

# The Freethinker

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WE HAVE HAD OCCASION to pass so many adverse comments on the BBC that it is a pleasure to be able to applaud them for once in a way. The recent Television series of six programmes, "Five Hundred Million Years," did what it set out to do; it showed how Darwin's basic speculations have stood the test of a hundred years of experiments and discoveries in the field of biological evolution, including man.

The first five of these programmes were purely illustrative and explanatory: there was no attempt to bring religious interpretations to bear, except for one unfortunate reference (by Sir S. Zuckermann rather surprisingly, as he has written for the Rationalists) to Darwin's oft-quoted passage in which he used the term "Creator." This can be offset by other passages, of course, but there is no certainty that Darwin had a *personal* creator in mind, after the manner of the Christian God. Darwin's great contribution was to Science, not to Philosophy. Yet, if Christians press the point, the stern truth which faces them is that he wavered between Agnosticism and Atheism.

## No Need for "Soul"

The last programme of the six took the form of a discussion on the implications of evolution. Representing the Natural and Supernatural respectively were Sir Julian Huxley and Prof. J. Z. Young on the former side, and Drs. Towers (R.C.) and Habgood (Protestant) on the latter.

Huxley described man's advance on his animal ancestry as being in no way supernatural. There was no need to invoke a "soul" at any point in his evolution. There had been no divine intervention, but only the appearance of novel types of thinking due to advances in brain complexity. The result was that man could inherit a world denied to the apes; a world of art, science, education, music and so on. Man could form concepts and develop a language. A great accumulation of culture had thus been effected, and this had been done without the aid of the supernatural.

## Man and Ape

In seeming to deny concept-forming to any animals below man, Huxley was in fact giving too much away to his opponents—not that they could have turned the gift to any account. Even if it were true that only man can frame concepts, the power of concept-forming is still *evolved* and not superadded from any "divine" source.

However, the study of the behaviour of apes has shown that many of them, and particularly chimpanzees, can form concepts and use these concepts in practical activities. The work of Kohler, Koffka, Sander and others on chimps, and of Thorndike on the orang, has dispelled any idea that man is unique in his capacity for theoretical thinking.

A simple example must suffice for our present purpose. It is common knowledge that apes will use a stick to bring food to port if it is placed out of reach. In Kohler's Tenerife experiments he found, time and time again, that

the chimp is able to make a distinction in his mind between *actual* stick and *possible* stick. That is, when no stick is present he will improvise. He will tear off a plank of wood from a box lid to use as a stick. He will use the keeper's arm as a stick. He will convert all kinds of material into the form of a stick, not always successfully but nevertheless purposefully. In other words, by using actual material sticks he has come to form the *concept*, "theoretical stick." And what he can do on his humble scale, man does on his vastly greater scale. Man can even get a scientific view of his own evolution, as Huxley pointed out.

This latter point was quickly interpreted by Habgood as meaning that man can actually "stand outside evolution," and is therefore in some way not tied to it,

but to a superior destiny. This was soon disposed of by Prof. Young, an anatomist, who reduced the feeling of "standing outside" the evolutionary process as due to the development of the human brain, particularly the fore-brain, giving the power of language.

## The Catholic Standpoint

Dr. Towers, as a Catholic, naturally renounced the idea that man could stand outside the process; it was precisely the fact that man was, bodily, part and parcel of it, which raised doubts as to his capacity for distinguishing the True from the False. (The Catholic inference is, of course, that only the One True Church can do it. Man by himself is incapable; therefore he needs the Church.) Towers quoted Darwin in support: "But then . . . the horrid doubt always arises whether the convictions of man's mind, which has been developed from the mind of the lower animals, are of any value or at all trustworthy."

Catholics are very fond of this quotation. It was levelled against me some years ago during an epistolary debate with Mr. (as he then was) Arnold Lunn, and the answer I gave him was, in substance, as follows: If man's reasoning powers are no guide to him because he is descended from animals who do not reason, then the mathematics of a university professor are false if his grandfather was a dustman who knew nothing about maths.

Darwin was a great scientist, who, like many other great scientists—Newton and Faraday included—simply floundered at the portals of Philosophy. Atheist or Agnostic though he was, I fancy Darwin would have met his match in debate with such talented Theists as Gillespie or Lawson or even Armstrong. The Bradlaughs, Footes and Cohens come not in hundreds.

## Values

Both Huxley and Young took up the argument about the True and the False (Towers) and the Right and the Wrong (Habgood). It is quite unscientific to make these into absolute values and capitalise them. It is our power of reasoning (which evolved simply because it had survival value) that discriminates between true and false.

As a matter of fact, 20th century Philosophy has made

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

## Evolution on BBC Television

— By G. H. TAYLOR —

great strides in what is called epistemology (the scientific testing of knowledge-claims) and no amount of Jesuitry could now get through the well-established Correspondence Theory.

Habgood insisted on having a criterion for what is "Right," and Young, the down-to-earth scientist, told him it was what was effective in maintaining life. As such, it is relative to circumstance. *Every* animal, said Young, in order to survive, has to do (mostly unconsciously) what is "right." (Colonies, or groups, which made a practice of mutual slaughter would obviously tend to disappear). Huxley accused his opponents of "inventing Absolutes."

As soon as the "immaterial spirit" was introduced, Young nailed the gratuitous assumption by exposing the known origin of the conception of spirit as *breath*.

