man and quite sexless. They “guard” every human being on the planet—hence they are rightly called Guardian Angels. The two Doms gave us a detailed description of life among angels—even referring to the way they carried messages on the famous Jacob's Ladder up to God Almighty. It was altogether a feast of intellectual bravura and all the more so because it was so devastatingly funny!

## Religion Today

By O. C. DREWITT

PSYCHO-ANALYSIS and psychomatic research have made it plain that religious enthusiasm arises from bodily tensions due to abnormal repression. The resulting bondage and binding of the individual is found most convenient by an authoritarian society and by the authoritarian system of education which serves that society.

A diseased character-structure is incapable of freedom. It is the condition of survival of an unfree civilisation. As a current fact the Church represents an ideological force which dominates many aspects of our social structure. Among the results are:

1. The dubious code of morality common to all speeches from the Throne;
2. The domination of BBC “culture” by aphoristic religiosity of breathtaking insipidity;
3. The almost total exclusion from radio and TV programmes of scientifically candid anti-religious argument and of all serious argument favouring changes in morality which contradict the opinions of the Church; and
4. An equally scandalous situation in the Press and from top to bottom of the educational system.

By encouraging certain minor reforms the Church is thereby enabled most conveniently to evade the giant problems of social structure and morality, the solution of which would genuinely make society free.

This above all applies to the fields of marriage and adolescent sex reform which no churchman dare radically touch and which the whole of the influential propaganda machinery of the country refuses even to discuss.

Another evaded scandal is the supposed “right” of parents to torture small children with outdated terrifying forms of religion, and so render them in later life incapable of ever thinking rationally.

Such methods of upbringing should be prohibited by law, but the power of the Church renders even their critical and public discussion impossible.

For all the abuses the ideological power of the Church is responsible, with its totem and taboo morality and its revolting puritanism. Among the positive contributions of the Anglican Church to human uplift are the simpering Madonnas popular in Anglo-Catholic circles, the mush of the “Children's Corner,” and the atmosphere of Flanders poppies and war memorials in which the episcopate manages to envelop royalty—all of which would be minor offences were they not symbolic of the Anglican religion in its entirety.

# THE FREETHINKER

41 GRAY'S INN ROAD, LONDON, W.C.1.  
TELEPHONE: HOLBORN 2601.

All Articles and correspondence should be addressed to THE EDITOR at the above address and not to individuals.

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

Details of membership of the National Secular Society may be obtained from the General Secretary, 41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1. Members and visitors are always welcome at the Office.

## 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.

C. S. KANE.—Protestantism differs from Catholicism basically in regarding the individual as primary and the Church secondary.

RATIONALIST.—Several priests, you say, have made notable contributions to science, such as Mendel. True, but not because they were priests. Two factors operate: (a) talent, and (b) the leisure time necessary to develop it.

## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (83 Suffolk Street, opposite West End Cinema).—Sunday, October 13th, 7 p.m.: COLIN MCCALL, "Atheism on the Air?"

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics Institute).—Sunday, October 13th, 6.45 p.m.: "The Mormon Church" (a film), by an ELDER OF THE CHURCH.

Central London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, W.1).—Sunday, October 13th, 7.15 p.m.: W. WIGHAM (General Secretary, I.L.P.), "The Socialism of William Morris."

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, October 15th, 7.15 p.m.: A. L. POVALL, "Apartheid—Principle and Policy."

Leicester Branch N.S.S. (75 Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, October 13th, 6.30 p.m.: J. M. ALEXANDER, "The Sex Basis of Religion."

Orpington Humanist Group (Sherry's Restaurant).—Sunday, October 13th, 7 p.m.: A. J. COLLINS, "To a New World Through Social Credit."

Portsmouth Branch N.S.S. (Forresters Hall, Fratton Road).—Thursday, October 17th, 7.30-9 p.m.: "Christian Morality v. Rational Approach to Life's Problems," by the Rev. D. W. THOMPSON. 9 p.m. to 10 p.m.: "The General Secretary Meets the Branch."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square).—Sunday, October 13th, 11 a.m.: Mrs. D. PICKLES, M.A., "The Opium of the Intellectuals." by Raymond Aron."

### OUTDOOR

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

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

London (Tower Hill).—Thursday, 12-2 p.m.: Messrs. D. TULLMAN and L. EBURY.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, FINKEL, SMITH or CORSAIR.

