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VIEWES AND OPINIONS

A Jesuit on Evolution

IN the evolution of Modern Thought since the Renaissance ushered in the modern era, we can trace three major intellectual discoveries which have fatally undermined the structure of traditional Christianity. These were the Copernican theory, the theory of Evolution, and the Higher Criticism of the Bible, and their effect has been to destroy the old world, both of nature and of man, whose existence was assumed by, and which formed the essential basis of the traditional scheme of Theology.

If Man were a logical reasoning being, that is, if he really were what his own self-chosen name, *Homo Sapiens*, implies, the Christian religion would long ago have passed out with the now exploded conception of the Universe which it sought to explain and upon which its teachings were based. However, history gives us many examples of the survival of powerful institutions which continue to survive long after the operative causes and beliefs that first brought them into existence have completely dissolved. Vested interests are tough propositions and they survive, so to speak, by their own momentum, long after all reason for their existence has departed. The incredible survival of Christianity belongs to this class of phenomena.

Both Catholics and Protestants condemned the Copernican theory when it first appeared, and ever since the *cause celebre* of Galileo, the Churches, particularly the Church of Rome, have had cause to regret their futile opposition. We are all Copernicans to-day, even the Pope and 'Dr. Wand! As far as we know, only the "flat-earthers" now reject Copernicus, and from the standpoint of logic they would appear to be the only real Christians left, since the Copernican theory makes nonsense of a geographical after-life, which is essential to Christian belief.

Nowadays, the controversy has shifted to Evolution, which also involves the credibility of the Bible. Instead of frankly admitting that their doctrines have, all along, been guess-work based on primitive mythology and then "shutting up shop" as gracefully as possible, the Churches cling tenaciously to life in order to justify their existence and walk the apologetic tightrope with an agility that borders on the incredible.

As one might reasonably expect both from its experience and interest in survival, the Roman Catholic Church has specially distinguished itself by its subtle attempts to bring the evolutionary theory into line with its traditional theology; a theology derived with impeccable logic from pre-scientific myths which are, however, incompatible with any evolutionary explanation of human origins. Catholic theologians have surpassed themselves in argumentative subtleties in their attempts to find a way.

When Darwin first propounded his theory in its modern form, a theory destructive of all traditional theological dogmas about man, particularly his creation

and place in nature, it was received with howls of horror by all the Churches: in particular by the great conservative Church, the Church of Rome. The recorded statement of a theologian, "Adam never had to say 'Papa' to an ape," about summed up the general feeling.

But the Vatican has always been an adept in sitting on both sides of the fence, and the Galileo affair has left painful memories as to the danger involved in too quickly condemning new scientific theories. So, as early as 1871, we find a man of science who happened to be a Catholic, St. George Mivart, cautiously accepting the animal origin of man's *body*, not of course his immortal "soul"—and escaping condemnation. (Later on, he managed to run into ecclesiastical heavy weather over Hell.) Mivart was followed by Father Zahn, and even by a Belgian professor of the Catholic University of Louvain, Canon Dorlodot, who, in his *Darwinism and Catholic Thought*, not only defended Mivart's thesis, but actually claimed that the Theory of Evolution had been first propounded by St. Augustine of Hippo in his commentary upon Genesis and had only been re-discovered by Darwin!

The most exhaustive and ingenious of all Catholic attempts to square an acceptance of evolution with Christian dogma comes from the pen of an English Jesuit, Fr. Humphrey Johnson: *The Bible and the Early History of Mankind*, in which he walks the theological tightrope with the dexterity proverbial in his Order. He is not only a learned theologian, but has, apparently, a competent knowledge of anthropology.

Fr. Johnson is an evolutionist, that is, of course, in relation to Man's *bodily* organs, this is the only form of evolution that a Catholic may recognise. He declares boldly that the evidence for the simian origin of the human body is "overwhelming." It must be confessed that he does not lack courage in roundly denouncing his co-religionists for their "obscurantism" (he actually uses this word) in regard to evolution in the past and he rather daringly declares that, "The Church, while she can naturally lay down whether or no a particular hypothesis is, or is not, consistent with her doctrine, cannot judge scientific evidence as such."

This principle opens a door, even if a narrow one, for the Catholic evolutionist to pass through. Our author also finds encouragement in a recent encyclical of the Pope, which declares that the literature of the Old Testament, though of course, the inspired Word of God, is not exempt from the literary standards of criticism applied to Oriental literature in general; a literature which, as is well known, makes extensive use of allegory and symbolism, and is often not meant to be taken literally.