#### Huxley on Christianity

In the last few seconds of the discussion Huxley got in a good blow at Christianity. Habgood had said (as Christians are very prone to say) that "Huxley has lived in a Christian country" and has therefore picked up decent standards of behaviour. "It's nothing to do with Christian standards," replied Huxley, "but with the increase of knowledge, and that is something organised Christianity has *not* stood for!"

#### Final Impressions

And so the sixth programme, about which one had justifiable apprehensions, went extremely well for freethought. No doubt there are some who could have wished that Huxley and Young had declared for Atheism in an outright

manner, but such things are a rarity on the BBC. The Christian representatives were not hammered as they could have been if confronted with militant Atheist propagandists, but they were cut to pieces effortlessly and deliciously to all eyes not covered with Christian rose-tinted spectacles. And the preceding five programmes provided the perfect background to their execution! Huxley was very effective and Young brilliantly so. We must hope to see more of Young. Habgood was hesitant and cut a poor figure in such company, but I, for one, felt a touch of sorrow for Dr. Towers. His arguments were perfect *within the Catholic framework*, but not one of the other three showed the slightest interest in Jesuitical argumentation. The average listener is totally unable to follow it, and this includes Catholic listeners themselves! Nor are they losing anything, for this type of argument is outdated. The Catholic Church may be politically adept at getting votes but can never bring its theology up to date.

The discussion gained nothing from the prattling interventions of the chairman, Sir J. Wolfenden. His contributions tended, not to help, but to disrupt, the continuity.

Huxley made one remark which needs separate treatment. He said: "I'm not a materialist but an evolutionist." Well, all four of them accepted evolution, so Huxley need not need another term to distinguish his position from that of the Christians. But of that, more later. For the present, one must express a high degree of satisfaction at these excellent programmes to commemorate the centenary of Darwinism.

## Promethean Man

By DR. EDWARD ROUX

Dead the great chryselephantine God, as dew last evening shed;  
Dust of earth or foam of ocean is the symbol of his head;  
Earth and ocean shall be shadows when Prometheus shall be dead.  
—SWINBURNE.

CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY attributed to the mortal Prometheus, the stealing of fire from the gods and its bestowal upon man. When Professor Raymond Dart found the remains of a ground-ape in the cave at Makapansgat (Northern Transvaal) in association with carbon, he named the fossil *Australopithecus prometheus*.

At what stage in man's evolutionary history did he discover the use of fire? At what stage did he first use tools? When did he first invent a spoken language? These are intriguing questions. It is unlikely that they will ever be answered to the complete satisfaction of critical minds. The archaeological and palæontological records are too scrappy at present to justify more than vague hunches and clever guesses. New finds may, and probably will, throw more light on the subject, but it is unlikely that they will provide the sort of evidence that will lead to certainty or near certainty. As far as the origin of language is concerned, this must remain a matter of pure speculation. Tools and fire are rather different: here at least some sort of evidence is available, and more may show up.

The races of modern man, collectively known as *Homo sapiens*, are all capable of making and controlling fire, and presumably have possessed this art for as far back as their remains are found; which takes us back at least to the last ice age, about 25,000 years ago. *Homo sapiens* was preceded by other types of man known to have used both tools and fire. The earliest of these, for which undoubted evidence has been found, was *Sinanthropus pekinensis*. The cave at Choukoutien, near Peking, where skulls and skull fragments of at least fifteen individuals were discovered, also contained quantities of solidified wood and charcoal, together with crude stone tools. Archaeologists have no doubt that Peking Man tended the fire in his home cave. He must have known how to transport fire, even if he

could not manufacture it.

The deposits at Choukoutien have been variously estimated at a quarter to half a million years old. The Makapansgat remains are probably more recent than this. *Australopithecus* was a ground-ape and, as such, of more primitive type than *Sinanthropus*. He and his kind appear to have lived on in the Transvaal well into the age of modern man. His use of fire is uncertain. Many do not accept Dart's conclusions. The evidence is not nearly as clear as at Choukoutien.

However, the possibility remains that man at the ground-ape stage, when he had attained an upright posture (though his brain was still of sub-human dimensions), had already achieved the art of controlling fire. In this connection it is interesting to note that chimpanzees in captivity often learn to smoke and may display great skill in the handling of cigarettes. Dr. A. S. Brink recently described the chain-smoking habits of Bango, a 27-year-old chimpanzee at the Johannesburg Zoo. Bango lights one cigarette from another, never tries to light the cork end, only puts a cigarette out when he has run out of smokes or is tired of smoking, and never burns himself.

If the craving for the sedative effects of tobacco will stimulate a chimpanzee to remarkable feats in the control of fire, possibly some other craving might have stimulated an ape-like progenitor of man to similar efforts. Brink suggests (following Charles Lamb) that the savoury odour of accidentally roasted flesh might have been the stimulus.

It is interesting to speculate that the use of fire may be perhaps the most primitive of human achievements, the invention that set everything else going. As Omer C. Stewart says, "The geologic dating of *Australopithecus* is as disputed as the question of his tool-using and fire-making. Nevertheless, *Australopithecus* may yet prove to be the progenitor of mankind and force us to admit that half a brain was enough to get fires started and to push us forever on to the hominid side-track."

