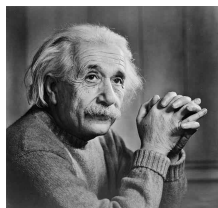


17 May 2008

By: Gabriel Gache, Science News Editor

Albert Einstein
mlahanas.de

[Einstein's Letter on God Sold for \\$404,000](#)

The famous paper changes owner for the second time

The letter sent by Albert Einstein to philosopher Eric Gutkind in January 1954 - "one year before the physicist's death" - detailing his beliefs about God and the Jewish people was auctioned on Thursday at Bloomsbury Auctions in London, and sold for the sum of 404,000 US dollars, including the buyer's premium. The letter had an auction starting price of 8,000 US dollars, 25 times less than that the obtained price. According to Rupert Powell, Bloomsbury director, the name of the buyer is yet unknown, but that person is probably a theoretical physics passionate. "This extraordinary letter seemed to strike a chord, and it gave a deep personal insight into one of the greatest minds of the 20th century," Powell said about the frenetic bidding. In the letter to Gutkind, Einstein says that "the word God is for me nothing more than the expression and product of human weaknesses, the Bible a collection of honorable but still primitive legends which are nevertheless pretty childish. For me the Jewish religion like all other religions is an incarnation of the most childish superstitions." "The Jewish people to whom I gladly belong and with whose mentality I have a deep affinity have no different quality for me than all other people. As far as my experience goes, they are also no better than other human groups, although they are protected from the worst cancers by a lack of power. Otherwise I cannot see anything 'chosen' about them," said Einstein about the Jewish people. Experts say that the letter is 100 percent authentic; it was first put up for auction in 1955 and has been in a private collection ever since. It is no secret that Einstein had some complex, agnostic views about religion, he did not believe in God, but felt uncomfortable being called atheist. Nevertheless, he did believe in faith to some extent and, although he was basically an atheist, he did recognize that a spiritual force may have been responsible for the birth universe. "God doesn't throw dice," Einstein said once about the random nature of the quantum mechanics. "Like many great scientists of the past, he is rather quirky about religion, and not always consistent from one period to another," says John Brooke, emeritus professor of science and religion at Oxford University. Towards the last days of his life, Einstein is said to have started wondering about the mysteries of the universe, to which he referred to as a "cosmic religious feeling", saying that: "Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind." However, this did not radically change his views on religion. "I do not believe in the God of theology who rewards good and punishes evil. My God created laws that take care of that. His universe is not ruled by wishful thinking, but by immutable laws. There is some kind of intelligence working its way through nature. But it is certainly not a conventional Christian or Judaic religious view," Einstein later said.