Sunday, 3 p.m. (Platt Fields) Messrs. WOODCOCK, MILLS, etc.

Sunday 8 p.m. (Deansgate Blitzed Site): Messrs. WOODCOCK, MILLS, SMITH or WOOD.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Meetings most evenings of the week (often afternoons): Messrs. THOMPSON, SALISBURY, HOGAN, PARRY, HENRY and others.

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

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Sunday, 11.30 a.m.: R. POWE. Thursday, 1 p.m.: R. POWE. Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY and R. POWE.

Wales and Western Branch N.S.S. (The Downs, Bristol).—Sunday, 3 p.m.: D. SHIPPER.

West London Branch N.S.S.—Every Sunday, at the Marble Arch, from 4 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.

## Notes and News

ABERDEEN Humanist Group have arranged a public debate between Mrs. Margaret Knight and the Rev. Ian Pitt-Watson, the chair to be taken by a Unitarian minister. The debate will take place in the Music Hall, Aberdeen, at 7.45 p.m. on October 18th.

JUDGE DANIEL J. O'MARA, of the New York Supreme Court in the County of Yates, has ruled that the Ingersoll House at Dresden, New York, is not entitled to tax exemption on a technicality that the incorporation papers of the Robert G. Ingersoll Memorial Association did not properly state the use of the building within the meaning of the tax exemption provisions of the law. The Association has therefore been faced with bills for back taxes amounting to several hundreds of dollars. We have little doubt that American Freethinkers will supply the required amount, and we are sorry that restrictions prevent most British subjects from contributing to the fund. But if any reader has relatives in the U.S.A., the address of the Association is 370 West 35th Street, New York 1, N.Y. The Secretary is the indefatigable Joseph Lewis.

STRIKING illustrations of Christian unity are to be found in an interesting book published in the U.S.A. recently, *The Religions of America*. It informs us that there are 268 Protestant sects with a total membership of 94,842,845. (Christian unity?) Some picturesque titles are given, some names appearing unfamiliar to the less flamboyant British Protestants. The "Free Will Baptists" sound a little less strict than the "Seventh Day Baptists (German, 1728)," but of the Baptists, perhaps the most unusual title is held by the "Two Seed in the Spirit Predestinarian Baptists." A fine assortment of Brethren includes the "Social Brethren," who do sound less old-fashioned than the "Old Order or Yorker Brethren" and more sociable than the "Hutterian Brethren." More businesslike are "The (Original) Church of God Inc." (beware imitations!), the "House of God, Which is the Church of the Living God, the Pillar and Ground of the Truth Inc." (say "Protestant"—we've only got one life!), and the "Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith Inc." After this we half expected to find Billy Graham listed as the Bishop of Wall Street. For those unable to afford an asbestos suit the "best buy" sounds like the "Fire-Baptised Holiness Church." Lastly, the "Duck River Baptists" are, at least, well-named.

FR. STARK, director of the German Catholic Family League, complained bitterly that the German birthrate was decreasing and even some Catholics (vile sinners!) were taking part in these unholy practices. Population increase in Germany is now down to only 4.9 per thousand, not as much as the Iron Curtain countries and Asian nations, and abortions number hundreds of thousands per annum.

WE referred last year to an attempt being made at Slough, Bucks, by the "Religion in Industry" campaign to attract workers to religion by means of open-air propaganda as they leave the factories. Less than 40 people were attracted at the first venture, though the campaign was on a big scale. Another attempt the other week was an even bigger fiasco, only 16 workers stopping to listen.

A NEWCOMER to THE FREETHINKER who is an M.A. (Oxon.) would like to make some freethought contacts at, or around, Exeter. The name and address are obtainable from this office.

# Matter, Mind and Commonsense

By H. CUTNER

IN THE FREETHINKER for August 18th appears a letter from Mr. W. E. Nicholson, which necessitates a more extended reply than one in our Correspondence columns; though, to be frank, it seems to me to be a waste of time to argue with this gentleman.

He is very angry, I think, because I criticised the late Chapman Cohen's obsession with Berkeley. But I never said at any time that he was an out-and-out Berkeleyan Idealist, as Mr. Nicholson implies. And I need hardly add that I have never considered "mind" and "life" as "entities." Mr. Nicholson should give my exact words when he is accusing me of something, and not put up his nonsensical Aunt Sallys so that he can have the pleasure of knocking them down.