## Lourdes and the Vatican

By F. A. RIDLEY

IN A RECENT ISSUE of this journal, there appeared an instructive article by Dr. J. V. Duhig on the "miracles" of Lourdes. His acquaintance, years ago, with the Sanctuary where the Mother of God is alleged to have appeared to Bernadette Soubirous, has enabled him to throw much light on Lourdes, with its commercialised traffic, fraudulent cures and bogus "Holy Water"; in which connection his article constitutes a valuable and timely contribution to any future rational critique of what is still, perhaps, the most famous miracle of modern times. Dr. Duhig was evidently not impressed by his first-hand contacts with the "Holy" place. For that matter, "Holy Cities" whether Mecca or Rome, are rarely impressive to those who approach them with a critical judgment not blunted by religious awe. The Rome of the Borgias appalled the young Luther, while Europeans who have succeeded in penetrating to Mecca have come away with most cynical impressions.

It is only when Dr. Duhig recounts a local story about the origins of the miracle in 1858 that I am inclined to become critical—not, of course, that there is anything inherently improbable in the tale related by the local wags that the actual impersonator of the Virgin Mary was a quick-witted young woman caught in *flagrant delicto*. As Dr. Duhig reminds us, a deliberate impersonation, if in less compromising circumstances, formed the starting point of one of the most brilliant modern satires, F. Tennyson Jesse's remarkable novel *Act of God*. However, in the light of the intriguing game of ecclesiastical politics just then being played in the Vatican, this local story appears to me to be oversimplified. Bernadette undoubtedly saw and heard *someone* in the famous Grotto. I don't think there is any doubt about that. But the actual words that she heard, "I am the Immaculate Conception" were too much in line with the then current pattern of ecclesiastical politics to have been purely the effect of chance. I, unlike Dr. Duhig, have never been to Lourdes and, while I can read French fairly well, I can hardly speak it at all. But it so happens that I have made a close study of that extremely interesting period in the evolution of modern Catholicism which began with the return of Pope Pius IX to Rome after the short-lived Roman Revolution in 1849 and the proclamation of Papal Infallibility, 1870, the most important event in the evolution of the Catholic Church since the Reformation. It was during this period that the Virgin appeared—or, at least, *someone* appeared—to Bernadette Soubirous at Lourdes. I think it was most improbable that there was any accident about the appearance as suggested in the amusing local tale of the lovers in the Grotto caught in the act by Bernadette. The Church of Rome has accepted at least one axiom of the Gospels; it does not let its left hand know what its right hand is doing! But while we shall probably never know what exactly transpired at Lourdes in 1858, there is, I suggest, sufficient circumstantial evidence to hazard a pretty accurate guess.

Let us here recall what was the contemporary state of ecclesiastical politics in Rome in 1858. It may be recalled that Pope Pius, who returned from exile in 1850 after the lurid episode of the "Red" Roman Republic of Mazzini and Garibaldi, resolved at all costs to root out "the accursed sin of Liberalism" in both the Catholic Church and in the secular States of the Church. Pius himself had started his reign as something of a Liberal, but that phase did not survive the Roman Revolution in 1848. (The Republic had been overthrown and Pius restored by a French army

which remained in Rome until 1870.) To achieve the eradication of Liberalism, Pius, acting here as the mouthpiece of the Jesuits, who have always been the champions of the Papacy, revived the idea of proclaiming the Infallibility of the Pope, an old ambition of the Jesuits which they had been trying unsuccessfully to bring about ever since the Council of Trent in the 16th century. Once recognised as an "infallible" dictator, Pius would be in a position to crush all opposition within the Church. The Catholic Church is, however, a conservative organisation and the opposition among the Bishops was strong; why should the great collectivist Church admit what the Pope's critics quite logically called "the Protestant dogma" of the superiority of the individual Pope over the collective authority of the Church? Only a General Council could validly establish a new dogma; and why should a General Council proceed to make itself unnecessary in future by transferring its collective infallibility to the individual Pope?

Faced with this theological impasse, Pius and his advisers hit on an ingenious plan: they resolved to proclaim a dogma on the sole authority of the Pope as a kind of test case. This would put the opponents of Infallibility in a very awkward situation, since, if they had once accepted the dogma, they had implicitly recognised the Pope's infallible power to proclaim dogmas on his own authority. The dogma chosen as a test case was very cleverly selected. It was the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin—*i.e.* that she was conceived alone among mortals without any taint of "original sin." This represented a logical enough postulate of Catholic theology but, though a pious opinion of great antiquity, had been criticised by Thomas Aquinas and perhaps for that reason had never been officially recognised as a dogma. Now this was definitely done on December 8th, 1854, since when the Immaculate Conception has been a *bona fide* dogma of the Catholic Church. The peculiar significance of this event was not lost on the Pope's supporters. The learned Lutheran historian of the Papacy, F. C. Nielsen, records contemporary opinion on this point and himself gently adds, "The proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary was a pilot balloon for the definition of the Pope's Infallibility."