Obviously a Jesuit trained in dialectic can use this permission to get a lot out of Genesis—perhaps even the Snake! But the difficulty for the Catholic evolutionist really begins when he tries to get evolution into it. Fr. Johnson tackles the problem hopefully, but the difficulties for a Catholic are formidable, even to Jesuitical ingenuity.

For not only is Genesis, as our author is forced to admit, "from the point of view of Dogma, the most important book in the Old Testament," but it is prohibited to all Catholics, as Fr. Johnson reluctantly admits, to interpret it in any other framework than that allowed by the last Biblical Commission appointed by the Pope. Unfortunately for Catholic scientists, the last Papal Commission to sit authoritatively upon the Bible was the notoriously reactionary one appointed by the ultra-conservative Pope Pius X in the early years of the present century, with the explicit object of eradicating any trace of theological liberalism (Modernism) from the Church of Rome. In pursuance of which aim, the Commission asserted all the traditional statements such as, Mankind are descended from a single pair; the Garden of Eden really existed; Moses wrote Genesis, etc. Not much room left for evolution there!

Our Jesuit is even forced to lament "the traditional dislike of novelty, a distrust wholesome enough within proper limits, but when improperly applied, tending to close the mind to the force of evidence." Surely a masterpiece of diplomatic understatement!

However, our Catholic evolutionist consoles himself with the hopeful reflection that the decisions of the Biblical Commission, though authoritative, are "in themselves neither infallible nor irrevocable." No doubt, Catholic evolutionists are hoping for a more liberal Pope in the future who will allow them seriously to begin the task of turning the Book of Genesis into a kind of first edition of Darwin's famous books, by explaining that it doesn't mean what it obviously says. Even when the human body is safely derived from the animal world, the still more formidable question of Man's "immortal soul" will arise.

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast," and Fr. Johnson ends his book with the sanguine forecast: "But Rome, ever slow to admit deviations from tradition, nevertheless always admits those which are necessary when the time is ripe."

That Rome does so is, indeed, the strongest proof that she is, for all her claims to infallibility, a normal product of the evolutionary process, and that as all evolutionary products, she only survives by intelligently adapting herself to the ever-changing environment.

F. A. RIDLEY.

THOUGHTS ON RELIGION

I

IF men are so depraved and intractable that in order to be moral they must be threatened with an avenging Jehovah who has prepared a hell of burning brimstone and lakes of fire for the devil and his angels and immoral men, they may as well be given up as hopeless as far as morality is concerned. If an appeal to their compassion for each other and a demonstration of the value of virtue for virtue's sake are not sufficient to form a basis for human morality, as they in fact are not sufficient due to the badness of human nature, the morality of human society must depend on the physical force of society for its observance. An examination of past and contemporary societies shows that the physical force of the civil power has always been the real moral restraint on men and that the superstitions of religion, while they frighten a few of the credulous into moral submission to the social laws, generally divide men into factions and cause persecution and that in the past they have been the ostensible causes of wars.

It is strange that men have sought the basis of morality not in their own goodness or in laws devised

by themselves but in imaginary divinities who reward the good and punish the bad; and the search for it in the supernatural has been so widespread that it is evident that the basis of morality is difficult to find. The use of an avenging and rewarding god as a compeller of morality through the fear that he arouses in men is analogous to frightening bad children into obedience through the use of bogies, and deserves an equal amount of reverence. In the final analysis the world probably has a moral meaning; but men must devise their own laws by which they may live in society and must effect the observance of these laws through physical force. This does not mean that physical force alone is sufficient or that instruction in morality is not necessary. That religious superstition has been used by men of political power to try to make other men obey the civil laws shows that the makers and enforcers of laws sometimes need moral improvement themselves. It is impossible for the author of divine law to be an avenging and rewarding god; for it is contrary to reason for a just god to be a revengeful god; and the facts amply support the view that the phantasm of a terrible god and the whole array of fear inspiring religious conceptions are mental instruments by which men have exercised spiritual tyranny over each other and which have not helped to create or to enforce a beneficial morality for humanity. While religious power and political power have at times in history been united because each depends on the regimentation of men, the former through morality and the latter through the social laws, and because each can strengthen the other, religion is a separate field of conquest in which those aspiring to domination of men may acquire power over them. It is for this reason that religion is not necessarily a valuable instrument in the administration of government; and an organised religion may be prejudicial to the civil government and become a power within a power, an *imperium in imperio*, as has been the case with the Roman Catholic Church. The religionists who have made their living through religion have had their own interests in mind and not those of government or of interpretation of divine law; and it has been for the personal motives of gain and domination of men that the rabbis, priests, and preachers have kept alive for so long the idea of a vengeful Jehovah.