Chapman Cohen as an Atheist could never go *all* the way with Berkeley, because that famous philosopher had two objects in view when formulating his Idealism—annihilating Locke's Materialism, and proving the existence of God. Locke's unknown "substratum" of "matter" Berkeley had no difficulty in controverting; but only convinced Idealists now use his argument that if we do not see things we know *do* exist, they must perforce exist in the mind of God—thus proving that God really exists. Giving God a "mind" is just plain anthropomorphism, but the acute Berkeley never saw that. Chapman Cohen did, and therefore he was always ready to throw over Berkeley, while just as ready to defend him against the "billiard-ball" type of Materialist. He was always insisting that we didn't understand him. In the very pages which Mr. Nicholson so confidently sends us—pages 75—78 of *Primitive Survivals in Modern Thought*—we have proof of this. We "had better keep to the newspapers."

How difficult it is to pin Cohen down can be seen on page 78, where he says: "There is no reason whatever for accepting 'Mind' as a substantive existence; but neither is there logical reason for accepting 'Matter' as a substantive existence." Yet on page 102 he says: "I do not, be it said, question the existence of 'Matter.'" Then comes: "What I do question . . . is the existence of a 'matter' which is not the matter I know." I am sure Mr. Nicholson thoroughly understands what all this means. I do not. If there is an explanation (other than Mr. Nicholson's) it is that whenever Chapman Cohen forgot about Materialism and remembered his Berkeleyan training, he would and did write this sort of confused nonsense.

Let me give another typical case. On page 73 of *Materialism Re-stated* we have:

The plain man has no doubt that the world exists outside his consciousness of it exactly as he sees it. And he proves it, exactly as the great Dr. Johnson tried, in his ignorance, to disprove the thesis of Bishop Berkeley, by kicking the ground to show that it existed. Of course, Berkeley never denied that the ground existed, or that it gave one the sensation of solidity, or that you could not stamp on it. But the attitude of Dr. Johnson is the attitude of the man in the street. To him the world exists as he sees it. . . .

The interesting thing is that Berkeley actually agrees here with "the man in the street." For Berkeley, the world is *exactly* as you see it. An object only becomes an idea in the mind of God when, knowing it exists, you do not see it. But I hope the reader will see from this quotation how often Chapman Cohen was obsessed with Berkeley. Let us go on, however, a little further.

This bit about Dr. Johnson really comes from G. H. Lewes's *Biographical History of Philosophy* (Library Edition, page 465). Berkeley was arguing, "If any man thinks

we detract from the reality or existence of things he is very far from understanding what has been premised in the plainest terms I could think of. . . . It will be urged that thus much is at least true, viz., that we take away all corporeal substances. To this, my answer is, that if the word *substance* be taken in the vulgar sense for a combination of sensible qualities, such as extension, solidity, weight, etc., this we cannot be accused of taking away." And Lewes adds a note: "An answer to Dr. Johnson's peremptory refutation of Berkeley, viz., kicking a stone: as if Berkeley ever denied that what we call stones existed."

But surely this is unfair to Johnson, who was far too careful and shrewd a reader not to know what Berkeley meant. Johnson, in fact, meant that he could kick a stone *now*, but that he could also kick it tomorrow if nobody moved it. That, in short, it was there and not just an idea in God's mind when he wasn't there.

And will the reader believe it? Johnson's position was actually that of Chapman Cohen when he wasn't thinking of Berkeley. The stone was there when Johnson kicked it, and it was there when Johnson did not actually kick or see it. Turn to page 76 of *Materialism Re-stated* and read:

I do not assert that the table or the room or the garden will cease to exist when I am no longer conscious of their existence, or that because I may die in May there cannot be an eclipse of the sun in June. I say these things have an objective existence. . . . Then why refer to Johnson as if he were wrong?

In much the same way, Chapman Cohen went out of his way to deride the basis of Bradlaugh's Atheism—Bradlaugh's one "existence," which he called the "ghost of a God." Bradlaugh was credited with "two infinites" and so on—of course, hopeless nonsense, and all the more unfair as so many readers will think it all true. Chapman Cohen always held (to me) that Bradlaugh was no philosopher, and should have stuck to politics. If anyone agrees with this, I advise him to read the wonderful debate he had with the Rev. W. M. Westerby on "Has Man a Soul?" which received the unqualified admiration of John M. Robertson; and the one he held with W. R. Browne, M.A., "Can Miracles be Proved Possible?" I doubt whether any living Freethinker could equal either in philosophical knowledge or acuteness of quick thinking.