That came later at the Vatican Council of 1870 which proclaimed officially the Infallibility of the individual Pope *apart* from the Church. But first it was necessary to get the new dogma accepted, and who knew more about the Immaculate Conception than Mary herself? The Vatican, or someone *au fait* with its still secret ambition, decided to, so to speak, put the Virgin herself in the witness box. The Virgin duly obliged on February 11, 1858, three years after the Dogma and obligingly declared to Bernadette, "I am the Immaculate Conception"; just what the Vatican wanted her to say at that precise moment, since by saying it, she killed two birds with one stone. She gave celestial approval, not only to the Immaculate Conception, but even more important from the Vatican's own point of view, to the Infallibility of the Pope who had already proclaimed it in the apt words of Nielsen, "as a trial balloon." This revelation was far too opportune to have been, as suggested by Dr. Duhig's local informants, the effect of any chance meeting. *Who*, precisely, Bernadette's informant was, we have no means now of knowing, but it was evidently someone carefully primed in advance as to exactly *what* the Vatican and the Jesuits wanted at that

(Concluded on next page)

## This Believing World

Without taking sides in the Cyprus problem it is most interesting to note that the Archbishop of Canterbury asked Archbishop Makarios, not for political but for *theological* reasons to come to England to a conference of some kind. Makarios has been denounced as being behind the murders and terrorism which is convulsing Cyprus—but obviously, when it comes to theology, what do these things matter? Dr. Fisher no doubt would have shaken hands with Pope Alexander VI, fresh from poisoning his enemies, in the name of their respective religions. It is fantastic!

★

That very religious artist, Mr. Stanley Spencer, R.A., has painted the Crucifixion many times before (we think), but his latest representation of this mythical event "has a look of bestiality about it," says a *News Chronicle* critic. Mr. Spencer painted "brewer's draymen" instead of Roman soldiers, and he put nails in their mouths because he used to see cobblers with nails in their mouths. And the result? "A look of bestiality"! We wonder exactly where were the bestial parts?

★

Bible myths die hard and it is almost impossible to find anybody but Freethinkers to give them up. Recently the *News Chronicle* "scientific" expert, Mr. Ritchie Calder, wrote about the Israeli Major General Yadin, who has given up the army for archæology, and as a result has been digging up the district "where Joshua fought." There is not a scrap of evidence that there ever was a Joshua, or that he fought the battles described in the book which goes under his name. Because a town called Hazor is mentioned by Joshua does not prove that Joshua "smote the king thereof with the sword." As a matter of fact, it has now been shown that Hazor may have existed for 7,000 years, but so far nothing whatever of Joshua himself has been discovered. Like Noah, he was "invented."

★

About sixty years ago, Emile Zola challenged the conscience of the world with his terrible indictment *I Accuse*, in which he showed a number of very religious French generals to be liars and cowards, and the Roman Church just as bad, in the Dreyfus Case. Some weeks ago, the *Daily Herald* used the words "I Accuse" as a heading for an article in which Canon Brian Green took part. The *Herald* writer, Douglas Warth, accused "the Church of lethargy, lack of leadership and cowardice, for not campaigning against our archaic Sunday laws." And all the worthy Canon could say at first was that "the Church has been lethargic." After that, he did his best to whitewash it, putting in a few mild protests that it could have done a little better.

★

But for one thing he must be congratulated. He did not bring in "our Lord" as the greatest observer of Sunday laws, or not—as the case might have been—the world has ever seen. Jesus was very discreetly left out of the argument. But the real problem still remains—are we going to let a number of stupid and ignorant cranks dominate Parliament over the question? The Jewish Sabbath, taken over by Christians and called the Lord's Day, should be abolished and everybody allowed freedom to enjoy their day of rest in their own way.

★

"TV Times," with a big flare of trumpets, announced "The Mystery of Lourdes" as the subject for their Sunday's *About Religion* programme, and Fr. Hollings, who is ITV's religious adviser, prepared viewers with the same

old mythology we are now so familiar with. It all really happened exactly as poor little Bernadette said it happened. Was it "miracles or mass hysteria"? Fr. Hollings went with a party of pilgrims and he told us all about his experiences with films, interviewing pilgrims and sick people—as well as poor little children.

★

The credulity, superstition and grovelling all came out in this unhappy film. Nothing was more pathetic than the thousands of stretcher cases—whose chances of a cure, as a Roman Catholic doctor fully admitted, were "most remote." No "miracle" was vouchsafed the ITV viewers—in spite of the fact that Fr. Hollings believed every word of Bernadette's encounter with "our Lady." But there were quite a number of happy pilgrims, all in perfect health, and delighted with the show. They acted just as similar people act at Brighton or Blackpool. As a true representation of the biggest of modern swindles, the ITV organisers must be congratulated.

## Northampton Trip

WE are sorry that the proposed excursion to Northampton on Saturday, June 21st, has had to be cancelled. The statue of Charles Bradlaugh had recently been renovated by the Corporation, and we intended to make the visit the occasion for a Bradlaugh meeting. However, the Corporation regards the renovation as "routine" and does not consider a meeting to be justified. Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner (who first suggested the excursion and who approached the Corporation) received a letter suggesting instead that a small group of people from London should be the guests of Alderman Adams for tea on June 21st. Under the circumstances, and bearing in mind the bus-strike difficulties in London, we acceded. The first four people who booked for the original excursion have been invited to accompany Mr. Bonner and one or two officers of the National Secular Society in acceptance of Mr. Adams's invitation.

## LOURDES AND THE VATICAN

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precise and critical moment in ecclesiastical history. Lourdes was, I suggest, a put up job if ever there was one. This was no chance meeting. The place of the miracle was also chosen with an eye to future events. The French Church was the one most opposed to Papal Infallibility, which its leaders opposed at the Vatican Council.

We can now, perhaps, put the relevant events in due chronological sequence. In 1854, Pope Pius sent up his "trial balloon." He proclaimed a new Dogma—that of the Immaculate Conception on his own personal authority. In 1858 the Virgin descended to Lourdes to signify in person that the "trial balloon" had actually reached Heaven! In 1870 the Pope, made confident by success, went on to call the Vatican Council which duly went on record with the proclamation of his infallibility. The first totalitarian dictatorship in the modern world was born in the Grotto of Lourdes on February 11th, 1858.

