

The Freethinker

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ON SEPTEMBER 27TH the Welsh Nationalist Party is organising a commemoration of perhaps the greatest modern Welshman, Robert Owen, who was born at Newtown, Montgomery, on May 14th, 1771, and who died while on a visit to his birthplace on November 17th, 1858. Robert Owen, whose long life lasted well into the reign of Queen Victoria, has a many-sided record for radical activities of various kinds, only equalled in modern British history by his predecessor, Thomas Paine, and by his great successor, Charles Bradlaugh. At the forthcoming commemoration, a number of radical organisations will be represented, among them the National Secular Society. For the illustrious name of Robert Owen ranks equally

among the pioneers of Freethought, of Socialism, of Co-operation and of pacifism, not only in Britain but across the Atlantic as well. The British Secular movement has particular cause to remember this great man; for not only was he the first native of these islands with a national and international status openly to avow himself an Atheist *sans phrase*; even Thomas Paine was an ardent Deist—but he still has a direct connection with the Secularist movement in this country. The Leicester Secular Society, the oldest Secular Society in the world, owes its inception to "Owenite" propaganda, and the statuette of Owen outside the Secular Hall in Humberstone Gate, Leicester, bears witness to the still living influence of the great Welsh Socialist, Co-operator and Freethinking critic of the established order in Church and State. The actual term "Secularism" was, of course, patented by G. J. Holyoake, who started as an Owenite "missionary."

Robert Owen and the Industrial Revolution

Owen's long life covered the first and decisive phase of the Industrial Revolution, that momentous but ruthless era which witnessed perhaps the most far-reaching transformation of human conditions of life since the origins of civilisation itself. Robert Owen, the pioneer in any socialist critique of industrial capitalism and its current excesses, was himself, paradoxically, a manufacturer, who had met with conspicuous success in business, first in Manchester, later in New Lanark. Unlike most manufacturers in that early era of unbridled competition, Owen early manifested a social conscience; and the co-operative reforms, and what would now be termed profit-sharing schemes, which he introduced amongst his employees, excited widespread attention at the time. Continental potentates, including a future Tsar, visited the Owenite cotton mills at New Lanark and went away deeply impressed. Amongst the more liberal members of the British aristocracy, Owen enjoyed considerable patronage during this early reforming phase of his career. The Duke of Kent, younger son of George III and the father of Queen Victoria was one of his patrons.

From Social Reform to Socialism

Robert Owen, however, did not limit himself to such pioneer efforts at social reform within the framework of

the fast-developing industrial capitalism. Neither a politician nor an opportunist, he eventually developed a thoroughgoing critique of the social order and ended up, as everyone knows, by demanding its ultimate suppression and the substitution of Socialism—"production for use." In visualising the ultimate attainment of this goal, Owen did not rely on violent revolution or on theories of class, a fact which has drawn down upon his head much subsequent criticism—including some harsh remarks from Marx himself, who was not noted for the mildness of his criticism, in particular where rival Socialist theories were concerned. (Marx's *alter ego*, Friedrich Engels, later made the *amende honorable* for this by paying a generous, if still critical, tribute to Owen in *Socialism Utopian and Scientific*).

In place of revolution and class, Owen relied on evolutionary methods, though he died the year before Darwin published his *Origin of Species*; and preached "Moral Harmony," the title of one of his publications, and co-operation. Owen is, of course, now revered as the founder of the Co-operative movement, but as Prof. G. D. H. Cole has reminded us in the *American Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (article "Owen and Owenism"), his conception of co-operation was much wider in scope than anything the movement has attempted. Owen's Co-operative societies were destined to supersede capitalist production and to become the roots of the new and higher social order. It is actually doubtful how far he would have given his approval to the modern movement.

In the annals of trade unionism Owen also played a notable pioneering role in the stormy era of the Tolpuddle Martyrs (1833), and the modern British Labour Party has expressly recognised him as its—shall we say—legitimate ancestor! He had an international reputation in his own lifetime; Owenite "missionaries" toured Great Britain; he founded "Co-operative Colonies" in the U.S.A.; and the French pioneers of Socialism, such as Saint-Simon and Fourier, studied and admired his work. He held aloof from the Chartist movement, whose violent methods repelled him, but he was officially invited to Paris after the 1848 revolution, and was consulted by the republican government there. With the exception of Paine and, perhaps, Bradlaugh, no modern native of Britain appears to have exercised such international influence or enjoyed such contemporary international fame.

Robert Owen—Atheist

Robert Owen is nowadays best remembered for his connection with British Socialism and Co-operation, but Owen "burnt his boats" with his contemporary social order by adding religious to his political heresy. Owen here went much further than his deistic predecessors, even than Paine, for he was an atheist, a term of unspeakable horror in the pious and predatory days of Queen Victoria. It was perhaps this fact, even more than his subversive economics, which caused "right-thinking" people to hold

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

Robert Owen

By F. A. RIDLEY

"Owenism" in horror. For Owen may be regarded as the outstanding representative in Britain of that school of atheistic socialism which has historically been stronger on the Continent than here, where, as Mr. Morgan Phillips reminded us not so long ago, "British Socialism owes more to Methodism than to Marx." Actually, Owen may be regarded with considerable accuracy as the direct ancestor of Secularism, hardly less than early Socialism, in these islands. (His dabbings with spiritualism when over 80 need not detain us here. Rather ironically, one of Owen's American disciples was Sidney Rigdon, later to be the probable author of *The Book of Mormon* and the step-father of Mormonism, which appears to have started with a social organisation on rigidly "Owenite" lines.)