Whether Mr. Nicholson will dismiss all this as "irrelevant," or packed with his favourite term (as far as I am concerned) "confusion," or insist that as "Matter" and "Mind" are "methodological concepts," and that therefore he must be absolutely right, I do not know or care. He has the right to think as he likes—and so have I.

I can only repeat that modern Astro-physics and Evolution have shattered Berkeley out of existence—as well as "Matter" and "Mind" as "methodological concepts." And I think it a sheer waste of time to discuss them otherwise.

## IN GHANA TODAY

Two pagan priests, in off-the-right-shoulder gowns, poured bottles of schnapps around the microphone and invoked the protection of the spirits. Then, with the singing of "Lead Kindly Light," Prime Minister Nkrumah, a Christian, was introduced.

—Daily Express (4/10/57)

## NEXT WEEK

### THE HINDU MARRIAGE SYSTEM

By PROF. JITENDRA MOHAN

## Opus Dei

By D. SHIPPER

WE RECENTLY COMMENTED on the emergence of a new Catholic organisation—the Opus Dei (Work of God)—in Spain. That its sinister influence is already being felt—and feared—is obvious. *Solidaridad Obrera*, the clandestine magazine of the C.N.T. (Spanish National Confederation of Labour) carried an illuminating editorial in its first April (1957) issue. Translated into English, the editorial appeared in *Views and Comments*, the monthly magazine of the Libertarian League (New York).

“We respect all ideas and beliefs within the limits of each individual’s conscience,” say the Spanish libertarians, “just as we detest institutions which tend to smother freedom of thought, which are impelled by a spirit of absolutism, aimed at making man submit to their dogmatic canons.

“A mysterious, or rather, deceptive institution has appeared recently in Spain. It is a thoroughly totalitarian organisation and is called the Opus Dei. This is one of the most dangerous and terrifying laboratories of the Black International. And it desires to throw its tentacles over Spain with a much more ambitious end in mind. All areas and spheres of life which interest its leaders are being inundated with its specialised robots. Everywhere it is carrying on a stubborn, ferocious fight for absolute control.

“There are people who have never given up the idea of erecting a scaffold or a stake on every corner for providing public *autos da fe*. But since this would scandalise too many people in our century and an indignant public opinion would rebel against them, these people, who lack sufficient temporal power to carry out their plans but do have enough personnel, are uniting and forming their Ku Klux Klans. They are preparing their poisonous weapons and labouring in their mission; that of halting any real progress and seeing to it that true freedom never reigns in the world.

“Ignacio de Loyola and the Company of Jesus also came out of Spain. The Jesuits were feared by even the most powerful, including their own Popes, even though the Order had been accepted and blessed by the Church. Now the Opus Dei is coming out of Spain, supremely ambitious, desiring an absolute spiritual empire *ab majorem Dei Gloriam*.

“The blessing of the Vatican is not lacking. And its direct promotion to the Government has already begun: Ullastres, one of its representatives, has been given a ministry. [In the recent Cabinet reshuffle Alberto Ullastres became Franco’s Minister of Commerce.—D.S.] It is evident, therefore, that its pressure is beginning to make itself felt.

“Attention, Spaniards, to the Opus Dei, another of the many dark institutions which are secretly working to continue Spain’s misfortunes.”

The opinion of observers *inside* Spain is, perhaps, worth more even than that of the historical student *outside*. But let us see what the Opus Dei say about themselves. Jose Maria Escriva, Jesuit Father, founded the Opus Dei and wrote their “bible”—“Camino” (“Road”). On page 34 we read: “The priest, whoever he may be is always another Christ,” and on page 36, “To love God and not venerate the Priest is not possible. Like good sons of Noah, cover with the cape of charity the defects which you see in your Father, the Priest.”

On page 292, “To obey is the sure road. To obey the superior *blindly* is the saintly road. To obey in your apostolate is the *only* road; because, in a work of God, the spirit must either be obedient or leave.”

What, then, are the members of Opus Dei? Sincere, religious workers? Or disciplined automatons, well-drilled soldiers in an army of intellectual zombies, ready to execute orders (or, maybe, just *execute*?) and think afterwards—if at all—and all for the Glory of God?