—NEXT WEEK—

DISARMAMENT—DISUNITY

By RICHARD NORTH

# THE FREETHINKER

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## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, June 15th, 11 a.m.: A. ROBERTSON, M.A., "The Kingdom of Darkness."

### 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).—Every Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. F. HAMILTON, E. MILLS and J. W. BARKER.

London (Tower Hill).—Thursday, 12-2 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER and L. EBURY.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: G. WOODCOCK. Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, MILLS and WOOD.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Every Wednesday, 1 p.m.; every Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: Various speakers.

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).—Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY. Sunday, 11.30 a.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

Wales and Western Branch N.S.S. (The Downs, Bristol).—Every Sunday, 6.30 p.m. D. SHIPPER.

West London Branch N.S.S.—Every Sunday at the Marble Arch from 5 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.

## Notes and News

At the recent General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, that body's ownership of the Gateway Theatre, Edinburgh, came in for some criticism. The Rev. S. T. M. Robertson, of Ardlach, was particularly concerned about the plays produced at the Gateway. "Drunkenness, sordidness and immorality were at times portrayed," he said. Worse, some of the playwrights had "absolutely no Christian outlook." Some of them were "absolute atheists." Some were "absolutely irreligious in their lives." Mr. Robertson likes his absolutes, and he would have only Christian plays by Christian writers. He quite realised that a theatre run on such lines would be a failure. Well then, "in God's name let it be a failure." The rest of the Assembly preferred not to take the risk.

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ON the eve of the Assembly, the retiring Moderator, the Right Rev. Dr. G. F. MacLeod, made a noteworthy attack on Sabbatarianism, which he described as a relic of Puritan culture that "scorned music, destroyed the bagpipes, frowned on the dance and the theatre and was afraid of colour." But—as the *Manchester Guardian* reminded us (20/5/58)—Dr. MacLeod spoke for himself and not the Assembly.

THE following day, May 21st, the same paper carried a picture of members of the Protestant "Pentecostal" sect in Calabria, Southern Italy, who, it explained, "reach the height of their religious fervour at Whitsun, when they believe themselves to be once again invested with the Holy Spirit in a way resembling the description of tongues of fire." The zealous women shown in the picture singing hymns feel it their task to convert sinners, and they paint many religious slogans on fences during their particularly active period.

★

MR. C. T. POWELL of Leicester offers to demonstrate how spiritualist fakes can be made—fake materialisations, ghosts, etc.—free to any N.S.S. branch within his reach, charging only expenses. In November he is to do his "turn" at the Secular Hall, Leicester, where he recently (May 3rd issue) had a full page write-up, with pictures of his "ghosts," in the *Illustrated Chronicle*.

## The Passing Show

ITALY.—For having sold the famous book by Roger Peyrefitte, *The Keys of St. Peter*, ten Roman booksellers received summonses from the Criminal Police, charged with: (a) Sale of a book making ridiculous the person of the Holy Father; (b) Making fun of the official State Religion of Italy; and (c) Distribution of obscene literature.

In his remarkable book *Mort d'une liberté* (Death of Liberty), Jacques Kayser quotes *L'Osservatore Romano* as saying that because "we have divine advice we have got to restrict the freedom of the press to print what is not in line with Catholic 'truth.'"

There was a time when such "directing" of public opinion was termed Fascism.

SPAIN.—Archbishop Gregorio Modrego, of Barcelona, in *Ecclesia*, the official mouthpiece of *Acción Cattolica*, requests of 4,000 hairdressers for gents and ladies to make themselves familiar with Catholic topics by attending religious classes. On their premises they ought to show pious periodicals only so that their clients are forced to read them.

The great Viennese satirist, Karl Kraus, once said, "The natter going on at the hairdresser's is proof that the head is needed for nothing but to wear a hat."

U.S.A.—A Methodist church in Los Angeles has a juke box of another kind: for 15 cents you can hear a complete sermon; if you want it spiced with appropriate organ music, you have to put another small coin in the slot.

LUXEMBURG.—The criminal police in Luxemburg had to sentence a perverted Catholic priest to three years' imprisonment under a charge of grave sex offences against schoolchildren; however, being a "holy man," they granted him a stay and he was set free. Public outcry forced the authorities to have a revision of the sentence, yet the public was excluded. The extremely light sentence of three years was upheld with the only alteration that the priest was wanted to go to jail immediately. His superiors, however, had used the respite to send him abroad on a "religious mission."

W. GERMANY.—During last year's campaign for the Diet elections (*Bundestag*) the Wurzburg paper *Deutsche Tagespost* wrote: "If our Christians were too dull or too lazy to go voting for Dr. Adenauer, St. Michael would withdraw his protection from such godless people and allow them to go through an ordeal of hardship they themselves have asked for."

P. G. ROY.

## On Christian Science

By H. CUTNER

AS MOST PEOPLE KNOW, one of the favourite aphorisms of Christian Scientists is—though slightly altered from Shakespeare—"Sweet are the uses of advertisement," and they welcome any article in any newspaper if only they are permitted to reply to it (when necessary) in defence of Mary Baker Eddy, a lady who was nearly as much married as not a few of our more glamorous film stars. Only, if her published portraits are anything to go by, she was not altogether as glamorous.