We have no doubt that the more scientific historians of a more advanced future will rank Robert Owen very high amongst the great radicals who have lived and worked in our country. We hope that all will go well at Newtown on Saturday, and only regret that the commemoration is not on a national scale. Perhaps that will come later. Meanwhile it is good to know that the National Secular Society will be officially represented at the commemoration by Mr. A. R. Williams, of Worcester.

Now, if I may be allowed to end on a personal note, as one who has advocated Freethought and Socialism simultaneously for many years, I regard it as a particular pleasure to record this tribute to one of the greatest Socialists and Freethinkers of modern times.

Review

By BAYARD SIMMONS

IN THIS YEAR when the British people (or some of them) are celebrating the third centenary of the Lord Protector of the British Commonwealth, to wit, Oliver Cromwell, it is appropriate to remember, and read, and read about his most celebrated aid and right-hand, John Milton.

All educated Britishers naturally know much about these two outstanding men of the score of years that marked the last civil war and Interregnum, when England's Second Major Poet, Milton, faithfully and ably served the Second Ablest Ruler of the British folk (the Firsts being the woman, the first Elizabeth, and, topping with Himalayan height, all poets everywhere, William Shakespeare).

It is interesting in these days when we are accustomed to judge genius by psychological measure, to note that these two, Cromwell and Milton, were well-matched complementaries: extrovert and introvert. But the old terms—man of action and thinking-man—will serve as well. Milton was a supreme poet, but he needed to serve a man of action. And what a man: one who was "never defeated in battle, never worsted in political manoeuvre, never baulked in power," to quote a contemporary commentator. He had "lucky days," and his run of luck on the Third September was extraordinary. For on that day he won the battle of Dunbar and the battle of Worcester; and he died on this same day, "Cromwell's Lucky Day." Milton was appointed by this energetic master of men (a sort of Lenin) as his Latin Secretary, a post equivalent to Foreign Secretary, high in the government of the Commonwealth. For many years these two kept the monarchs of Europe in a state of awed expectancy, and England's rulers' wishes could not be brushed aside in the chancelleries of Continental powers. Louis XIV, the *Roi Soleil* of France, was particularly bitter in his complaints.

All this is, of course, history, and these remarks are supposed to be a review of, and commendation of a scholarly-written book by Mr. E. H. Visiak, a British literary-man and talented poet himself. (Incidentally, I received this book from an American friend of the author.) But in the case of great poets some knowledge of the background of their life and education is of first importance to knowing the ideals that inspired them, ideals necessarily showing in the poet's verse and activities. This is certainly primary in the case of John Milton, none more so. That queer English genius, De Quincey, wrote this of Milton: "He is not a writer among writers, not a poet among poets, but a Power among Powers." A Power it may be said is a Portent, a significant sign, a prodigy, a marvellous thing, which sticks out like a flagpole. Mr. Visiak has named his last book on Milton (he has written quite a few) *The Portent of Milton*, admirably chosen words to convey, what

his subtitle enlarges, "*Some aspects of his genius.*" About half-a-dozen books on the second greatest English poet have appeared from the pen of Mr. Visiak, since his treasured *Milton Agonistes*, written in 1923.

Enough about the author: with what does this book deal? Necessarily with the poet's poetic output, but in large part with Milton's superb prose writings—state documents and pamphlets. Many are naturally on matters of the greatest interest to Freethinkers and free thinkers. The enemy in Milton's day is the same implacable enemy of our own time, the Roman Catholic Church. Subjects like the Freedom of the Press ("Areopagitica"), freedom of Divorce, friendships with other poets, like Andrew Marvell, are dealt with in Mr. Visiak's impeccable prose. For those who like bedside books, Mr. Visiak's *Portent* (published by Werner Laurie at 15s. net) is of a convenient size, and one will rise from its perusal enriched in diction and vocabulary. As I said, the writer is a fine scholar.

God in a Nightshirt

A FRENCH cartoonist, Jean Effel (his real name is François Lejeune, initials FL—"Effell") has pictured a bald-headed, white-bearded, nightshirted God, and a jovial, hairy-legged Devil doing rock 'n' roll with Eve, in a Czech film, *The Creation of the World*, which won first prize for animated cartoons and the Silver Gondola for educational and cultural films(!) at the Venice film festival. The Roman daily paper *Avante* deplored the honouring of a film ridiculing religion, and the Vatican *Osservatore Romano* carried an editorial headed, "Blasphemous Parody Wins Prize." The show, it said, "amounts to making a laughing stock of the Holy Scriptures and implicitly of God Almighty himself." Effel's pictures originally appeared in a number of booklets which had a good sale in France, and an illustration from the rock 'n' roll sequence reproduced in *Time* (8/9/58) is quite delightful to an irreverent eye. The cartoonist readily granted *Osservatore Romano's* right to criticise the film, but—he said—"they never seem to worry about religious ceremonies shocking the laymen."

—NEXT WEEK—

BLASPHEMY THREAT AT TOWER HILL

By COLIN McCALL

Controversy

J. W. T. ANDERSON:

Having read with interest the replies to my letter of June 27th, I should like to make a few comments. With reference to Mr. Dickinson's, I would mention David Hume's famous pronouncement in which he denies that there is in human minds "any such passion as the love of mankind as such, independent of personal qualities, of services, or of relation to ourself." In other words, all love is self-love.

Hume, "a large, jolly Atheist," did not delude himself that so-called matter could produce ethics. As Hume is the blue-eyed boy of most Materialists—almost the Jesus of Materialism—they should take his words to heart. Mr. G. I. Bennett refers to "loveliness" and the "Substantive existence of moral sense, which has its beginning and source in suckling and rearing the young." He does not tell me, however, why one piece of "matter" should have the "moral sense" to wish to rear another piece.