Opus Dei is a *new* organisation; new, but yet so old. As old as the Vatican itself.

## The Bell-Hop

By G. H. TAYLOR

IT HAS NOW BECOME quite “the thing” in U.S.A. to belong to, and attend, a place of worship.

Whether this constitutes a revival or religion depends on whether you count heads or noses. If heads, no one has any clearer grasp of doctrine than before: there is no new embracing of religion intellectually, no revival at all. If noses, then the figures are up all round—from the Ba’hai cult in Willmette to the Rosicrucians of Los Angeles.

It is the pet theory of some political minds that if people’s material wants are satisfied they will have no use for religion, and that therefore the N.S.S. is merely wasting its time on a cultural issue which would disappear overnight if only this-world poverty were abolished. Economic prosperity is thus supposed to wipe out Christian and other religions.

This theory is upset by what has happened in U.S.A., for it is not only the poor but the well-to-do who are taking up church membership. Can it be that the Church is the next port of call after the psychiatrist?

An excellent informative article by Cecil Northcott in the *Manchester Guardian* (September 14th) suggests reasons for this revival, however superficial it may be.

The *Guardian* article refers to America’s little army of psychiatrists whom her citizens expensively consult, as well as a host of medical men who dole out tranquilliser pills. These report a tide of anxiety which is turning their clients to religion. It would need a very detailed inquiry to discover the actual causes of this social malaise. One aspect of it might perhaps be represented in the feeling, “If there’s a God and the bomb drops, I’d better get right with Him.” It is a fact of psychology that if a lot of frightened people huddle together some of the fear goes. The Churches, I think, offer just this poor sort of fellowship, and it underlines the greater and greater need for freethought.

The dollars, of course, are flowing in, and last year, according to the *Guardian* report, 21 major Protestant Churches spent over 300 million dollars on plants and buildings. For these dollars the American citizen wants (to quote Mr. Northcott) “security, quick and easy instruction exact information without too much reflection being needed, and the golden inward glow of “belonging.”” Rabbi Eisendrath, President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, is quoted as follows:

Man is the beginning and end of present day American religiosity—God is made to serve, or rather to subservise, man, to subservise his every purpose and enterprise, whether it be economic prosperity, free enterprise, security, or peace of mind. God thus becomes an omnipotent servant, a universal bell-hop, to cater for man’s every caprice; faith becomes a sure-fire device to get what we petulantly and peevishly crave.

Thus the terrible Jehovah of the Old Testament evolves into the pal upstairs.

What “revival” is this? Who’s fooling whom?

American poetess Phyllis McGinley (after touring British cathedrals) wrote in the *New Yorker* magazine: “I think in all of England’s See, no verger dwells untipped by me.”

## Joseph Lewis v. Billy Graham

I CHARGE Billy Graham with being guilty of the short and ugly word.

He stated that George Washington prayed at Valley Forge for victory. This is a downright falsehood. The picture showing Washington praying at Valley Forge is a pure fabrication.

Billy Graham also said that Benjamin Franklin led the members of the Constitutional Convention in prayer. This is a falsehood. When Franklin suggested such a prayer, he himself is the authority that only two or three of the members wanted it. Our great constitution was conceived and born without the benefit of divine help.

Billy Graham said that Lincoln uttered these words: "I am not concerned whether God is on our side. I want to know whether we are on God's side." Lincoln never uttered these words. They are a libel upon our great and martyred President.

Lincoln did say:

"I am approached with the most opposite opinions and advice, and by religious men who are certain they represent the Divine Will. I hope it will not be irreverent in me to say, that if it is probable that God would reveal His will to others, on a point so connected with my duty, it might be supposed He would reveal it directly to me."

Billy Graham makes a similar false statement concerning Robert E. Lee. This barefaced disregard for the truth should make Billy Graham hang his head in shame.

I am constrained to quote the words of Thomas Paine regarding this matter. He said: "It is an affront to truth to treat falsehood with complaisance."

JOSEPH LEWIS, *President, Freethinkers of America.*

[Reprinted from the *Age of Reason*, September 1957.]