In a lecture delivered before the Bradford Branch of the N.S.S. last year, the speaker could, of course, only deal with some of the "leading points" of Christian Science—which, incidentally, is neither Christian nor Science—and it would be manifestly unfair to criticise it fully even if that could be done in an article or two; but, glancing through a typescript of the lecture, I am staggered at the way in which the writer slides over the *essentials* of Christian Science, and presupposes that some of us on THE FREETHINKER at least don't know a little of its origins. According to this lecture, "it was the discovery of facts about God" which led the egregious Mrs. Eddy to begin her "spiritual" healing of materialistic diseases. Personally, I do not doubt that a few healings do occur, just as they occur with Spiritualists, priests, patent medicines, and old wives' cures. But I must confess that a lady I knew as a most determined Christian Scientist when she was well, would have died of blood poisoning if a poor benighted orthodox doctor had not been called in to save her life, which he did. Reading hard for a week from *Science and Health*—quite a funny title when you come to think of it, for if ever there was a pretentious work, most of it completely unintelligible and utterly humourless, it is this—the professional Christian Science readers only made her worse, and indeed she was only rescued when on the point of death.

One of Mrs. Eddy's husbands died "from the effects of arsenical poisoning mentally administered." These are her own words and no doubt the operative word is "mentally." How you can get arsenic "mentally" administered is one of those mysteries which justify her contention that there is no such thing as "evil." Everything is "spiritual." Mrs. Eddy herself in her younger days professed to cure people from any disease "spiritually"—but she failed to cure any of her husbands and she herself—alas!—had to have drugs to stop her from dying of sheer pain when she was getting old. No doubt she had got so used to the tosh of her own spiritual writings that they had no more effect on her.

Just as Mme. Blavatsky could not keep off the word "ego"—like Mr. Dick's King Charles's head, it kept popping up everywhere—so Mrs. Eddy was obsessed with the word God—or at least professed to be so. Everything was of God—"God is All in All, God is Good, God is Mind, God Spirit, being all, nothing is matter. Life, God, omnipotent good deny death, evil, sin, disease." There you have it all in a nutshell and it would read the same upside down, sideways, or even if the words were mixed together afresh. *Science and Health* is literally packed with similar gems, and like the one that "man has neither birth nor death." When it comes to sheer drivel, it is doubtful whether anybody has ever come up to Mrs. Eddy.

The lecturer at Bradford was a little more circumspect but not much. If his address is examined in detail, we get such jewels as Mrs. Eddy accepted "the statements in the

Bible that God is good, that he is Spirit, that he is infinite. . . ." The word "good" is, of course, a purely relative term and has no meaning whatever apart from human activity—though people sometimes say, "He is a good dog." They never say "It is a good bug." If there is a God, the word "good" simply cannot refer to him—it is a word for humans only. But take the word "infinite," which we are told Mrs. Eddy found in the Bible in "God is infinite." If Mrs. Eddy knew her Bible (and I never found any evidence whatever for that) she would have found that the word "infinite" occurs only four times in it. Jesus never used it at all, and it is never used anywhere in the Bible in the sense that "God is infinite." The statement is just a plain untruth, but Christian Scientists can get away with this and similar ones simply because very few people take the trouble to verify their statements.

In the same way, Jesus is said to cure people by purely "mental" means, like Mrs. Eddy or her "healers." The Christian Science publications, including Mrs. Eddy's, which maintain this, are simply lying. Jesus always cured by *physical* means, as when he cured a blind person with his "spittle" and clay. When many years ago I offered to take a Mr. Charles Tennant, who was then the Press Correspondent at the headquarters of Christian Science in London, to a few blind persons to be cured by Mrs. Eddy's methods (or those of Jesus), he very hastily declined. The blind man in John who was cured by spittle and clay was, pleaded Mr. Tennant, cured of "*spiritual* blindness." For brazen fraud, there is very little to be compared with Christian Science.

As there is no such thing as "evil" in the sight of Mrs. Eddy, we should not be surprised that when she married Mr. Eddy she gave her age as 40, though she was actually 56; but, of course, this little "white" lie is nothing compared with what she was charged with by Dr. F. W. Peabody in his book, *Religio Medical Masquerade*, published in 1904, six years before Mrs. Eddy died. If the "words criminal libel" have any meaning, Dr. Peabody should have been hauled before the courts by an outraged woman. In its review, the *New York Times* said, "There is no middle ground. Either Dr. Peabody is the most shameless of calumniators, or Mrs. Eddy is the basest of charlatans. And Dr. Peabody expresses an eager readiness to have this question submitted to any test. His charges run the whole gamut from attempted murder to accomplished theft, with endless lying scattered all along in between. . . ." Mrs. Eddy did *not* go to law.

And in this connection, it should prove intriguing at least to find how strong were the powers behind Christian Science when the cult became so fashionable and wealthy. For example, when Dr. W. Riley was asked to write for the *Cambridge History of American Literature* on "American Bibles" dealing with the *Book of Mormon* and *Science and Health*, the New York Christian Science Committee got to work. Some copies had been printed, but the publishers took fright when they were told that "they had sanctioned the perpetration of a sacrilege," and were "outraging" the feelings of two million followers of Mrs. Eddy. So the volume was suppressed. The same Committee tried its best to suppress the publication of the *Quimby Manuscripts*, a book which showed that Mrs. Eddy had "lifted" most of her "spiritual" ideas about God and disease from an American mesmerist and "healer" called Phineas P.