Sooner or later human life on this planet will end, and if Materialism is true all ideas of good and bad, honour and duty, knowledge and love, will perish when the last man lies down to eternal sleep.

Unless, then, ethics have their origin in some other order, there is no point in our bothering about them. As William McDougall rightly said: "A civilisation which resigns itself wholly to materialism lives upon and consumes its moral capital and is incapable of renewing it."

Materialism must inevitably end in nihilism. Having rejected man-made religion, and rightly so, Materialists attempt to believe in ethics of their own creation—cerebral states, if Materialism is true. Being afraid of the void that confronts them, they proceed to people it with ghosts and then expect non-Materialists to believe in such entities which go by the name of love, duty, and all the rest.

We can ridicule the Roman Catholics for filling "heaven" with saints and angels, but are Materialists any different? Like the religionists they abhor, they must have some sort of god to cling to. O weak human nature! It is better and more honest to believe in nothing rather than accept an ethical dreamland.

Mr. Drewitt's reference to determinism merits only a few words in reply. Heisenberg's Principle of Indeterminacy seems to be generally accepted, Mr. Drewitt should be more consistent and he should certainly not call Spinoza to his aid. Is he not aware that this "God-intoxicated" metaphysician held strong views concerning the destiny of the human mind? In his *Ethics* (V. Prop. XXIII) Spinoza wrote that "The human mind cannot be absolutely destroyed with the body, but something of it, which is eternal, remains."

Although I am not a member of the S.P.R., I have been acquainted for many years with its work, and, therefore, would like to make it clear that the Society, founded in 1882, does not express a corporate opinion, nor does it try to prove anything. Some of the S.P.R.'s presidents and members have been Materialists to the end of their lives—the French physiologist Charles Richet is one example. On the other hand, many well-known scientists, not credulous fools, have believed that the evidence, gathered over a long period, proves mind can exist apart from brain.

The E.S.P. experiments, of course, are mental, not physical. Physical energy loses its intensity inversely as the square of the distance from its source; but successful experiments have shown that E.S.P. is unaffected by distance. I should, however, like to say that psychical research is not responsible for my Vitalistic beliefs. More than

twenty years' close study of the brain, both human and animal, and also the observation of embryonic development in animals have produced questions which are unanswerable on the Materialist hypothesis. To mention two only:

At an instant's notice (there is no time for "habit-memory" to be formed) a right-handed person can write with his left hand. What causes the switch from one motor area of the brain to another? A mind which is free from determination by "matter"? This appears to be the only logical answer. Again, surgical operations on the brain have shown that mind can remain intact after parts, often large parts, of the brain have been removed. Why? Everything points to the fact that mind exists in its own right; if so, Materialism cannot be true.

Most of the Materialists whom I have met, both personally and on paper, are concerned with destroying Christianity (good luck to them!) and when asked questions such as those enumerated above, and others even more intricate, they can only answer with a blank stare. The secret of the universe lies somewhere and it may well be that we shall discover it in some other state of consciousness beyond "All this mighty sum of things forever speaking."

G. H. TAYLOR:

(1) Hume is only saying that love of mankind is a reaction to the stimulus of personal experiences. How could it be other? To interpret him as saying "all love is self-love" is a really dreadful *non sequitur*.

(2) Before describing Hume as the Jesus of Materialism Mr. Anderson must show that we take our stand on Hume. We use Hume, perhaps, but he certainly did not develop any systematic philosophy such as could be the standard of 20th century materialism. He was an acute critic, and philosophy has benefited from him, but things have happened since then, both in science and logic. I am prepared to accept, practically wholesale, the materialism stated in *The Philosophy of Physical Realism* by Prof. R. W. Sellars of Michigan University. Let Mr. Anderson see if he can pick a hole in it. For me, the only epistemologically tenable materialistic philosophy is that of the American Critical Realist school represented by Sellars and his disciples—C. P. Montague, Morris Cohen, etc.

(3) Nowhere did Mr. Bennett say human beings were merely pieces of matter. They are minded organisms exhibiting the complexity one would expect from such a complex stage in evolution. Nor is evolution purposive. Purpose is the offspring, not the parent, of evolution. And it is a rarity, an oasis. Glorious oasis! But what is the meaning of the desert?

(4) Mr. Anderson has got McDougall completely wrong. McDougall is using the word materialism in quite another sense from the philosophical. What McDougall really thought about (philosophical) materialism is this: "The repudiation of materialism generally means the repudiation of the now old-fashioned atomic materialism of earlier centuries. . . . The modern view avoids the earlier crudities." (*Modern Materialism* by Wm. McDougall.)

(5) Materialism leads, not to nihilism, but to Scientific Humanism.

(6) How can Mr. Anderson equate ethics with cerebral states? As he accepts the evolution of new phenomena from old, he must hold that the emerged novelty from a set of conditions features a new type of behaviour not

(Concluded on next page)

This Believing World

All believers in the Design Argument and in the Great Intelligence who (or which) rules the Universe and is responsible for everything should try and explain Dr. W. E. Swinton's remarks about insects. He is reported to have said that "we do not regard seriously enough the tremendous threat that the insects are and have been for many years to human population." All these insects were created by the Great Intelligence (who, by the way, used to be called God Almighty) and Dr. Swinton thinks they might exterminate the Lord of Creation created by God on the sixth day of Creation as his final masterpiece. Think of it—the poor little flies and mosquitoes and bugs and fleas, etc., ousting Man from the Home created for him by God! It is a terrible thought—but won't Christ save him?