## CORRESPONDENCE

### A REPLY

It would be difficult to imagine a more woolly letter than that of Mr. Mills in your issue of September 27th. If he claims to be an "unbiased free thinker" (to use his own term) then he should refuse to accept as "sound evidence" the Biblical assertions for the existence of God or for any other "powerful and intelligent Ruler of the Universe." He sounds like someone who still believes lock, stock and barrel in the Genesis legend of creation, or in a flat earth, or in a heaven and hell, and obviously he would have no time for "sound evidence" to the contrary!

Mr. Mills must, in short, be one of those naïve and credulous individuals who remain unaware that science has dealt drastically with religion and is in no doubt as to the origin of either the belief in God (or gods), or the mistaken interpretations by primitive man of natural phenomena that can nowadays be adequately explained. Has it never dawned on your correspondent that the real problem is no longer one of evidence, but one of psychology and sociology? Once he has grasped an understanding of the conditions which gave rise to religious beliefs and the sociological conditions that favoured their perpetuation, he will then be on the way to becoming a real freethinker.

E. BEVIN.

### MILITANCY

Permit me to heartily endorse Ella Twynam's plea for more vigour in our attacks. We should war strenuously against all forms of supernaturalism, and war cannot be waged with sheathed swords. Those who have no enthusiasm for entering into the fray must stand aside while we others fight and defeat the enemy.

W. E. HUXLEY.

I should like to express my agreement with Mr. Bennett in the discussion on militancy. Instead of winning converts from this to that, it would be better if people were liberated from the cages of some "one true system" or other, and the impractical ethical codes which they have created, so that they can be themselves. I am not very well acquainted with the Freethought movement, but it seems to me to be fearless and unhampered, and in a position to help with this liberation, as it is doing, and anyone who does that has no need to proselytise.

RUTH POULTER.

[The above two letters, both abridged, close the controversy on militancy.—ED.]

### RELIGION IN RUSSIA

For many years we have very justly complained about the compulsory religious training of schoolchildren, knowing as we do the frightful impact upon the brains of the young, causing them to accept absurdities and stupidities as truths.

Yet what do we find in THE FREETHINKER of September 20th, under "This Believing World"? Your writer states that despite a rise in the population to 8,000,000 in Moscow the churches have decreased from 460 in 1917 to about 50 at the present time. This fact seems to annoy your writer, especially as there is only one synagogue left. He is so angry at the decline of religion, especially the Jewish religion, that he calls it suppression. Why were any churches left if it is a case of suppression?

He is also very angry that religion has been taken out of the schools; so are the Catholics, the Jews and the Protestants also angry! However, he finds some consolation in this dismal array of anti-religion, for at the end of the second paragraph he says, with apparent relish, "But we would not be surprised to learn that even among the young people, religious rituals are still faithfully carried out." Consider, after all, that the Catholics, the Jews, and all other religious sects are advancing by leaps and bounds in the land of the "free," "U.S.A." Two of my friends passing through on their way to Australia, one day in San Francisco were finger-printed, and had to produce various documents.

As to the so-called suppression, certainly bishops, prelates, archbishops, rabbis, and all other religious leaders are not allowed to possess great wealth and power with which to dominate people's minds, neither are religious teachers allowed in the schools to corrupt the minds of the young.

P. TURNER.

### NUCLEAR TESTS

Readers may be interested to know how certain religious leaders react (in this town) to the vital question of nuclear tests. Dorking Society of Friends recently held a public meeting to protest against H-bomb tests and to sound public opinion. As a result of the support received, a second meeting was called on September 16th to form a committee to work with the National Council for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapon Tests. Letters were sent to all the main local organisations and churches inviting them to send representatives to the meeting. There was no response whatever from the R.C., Anglican or Jewish leaders. This apathy unfortunately extended to certain lay organisations also, but one would have thought the fate of mankind would have been the concern of the "spiritual leaders."

G. DOBINSON.

### WAS THERE SOMETHING?

Mr. Hewson assumes that because atheism forms a part of my Freethought it constitutes the "sum total" of it. But, hair-splitting or no, I was dealing with rational statements and not with any belief as such. As I remarked, Mr. Hewson is quite entitled to make the statement, "I believe there is a 'Something' behind the Universe." He is not entitled to say it is "indisputable"; that "Without a doubt this mighty Cosmos has a Something behind it." Nor is he entitled to classify this statement with verifiable statements about the mechanics of flight. Not if he is to be logical, that is.

ROBERT DENT.

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