Quimby—and he was not the only one either who contributed to Mrs. Eddy's rubbish about "spiritual healing." But it was Quimby who told us in 1863 the glad news that "the religion of Christ is shown in the progress of Christian Science"; while it was not until 1875 that Mrs. Eddy insisted that "in the nineteenth century, I have fixed for all time the word Science to Christianity." The Bradford lecturer did *not* point out this remarkable coincidence to his listeners.

Then there was the famous biography of Mrs. Eddy written by Miss Georgina Milmine for *McClure's Magazine*, aided by "a staff of experts." Every effort was made to make this thoroughly authoritative, scores of witnesses were interviewed, authentic photographs were discovered, and places of interest were taken, and hundreds of Mrs. Eddy's letters were found which did not at all tally with those when she became the undisputed head of Christian Science and could play—though she didn't—with millions of dollars. Above all were discovered many, if not all, the "sources" of her "original" discoveries in "spiritual" matters. One of the photographs, by the way, was a picture of Mrs. Eddy that that gracious lady sent to an admirer; alas—it turned out not to be Mrs. Eddy at all but some-

one just a little more "glamorous."

The Milmine biography left Mrs. Eddy "without a shred of character"—as Dr. Peabody notes. When it was published, it sold very well—and then it suddenly disappeared! You cannot buy a copy these days. The publishers destroyed the plates, and it will never—not yet at least—be republished. In the art of "suppression," Mrs. Eddy could even teach the Roman Church. However, you can find out all about Mrs. Eddy in the "official" biography written by a Miss Sybil Wilbur. It is just as authentic as any of the Gospels. As Dr. Peabody points out, "it is a fiction from beginning to end." He adds, "When one contemplates the results of the Christian Science methods of spreading the 'truth,' how appalling is seen the efficacy of lies!"

It would take a long article to deal with some of the impudent lies put out by Christian Science publications on the "cures" effected by its "practitioners"—or claimed as cures. It would be worth the telling, but I have said enough—though it is a mere outline—to show what an unmitigated fraud Christian Science all is. Religion has to be thanked for scores of imbecilities but few "beliefs" can outshine in this way the imbecilities of Mrs. Eddy.

## A Talk to Methodists

[This is taken from a recent talk by James Hervey Johnson to the Methodists of San Diego, California, in their Methodist Church. It is reprinted from the *American Rationalist*.]

IT IS NOT POSSIBLE for me to conceive of a powerful good God who would permit or cause such terrible suffering to man and animals such as I see everywhere all the time. A good God wouldn't do it and if he couldn't stop it he wouldn't be all powerful. I can see no intelligence or justice in permitting innocent children to suffer from polio, innocent good people to suffer from cancer and tuberculosis and all of the other terrible diseases. All my life I have visited the sick and the dying in the hospitals and in the homes and it is terrible how much some people have to suffer. Some of them suffer day in and day out for years. They never have a day free from pain. One old man I know is 96. He has lost his sight, lost his hearing, and has his nose cut off because of cancer. Yet he never did anything wrong that I know of. Another poor old man has four cancer sores as big as your hand on his legs and can barely walk. The doctors say he ought to have his legs cut off. Another lady, a former secretary, is in the hospital now with her intestines clogged up, so they had to make an emergency opening. These people are good people, I have known them for years. I would say that any being with the power to stop this suffering would be a fiend not to do it. I help these poor people as much as I can. If I had the power I would stop their suffering in a minute. No one can ever make me believe that there is any God permitting this senseless suffering of innocent people.

When I was young I was taught that I must accept religious doctrines on faith. That meant that, even if they couldn't be proven or were unreasonable, I must believe them because someone told me they were true. But when I grew older and had studied more, my reasoning revolted against believing such things.

I couldn't believe the world was made in one day, that God created light before he made the sun, that Eve was made of Adam's rib, that Noah put all the animals in a small boat with one window, that God killed all the animals, fish and trees on earth except those in Noah's Ark because he had made a mistake in creating men. It wasn't reasonable to think that Joshua made the sun stand still all

day and stopped the moon. The ignorant men who wrote such things knew nothing of the universe and didn't even know that the earth revolved around the sun and that the earth spun on its own axis.

I didn't believe that Samson killed a thousand men with the jawbone of an ass or that another ass talked to a man. When I studied more, I discarded the belief that Jesus was born of a virgin, that he died and was resurrected, and that he ascended to heaven like the pictures I saw on the Sunday school cards showing him rising in the air.

You see, I compared this story of religion with all the others; Mohammedanism, Shintoism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, and the hundreds of dead religions such as those of the ancient Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, and the Scandinavians. They were all full of miracles and unreasonable fables and dogmas.

All over the world I found that men killed each other by the millions because they had different religious beliefs. It would seem to me that if there was a God he could appear or at least talk to the people and explain all these things and tell them how to keep out of trouble and harm. The Pope talks to 400,000,000 people by radio several times a year. He claims to be the representative of God, but so do hundreds of other religious leaders. If there was a God who really loved the people, he could talk to them... without a radio and explain everything that would keep them out of harm.

Now, of course, I couldn't begin to tell you the hundreds of thousands of thoughts that came to my mind as I read, studied, thought, and observed men, books, and things for many years. It takes a week to read one book sometimes and I read thousands of them. No lazy man can be a freethinker or an atheist. You have to study and think and observe and compare. Such men do not have their opinions tailor made. Some communists may claim to be atheists because they are told to be so, but they are not freethinkers. No freethinker could ever be a communist, and most freethinkers I know of would rather be dead than to live under a dictatorship, either communist or religious.