★

Banned two years ago by the British Board of Film Censors, an American film in colour showing us the Life of Christ is to be released; the only cut insisted on by the censors is the arrest of Barabbas. But we hope that some of the more entertaining stories from Holy Writ will be shown. For example, there is the visit made by an Angel to Joseph in a dream—surely the secret of this marvellous event, unintelligible even to the most devoted of believers, should have been vouchsafed to the pious director? Then there is the "Star in the East" and the Three Wise Men.

★

And what about the "Tempter" sometimes known as the Devil? Few scenes in the Life of Christ could possibly be as colourful as those with the Devil clasping Jesus in his arms flying up "an exceeding high mountain," showing him all "the kingdoms of the world," and saying that if only the Son of God will worship him, he can have the lot. What terrific will-power Jesus must have shown on this occasion—refusing what was already his own, "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof" (Ps. 24, 1)!

★

Apart from devils and miracles, we wonder how the "casting" was done? What a pity the film wasn't made in England, with Miss Diana Dors as the Virgin, Mr. A. E. Matthews as Joseph, Mr. Tommy Trinder as the Devil, and perhaps Miss Brigitte Bardot or Sabrina as Mary Magdalene. A few of our rock 'n' roll singers—like Tommy Steele—could easily make up the Apostles. Perhaps one day a "musical" version of "our Lord's" life will be filmed, and that surely would be a treat.

★

One of the youngest members of the recent Church Assembly, a Mrs. Jones, was, she confidently told it, only three years ago an "Agnostic," and "shared its point of view." And now, of course, she is a fully-believing Christian, Christianity being "the only possible interpretation of life." Even her extreme youth is no excuse for talking drivel. We are quite certain that Mrs. Jones was never a genuine Agnostic; and just as certain she could neither give us the Agnostic case, nor find any answer to it. But anything goes down at a Church Assembly.

★

At the Glasgow Christian Front, Sir Hector Hetherington, the Principal of Glasgow University, actually claimed that Christians were in "a minority"—and probably he was right, for it must be very difficult to be a "true" Christian. Following him was the Rev. Dr. Davidson, the minister of Glasgow Cathedral, and he must have received a great ovation when he announced his belief that "theology is still the queen of sciences." Theology a science! Still, he could be right after all; theology may well be the one "science" which so beautifully harmonises with the Bible.

ITV's "About Religion" had Fr. Huddleston as its "soap-box orator"—and we must give him credit for answering his hecklers not only with good humour and courtesy, but also very often with common sense. But, of course, his audience was composed of *Christians*—and he never had a single Freethought argument to contend with. It was easy work for him.

★

The religious world must have been thrilled at the final repentance of mass murderer Peter Manuel who, we are told, did *not* spurn the Catholic Church before joining the elite in heaven. He "held the cruets of wine and water required for the Sacrament," and piously gave the responses to the prayers of the priest. In other words, after murdering at least six people young and old, he most touchingly trusted his Church and thus was saved. How like Constantine the Great, who also murdered at least six of his relatives and then joined the Church and was also "saved"!

★

At the TV "Brains Trust" the other Sunday the Archbishop of Cape Town, Sir Ifor Evans, Sir Halford Reddish and Miss Margery Perham appeared quite unable to answer clearly the question, "What is Humanism?" Considering the way the word has been bandied about, this is surely extraordinary. There would have been no difficulty about the words "Secularism" or "Atheism" or even "Rationalism." Was not the Brains Trust's difficulty that almost anybody can now be called a Humanist?

CONTROVERSY

(Concluded from page 307)

characteristic of the conditions in isolation. Personalities emerge. They have to live in proximity. Therefore morals emerge. Where does this depart from the language of materialism?

(7) Heisenberg's Principle of Indeterminacy referred to prediction, not to some latent free will in matter itself. Heisenberg was a determinist. Statistical determinism can co-exist with particle-indeterminacy pending improvement of investigating instruments (see Levy, *Thinking*; Max Planck, *What is Science?*; Susan Stebbing, etc.). He is confusing Indeterminacy with Indeterminism. Here is one instance of indeterminacy: the photographing of electrons knocks them about to such an extent that their behaviour defies prediction (see Haldane's debate with Lunn, *Science and the Supernatural*). In his *Mysterious Universe* Jeans showed cases of indeterminate behaviour in physical particles and suggested reasons for it. Note: Indeterminate, not *indeterminable*. Heisenberg warned against creating a principle of Indeterminism out of his Principle of Indeterminacy.

(8) I could take Mr. Anderson up at great length, did space allow, on Spinoza, but remember he and Hume are pre-evolution philosophers.

(9) The scientists of great repute who have been Spiritualists can be counted almost on one hand. I have listed them in my book, *Can Materialism Explain Mind?* and given numerous names to outbalance them.

(10) E.S.P. has been frequently dealt with in these columns, most recently on August 29th, perhaps before Mr. Anderson wrote the above.

(11) The mind does not "remain intact"—whether parts of the brain are removed or not. It is a function in flux. Destruction of the brain has its inevitable effects, even though these may not impair the "togetherness," the unity or personality. But the latter can be "split" or dissipated, according to circumstances. Where, again, is causation violated? And how is causation violated by a decision to write with the left hand?

THE FREETHINKER

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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 welcome during normal office hours.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Every Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: Messrs. DAY and CORINA.

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 (Marble Arch).—Meetings every Sunday from 5 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER and C. E. WOOD.

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, 6.30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY and C. MCCALL.