When I came to the conclusion that religion was based on a primitive fable I found that I had great peace of mind. I knew that to live best I must learn to follow

Nature's laws. And I enjoyed being good to other people and fighting for the principles of right. I have no fear of death nor of any fabulous after life. I have visited sick atheists in this section of the country for many years and they pass on philosophically without fear of death—sometimes suffering but usually with thoughts for the welfare of their families. I think they die more peacefully than the many religious people I have visited in their dying days.

Intelligent men are grateful for information. You have asked me to tell you what freethinkers think and what they believe. I express the ideas of some of them and the ideas of many atheists. But, of course, this is just a summary. I wrote one book of 192 pages on the subject and have written hundreds of articles. It would take a week to read them all, so you can see that what I have said tonight is just a bare sample.

I wish that people of all religions could talk together in the spirit we have met tonight, so that all could understand the other's viewpoint. It would help make world peace and peace among men.

Life is hard, a struggle against the elements, the insects and disease. It will be a happy day when men are tolerant and cease to fight and kill each other because they have been taught different religious beliefs. Let us all help to bring that time to come!

JAMES HERVEY JOHNSON.

"In some corners of civic affairs the present day Labour Party is in danger of compromise with the Catholic Church itself. Glasgow's Catholic vote has always been a fairly solid left wing vote, naturally enough, since Labour speaks for the under-privileged masses. But the Labour Party in Glasgow today is so concerned with keeping the Catholic vote solid that in some places it works more hand-in-glove with the parish priest than you would expect in a party that wants to unite all men regardless of race, creed or colour."—From *Dancing in the Streets*, by Clifford Hanley.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### LAO TZU

The Rev. Broom says it is reported that Lao Tzu wrote the Tao-te-Ching when about to die. Tradition has it, I understand, that it was not on "the frontier between this world and the next," but just a geographical frontier; that he wrote the book and then disappeared, but not that he died. G. DUNCAN.

### GODLESS COMMUNISM

Herr Walter Bayer of Graz, Austria, was present in a Graz Evangelical church when a statement was made about the Democratic German Republic (Communist East Germany). It was alleged that "children of the ages of 14 and 15 who live in the district around Eisleben were dragged off to Russia, or Siberia, after having received the Christian confirmation." Herr Bayer wrote to the East German monthly *Q.D.R. Review* for their comments on the story, and the editors were so shocked by the slanderous accusation that they replied in an "Open Letter," published in their May issue. After an explicit refutation of the charge some interesting details about the position of religion were given.

Besides the protection afforded by Article 10 of the Constitution ("No citizen may be extradited to a foreign power"), Article 41 extends to every citizen "Full freedom of conscience and religious belief," and further states that "The unhindered exercise of religion is protected by the State." Article 6 classifies every act of "fomenting hatred" against religious creeds as a "crime within the meaning of the penal code."

The editors point out that hundreds of destroyed and badly-damaged churches have been restored with the aid of Government funds. The expenses of training theologians (20,000 marks per student) are borne by the Government. Finally, since 1949 the different religious communities of East Germany have been given an average of 11,000,000 (11 million) marks per year out of Government funds, this to be disposed of at the sole discretion of the ecclesiastical authorities.

And these are the people who assure me that freethought activity is now "unnecessary" in East Germany, as the installation of Socialism will lead to the death of religion! A study of the finances above might lead us to the conclusion that the governmental authorities have a "vested interest" in keeping religion alive. D. SHIPPER.

### THE EARTH AS A PLANET

A unique opportunity presents itself to the scientifically minded who live in the Midlands. Until June 29th, "The Earth as a Planet" exhibition will be on view daily (including Sunday afternoons) at the Leicester City Museum, New Walk, after being exhibited in Paris and Liege. This includes over one hundred pieces of scientific apparatus, and covers approximately 500 square yards, and is a tribute to the scientists of 65 countries who, under the auspices of Unesco, proved that science can do what religions cannot; namely, co-operate.

There are seven sections: Solar activity, the Earth as a magnet, the upper atmosphere and transmission of radio-electric waves, the lower atmosphere and meteorology, aurora, cosmic rays and the International Geophysical Year. Each section has explanatory panels, together with apparatus which visitors can work for themselves, and experiments are carried out by demonstrators.

C. H. HAMMERSLEY.

### HOW I BECAME A FREETHINKER

Brought up a Catholic, at the age of 18 I found a copy of Robert Blatchford's *God and My Neighbour*, saw therein some mention of THE FREETHINKER and have read it ever since, quietly putting the Freethought case wherever and whenever possible.

Blatchford's book convinced me, but I understand he afterwards retracted it. Can anyone tell me for what reason?

F. M. BLAKE.

### LECTURE REPORT

NOTTINGHAM BRANCH, National Secular Society, report a very successful meeting on Sunday, June 1st, at the Co-operative Hall, when Mr. O. C. Drewitt spoke on "Why I Left the Church." Although some of the audience did not agree with Mr. Drewitt's conclusions (naturally enough), says the Branch President, Mr. Arthur Johnson, he certainly gave them plenty of food for thought. Mr. Drewitt afterwards told the officials that the reception and the standard of questions were among the best he had experienced since he began lecturing. It was clearly a most interesting meeting for all concerned.

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