Orpington Humanist Group.—Sunday, September 28th: Ramble from Knockholt Station (S.R.), 11.20 a.m.

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Midland Institute, Paradise Street).—Sunday, September 28th, 7 p.m.: J. M. ALEXANDER, "Sex and Sin."

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Nottingham).—Sunday, September 28th, 3 p.m.: COLIN MCCALL (London), "The Humbug of Telepathy."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—ANNUAL REUNION, 3 p.m. Sunday, September 28th, 1958: Guest of Honour, Sir JULIAN HUXLEY, introduced by Dr. W. E. SWINTON. Chairman, J. HUTTON HYND. Speeches, music and refreshments. All welcome.

Wales and Western Branch N.S.S. (Bute Town Community Centre, Cardiff).—Tuesday, September 30th, 7 p.m.: L. EBURY (London), "Does Freethought Matter?"

Notes and News

CAN it be that the Lord's Day Observance Society is unwittingly hastening the repeal of the Sabbath laws by its very ardour in enforcing them? Certainly it seems to be antagonising more and more religious people, and by stopping the Brighton dance for a Jewish charity it has—says the *News Chronicle* (29/8/58)—"angered Roman Catholic alderman Mr. Gerald Fitzgerald." The same paper, in its editorial, rightly says that the Sabbatarians are "impervious to argument" but draws attention to the "healthy reaction" that is being provoked, which "could rid the country of this absurd inheritance from the Ironsides." Incidentally, the Secretary of the National Secular Society may learn the imperviousness of the L.D.O.S. at first hand on Tues-

day, October 14th, when he and Mr. Legerton (Secretary of the L.D.O.S.) discuss "Should Sunday as a Sabbath be Abolished?" The discussion will take place under the auspices of South Place Ethical Society at the Conway Hall, London.

★

SOUTH PLACE Ethical Society hold their Annual Reunion on Sunday, September 28th, in the Conway Hall, when Sir Julian Huxley, F.R.S., will be the Guest of Honour. Members and friends will meet informally at 3 p.m. and speeches and music will follow from 3.30. Tea will be served at 5 p.m. Our friends at South Place send a very cordial invitation to members and friends of other Free-thinking groups in Britain, including the National Secular Society.

★

THE June issue of *World Christian Digest* quoted "from an interview with Albert Einstein in 1950," in which the famous scientist allegedly said: "I believe in a personal God, and I can say with a good conscience that never in my life have I for a minute held an atheistic view of life," and "it is my conviction that without religion the human race would stand today on the level of barbarism... Religion has been the very driving force of human progress." Asked by one of our readers to supply details of the interview, *World Christian Digest* admitted that they had "tried to obtain the source from which the extract of Albert Einstein's statement was taken, but have failed to do so." But the best was yet to come: "As we have had another enquiry from one who seems to doubt the accuracy of this statement, we are endeavouring to get in touch direct with Einstein himself," added the *Digest*, and "If we succeed in doing so, I will do my best to let you have a note as to his reply." If they succeed, their achievement will have surpassed even those of Einstein himself!

★

WE read in *The Economist* (28/8/58) that eight million adults in Britain "seem to go to church regularly," while "about 18 million others seem to feel guilty that they do not." On the other hand, 12 million—50% more than the regular attenders—say that "they never will attend." Yet a table of religious affiliation lists 21 million Church of England, three million Roman Catholics, 5½ million Nonconformists, 2½ million Church of Scotland, two million Jews, Christian Scientists, Seventh-Day Adventists and others, and four million professing no faith. The Church of England figure is, of course, purely nominal. But the BBC should take note of the relative R.C. and "no faith" figures. The Corporation should also note that only 41% of British adults believe in a personal God and 54% hope for a future life. A "big majority" considers economic security more important than religion and disagrees with the Archbishop of Canterbury on remarriage of divorced persons. *The Economist* adds that "the genuinely anti-clerical minority is smaller than in most countries." True, but it has less opportunity for publicity than in France, for example, where Freethinkers make regular appearances on the air.

★

THE International Cultural Forum, a post-war society, has drawn up an Animals' Charter which should interest many of our readers. Copies of it, and details of the Forum, may be obtained from Miss F. Barker, the United Kingdom Hon. Secretary, 127 Nevill Avenue, Hove, 4, Sussex. The Forum supports the idea of a World Day for Animals, when we are asked to "think, speak and act for suffering animals." That the day chosen, October 4th, is dedicated to St. Francis of Assisi will not deter Freethinkers, for whom, in fact, every day is an animal day.

Neither Atheist nor Agnostic

By AXEL STERN

AN ATHEIST is a person who denies the existence of God*, an agnostic one who maintains that to answer the question as to God's existence is beyond our means, that we simply "cannot know." I want to argue that both positions yield more ground to the religious person than he deserves and, in a way, all that he wants.

Let us examine some assertions of non-existence: The greatest natural number, the unicorn, the present king of Iraq, flies as big as elephants, a tunnel under the Channel, all these do not exist.

The "existence" of numbers, as of all mathematical and logical concepts, operations, etc., is, be it first noted, only metaphorical. To say that there is no greatest natural number is the same as to say that the natural numbers are infinite, *i.e.*, to any given number we can find one that is greater (*e.g.*, by adding 1).—N.B.: Since Cantor, mathematicians prefer another, more precise, definition of infinity which, however, need not concern us here.

The unicorn is *defined* as a mythological animal, horse-like and with a single straight horn on its head. In other words, it belongs to the very meaning of the unicorn that it should not exist; that is, it "exists" only in and for the imagination.

The present king of Iraq, too, cannot—logically "cannot"—exist, for since July 14th, 1958, that country has been a republic, and republics have, by definition, no kings. The fact that the people who organised the *coup d'état* made quite sure that there should not even be a claimant to the throne by assassinating the whole royal family might seem to, but actually does not, strengthen our argument.

When we come now to flies as big as elephants, our assertion of their non-existence is based on our zoological knowledge. There would be no *intrinsic* strangeness in someone's asserting that there are such flies; he would merely be factually mistaken.

As for the tunnel under the Channel, many of us hope that its non-existence will not last much longer. There are economic and political reasons why this tunnel does, at present, not yet exist; but they are of a much weaker kind than the zoological ones for the unlikelihood of finding those giant flies.

Now, what sort of existence, asserted of God by religious people, do we want to deny? "God exists" is certainly not meant by them either just metaphorically (as used for mathematical entities) or in a purely mythological sense (as in "unicorns exist in fairy tales"), nor in a sense analogous to the said tunnel, since his existence is not supposed to depend on human decisions or actions. We freethinkers, for that matter, are quite ready to attribute existence to God in any of these senses: as a conceptual fiction, an imaginary being, or an anti-bogey construed for satisfying certain human needs. In this third case, there remains, however, the difference that a man-made tunnel can itself be inspected, while inspection of the anti-bogey is, to take the Christian case, restricted to occasional pic-

tures of same, some historical evidence of the existence of his alleged offspring and possible contact with his self-styled representatives.

Very few religious people, nowadays and hereabouts, believe in God as a pleasant or severe old man, tremendously big and powerful, sitting on some mountain or floating on a cloud. Therefore, while we should certainly deny the existence of such a one, we should be running in open doors. So the parallel with the giant flies need not hold our attention.

The "present king of Iraq," however, offers a most useful analogy. Similar, indeed, to devoted loyalists, religious people like to argue that the world and human life would be meaningless unless they were understood as created and governed by God ("supreme intelligence" is the usual preparatory step). If you found a beautifully laid-out garden in the middle of the Sahara, they will say, you would not think that the flowers, shrubs and trees happened, by pure chance, so to grow as to make those patterns and paths; you would conclude that there had been a gardener at work; now look how wonderfully the world is ordered.

The first thing that is wrong with this argument is that the order of the garden strikes us (a) because we have elsewhere seen gardens before and know that they are man-made, and (b) because of the contrast between the Sahara and the garden. Neither of these reasons is applicable to the universe. All we have ever seen is one single universe (and, for that matter, only a small portion of it); and we could not compare it to any other since, by presupposition, there is only one.

The second thing that is wrong with the argument is that it extends human ways, planning and behaviour in a childish and immature way. Here religious people remind us somewhat of children: when they hurt themselves at a chair they will say, "Naughty chair!" and hit it, because they think of the material world as animated.

Having shed animism and anthropomorphism, we do not accept the alternative proposed to us, which is: "Either the universe is ordered, or else all things in it have happened by pure chance," where the second choice is supposed to be rhetorical and "quite impossible." For that matter, some thirty years ago J. B. S. Haldane took the trouble to calculate that, on the probability of pure chance, 10 to the power 10 to the power 80 years suffice for exactly the same "unlikely" state of affairs in the world to occur again as prevails today.

Now, we do not accept the above either/or because both terms, "order" and "pure chance," express *man's* reaction to what he finds and, in that sense, cannot be said to exist "in" the things or the universe. The way, for example, in which Aristotle saw the order of the world was unacceptable to Newton, and Newton's world order was found insufficient to account for certain events and relations that Einstein's theory of relativity has taken care of—for the time being.

Further, of Aristotle's four causes (material, formal, efficient, and final) only the third has survived in science since Galileo. In our day, modern quantum physics shows us that we *can* dispense with even this principle of causality (that for every change that happens there is one event [change] or one set of events [changes] whose occurrence is its necessary and sufficient condition). This is a deadly blow to any claim for the principle of causality's being

*Some readers may find it objectionable that I capitalise this word. However, since it is used in our context as the proper name of a supposed *someone* (like Jupiter or Minerva) and not as a term designating merely an object of observation or thought, capitalising is philosophically as well as grammatically correct usage. Many arguments trying to establish God's existence, in fact, slur over the g-G distinction. The "first cause" argument, for example, establishes, were it valid, only a totally impersonal god.

Freethought and Freemasonry

By H. CUTNER

ONE of our readers appears to be disturbed at the way—so he says—Freemasons are using Freethought “for their own ends,” and no doubt that other readers are in full agreement. Let me confess at the outset therefore that I haven’t the slightest idea what he means.

I am no Freemason, and I do not pretend to know any of the secrets of Freemasonry at first hand. I am however disposed to believe that there are no secrets of any importance. Modern Freemasons appear to be mostly men of integrity always ready to help their brothers when necessary. They have excellent schools and hospitals which—so I understand—are supported by themselves. Brought up as they are to some form of Theism such as Judaism or Christianity, it is not surprising that, at least in British lodges, they believe in God whom they call “the Great Architect of the Universe.” They do not force anybody to believe in him, and they quite properly resent any attempt to convert them except by the use of reason. I haven’t come across any evidence that most of them care two hoots for Freethought as such, and I have come across quite a lot of evidence that they prefer to be left alone. They are quite satisfied to be Freemasons.

Freemasonry is a “secret” society—that is, only those who have been “initiated”, and who have passed the various tests imposed, are allowed to enter the sacred circles. No doubt the tests vary in each country and have varied during the centuries. Nobody is quite sure when the modern form of Freemasonry came into being but there are records of meetings held as far back as the 14th century. Most encyclopedias give details of the various lodges and the masonic symbols—such as the gavel, compass, square, columns, etc. used by masons, and which outwardly are just tools used by builders, but “esoterically” have all kinds of inner meanings. This is where the “mystery” religions come in—religions like Mithraism, the worship of Isis and Horus, and of course Christianity.

Some of the “mysteries” of Freemasonry are based on Solomon’s Temple, minute details of the building of which are given in the first Book of Kings. All Freemasons of course believe in the actual existence of Solomon and his Temple—and I hope I am not unfair to readers of this journal when I say that no doubt some 80% of our readers agree with them, and at least 95% of the readers of our contemporary, *The Humanist* would reject with scorn the supposition that both Solomon and his Temple are myths. That at least is what I believe, and I have never come across any evidence whatsoever from archaeology that either ever existed. To put it another way. The “mysteries” of religion were created by priests or witch doctors, and most people, unable to account for the real mysteries in this world of ours, swallow the explanations given in “sacred” books, particularly when the nefarious workings of “magic” are called in to aid the priests. The continued interest in astrology is evidence enough to prove how readily anything savouring of magic is still lapped up even by people who protest that they do not believe in crude superstitions.

Freemasonry is a descendent of the “mystery” religions. Robert Taylor in one of his lectures in the *Devil’s Pulpit* said:—

I shall prove Freemasonry to be the combined result of Egyptian, Jewish, and Christian superstitions, and absolutely identical with the celebrated Eleusinian Mysteries of Greece, the Dionysian Mysteries, or orgies of Bacchus, and

more than pragmatic, even if causality is again reinstated, i.e. becomes empirically meaningful, in this field of physics; for we have now been able to do without it.

“Order” (in this general sense) means “we have been, or trust to be, able to systematise, see a pattern in, these (groups of) things or events”; and “disorder” means that we have not been, and do not expect to be, able to do so. At present we are satisfied in numerous fields with a statistically based, rather than a strict, systematisation for the interconnection and accounting of things and events. Any world in which a thinking being could survive would be ordered for him. Giving the old statement a very different and new meaning, we can thus agree that “the orderliness of the universe proves, indeed, that there must be a thinking being who has created that order” (though certainly not the universe), viz., man.

The world, independently from our thinking, can be said neither to be ordered nor to be chaotic, but merely to be. Events in the world can, in principle, be explained, that is, their interrelations with other events can be worked out and clarified. Therefore, the world, the universe, as such, cannot be explained at all; this is a logical impossibility, not the effect of a “sad limitation of human reason.” He who asks for an explanation of the totality of things has not understood what “explanation” means.

A theory should allow us to systematise our data more comprehensively, or to clarify and predict at least some events that cannot be so well clarified and so precisely predicted without it. A theory that does not satisfy these conditions is, so far, not false but empty and void, i.e. with reference to the job that it was supposed, or claimed, to be required for. And this, as we have seen, is precisely the case of the theory of God’s existence.

Those who make the laws and those for the defence of whose interests most laws are made, attribute great importance to the belief in God. At the same time they seem to be rather uncertain as to the demonstrability of his existence; for they have found it necessary legally to protect the belief in God against attacks. For centuries, the principle of causality was considered (and is so still today by a great many people) as fundamentally vital for all our thinking; but no one has ever dreamed of protecting it by law.

The king of Iraq is dead; this implies there was one once; it simply so happens that Iraq is a republic now (from which it then follows logically that there cannot be a present king of Iraq). “God is dead!” said Nietzsche; he was, indeed, an atheist. Somebody who denies the existence of something lays himself open to be shown wrong by his opponent’s producing of the thing in question; at least, his opponent can declare himself satisfied by a certain amount of evidence, even if the other judges it to be insufficient. Someone who declares a thing to be “beyond our ken” may well be told, “Speak for yourself; this something is not beyond my ken.”

Since we understand children and childish animism, and fairy tales and poetry, we can in the same way also understand people’s talk about God. But people who talk about God do not mean to speak in this way. When we drop childishness and allegory and metaphor, we freethinkers do not deny God’s existence nor can we possibly recognise here any personal or generally human limitations of our reason and understanding: for there is nothing that could even be said either to exist or not to exist. On metaphysical grounds, which have been under discussion here, we are therefore neither atheists nor agnostics. Indeed, the question of God’s existence does not even arise.

N.B.: In “An Atheist After All?” Axel Stern will discuss the moral arguments for God’s existence.

the Christian Mysteries of the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, which are absolutely not more different in any respect from each other, than the customs and forms of any Lodge of Free Masons in England may be, from those of a Lodge in any of the nations on the Continent; where, though the language, the words, the persons, and the paraphernalia, may be varied, the spirit and the purport of the mysteries are precisely the same.

Robert Taylor was perhaps the first writer to insist that there never was a "race" or a "nation" of Jews, and he claimed that the terms "Jews, Israelites, and Hebrews, were designations of those who had passed on to the highest dignities in these holy mysteries." For him, that strange Epistle to the Hebrews in the New Testament, which is very rarely quoted and even less understood, was "an Epistle to the *Free Masons*—that is, to the higher order of the initiated in the craft of the mysteries—the free and accepted masons," addressed to "a mystical and religious fraternity only, whose members might consist as societies of Free Masons may..." If Taylor had known about the discoveries associated with the Dead Sea Scrolls, he might have seen how his speculations on "Divine Mysteries" could be very well substantiated.

Of course, no Freemason would ever agree with Taylor or his friend Richard Carlile (who wrote extensively on the subject) who also ridiculed the idea that any of the "mysteries" with which Freemasonry was surrounded were really mysteries. Not many would agree that sun and moon and phallic worship in different ways account for most of the "secrets" however disguised.

All sorts of stories have been woven round Solomon's Temple and Hiram and the famous two pillars of the Temple, Boaz and Jachin, names later given to "Masters" in Freemasonry. In what is known as "Royal Arch Masonry", the Masons are given various Biblical names such as Haggai, Ezra, Nehemiah, Jeshua, and so on; while one of the Masonic Orders of Chivalry is named after the famous Knights Templars. Their "degrees" were absorbed by Freemasons—such as Grand Master, Grand Prior, Grand Herald, Grand Hospitaller, and many others. Initiates are still taught a lot from the Bible, and are supposed to know what they are taught, most of which is based on almost undiluted Fundamentalism. Or this may have been the case in Carlile's time, and is no longer necessary now. One of the "Obligations" is thus given by Carlile:—

I, A.B., in the name of the Blessed Trinity, and in commemoration of St. John of Jerusalem, that first faithful soldier and martyr of Jesus Christ, do most solemnly promise and swear, that I will never illegally reveal the secrets of a Knight Templar to a Royal Arch Mason, nor to any person beneath the dignity of this noble order, nor aid in the installation of a Knight Templar, unless five are present, under the penalty of all my former obligations.

It would be tedious to go into all the details of the connection between what the Knights Templars are supposed to have taught their initiates, and what modern Freemasons believe. The Knights swore that "with the sword of my faith, I will guard and defend the sepulchre of our Lord Jesus Christ against all Jews, Turks, Infidels, Heathens, or other opposers of the Gospel"; but it is doubtful if the modern business man who is proud of being a Freemason cares two hoots what any Knight Templar swore.

Robert Taylor contends—I have no means of finding out if it is true—that the famous Christian Tetragrammaton I.N.R.I. supposed to stand for. "Jesus Nazarenus Rex Judaeorum" is really the four pass words of the higher grade of masonry—*Jamin, Nour, Rouach, Iebeschal*, which signify the four elements, Water, Fire, Air and Earth, over

which preside four archangels. This is how we get "mysteries" in religion—just as in Corinthians, Paul tells us that he was caught up into the third heaven where he heard "unspeakable words, which is not lawful a man to utter." Taylor contemptuously dismisses this nonsense always contending that "the science of the Sun, or of astronomy, is the interior and esoteric secret of Free Masonry." It is the secret too of Christianity—for "Jupiter-Ammon" he adds, "is precisely the same Deity as Jesus Christ, Amen. And both Jupiter, Ammon and God Ammon, and Jesus Christ, Amen, are personifications of the Sun who is Jupiter in Spring; Christ in Summer; Jesus in Autumn; and Amen in Winter."

But few Freemasons these days are interested in the Science of the Sun and fewer still have ever heard of Robert Taylor or even of Richard Carlile.

And the upshot of all this? Well, modern Freemasonry is much more interested in the doing of good works than in bothering about the reasons for their beliefs. And in that, Freethinkers should gladly give them every credit.

At least I do.

CORRESPONDENCE

HOMOSEXUALITY IN ISLAM

"Islam in Africa" by Leonard Martin I find most interesting. But what makes him think that the faith imposes very severe penalties on homosexuals? It is (or was) as prevalent throughout Islamia, and practised by all grades of society, as it was in ancient Rome.

People who speak the vernacular tongues of Islamia well enough to hide their European origin know that men boast of their success in breaking down the reluctance of comely boys. I was acquainted with two men who in their boyhood dwelt in the Royal Qājār Harem of Teheran. Over camp fires one would regale me with tales of what went on there. I thought that he was pulling the long bow until I acquired *The Private Life of Nasr-ud-Din Shah* by his grandson, published (in Persian) in Teheran.

When his Majesty visited Europe the Aziz-us-Sultan was in his entourage. It is doubtful whether Albert Edward of Wales and his Royal mother, who shook the youth warmly by the hand, were aware that the title bestowed on him by the King of Kings means "Darling of the King." Quite evidently neither the bestower of the title nor the recipient of it had any idea that it was shameful. Lord Curzon, in *Persia*, remarks that the Darling of the King was not the Darling of the Court. True. But that was not due to the way his influence over the monarch was acquired. Opposition would be engendered irrespective of how such influence was acquired.

Civilian officers in Qābul and on the frontier were well aware of the score or so of comely Ghulam Bachagan who were kept in the Amir's palace, and why. But in official despatches, to preserve the amity of nations, they became "pages."

When told that many of his followers were sodomites Hazrat Muhammad merely told them, "Truly ye are a people given to excess." But he neither forbade the practice nor made it punishable.

The Nazarene loved a boy, but it was not considered criminal and so was not mentioned at his trial. We are only made aware of it by a chance observation.

W. E. HUXLEY.

SECULARISM AND MENTAL ILLNESS

I become increasingly aware that a practical application of the attitudes of mind which stimulate the production of mental illness. In fact, if I were more adept at literary expression, I could produce interesting support for your magazine regarding my experience of the religious sentiments and influences manifested by the hundreds of schizophrenic patients that I have met. This, despite the recent pronouncement of a certain Catholic Bishop that the insane were usually atheists. In fact, of all the Christian arguments unsupported by fact this is really one of the most downright dishonest. A minister appointed to a mental hospital has, of all preachers, a most appreciative audience to his sermons. He can speak of visions, miracles, etc., with no fear of contradiction!

A STUDENT PSYCHIATRIC NURSE.