Religious morality is a travesty of morality. Its aim is not to make men fraternal toward each other; its teachers do not appeal to human compassion for its basis; but it is usually based on the selfishness of those who receive it; for its observance is exacted from men by promises of rewards and threats of punishment by a god.

It is to be observed that, if religious men really work for the good of a society, there should be an answer to the question: If religions are false, why are they the instruments by which morality, which is necessary to social existence, is taught and perpetuated? When the bad effects of religions through persecutions and wars and through doctrines productive of repression and ruin of the natural life are considered, religions are less valuable than the religionists make believe; and there is no necessary connection between the deceptions of religions and a workable morality. A man does not have to be deceived in order to be a good man. The answer to the question is as follows: If men are to succeed at a political or religious or other enterprise, it must be made to appear that they are working for the good of society or at least for the good of their followers. If they choose religion as a trade, and desire to make a living at it, they must talk of the good; and it is one of the ironies of human life that men have thus far in

their evolution seemed more susceptible to the good through the unintelligent side of their nature than through any other side. However rascally religious fanatics are, their scheme for influencing men and gaining social power or for making money from the credulous depends on their pretending to be supporters of the social ideas of the good and the right. Men live on the ideas of the good and the bad; and whoever is to gain a position of power among them must favour the good, which is the useful or is thought to be so. To advocate the bad, which is the harmful, would bring restraint or destruction on whoever advocated it and would be a form of criminality. Even revolutionists and conquerors who destroy men by the millions pretend to have the good on their side and use this idea and the idea that their enemies are evil as mental weapons. Also, it should be added that, since men are ignorant, superstitious, and fearful of misfortune, pain, and death, they are naturally the prey of the religious charlatans who sell balms and comforts.

The fictions of religions given to men in childhood as realities have some moral and spiritual value with the credulous and with women who are by nature more credulous than men. The value of religion as a belief providing certainty is counterbalanced by the effort necessary to combat doubt of the belief. Religion is of small comfort when all is said; and men with religious faith are as unhappy as those with none.

If men cannot be induced to live ethically through appeal to their compassion for others, they will not live ethically by being religious or by attending a church or by being threatened with hell and damnation. The latter might force through fear some men into obedience to the barest moral laws; but their utility stops there. Selfish men remain selfish, whether religious or irreligious. You may everywhere find men of a selfish and bad nature, who are members of churches and who in their dealings with other men are rascals.

It may be said that religion is necessary to make men moral; if human morality can rest only on the shaky foundation of religion, it does not have much foundation.

WILLIAM RITTENOUR (U.S.A.).

SOME MEDLEY

"NOTHING gives us more pleasure than a good piece of reasoning," so said David Hume, and it may be added as of much more value, right reasoning is right action. It would be insincere to say that Mr. H. H. Preece's two articles "Misconceptions of Materialism" and "The Doctrine of Necessity" are examples of cogent reasoning. Mr. Preece's style is not facile for quotation; it is too much the pedagogue and pupil, too didactic, authoritative, and final, too interspersed with inverted commas.

He most emphatically is not objective minded enough for philosophical criticism and exposition; widely acquainted with books, he does not appear to have assimilated them and made their thought his own. Prof. W. Macdougall's assertion is that "Modern Materialism is the assumption that mechanistic science can in principle achieve a complete and satisfactory account of the world and of man, his nature, origin, and destiny." I have previously commented on Mr. Preece's dismissal of this as "sheer nonsense and claptrap."

Now, in his article, "The Doctrine of Necessity," he says my attitude to this reveals me much of a Christian and confirms his suggestion that so many Freethinkers now take their case from Christians and talk like them.

Truth is not a personal matter, and definition is impersonal. Prof. Macdougall's definition of Materialism is perfectly correct and yet does not of necessity imply that he is a materialist. Facts again are impersonal, powerful intellects like Jonathan Edwards, Calvin, and others can quite properly take secular facts and use them to draw conclusions from dogmatic premises that give them half-truth self consistency. I hope this will convince Mr. Preece that I was and am fully aware of how I was answering the question. Now follows this extraordinary comment: "We can now see how Prof. Macdougall mis-stated the case, for he was not a materialist, and was seeing it from his own point of view." And more amazing still he is contemptuously referred to as "our leading exponent of animism" which, vide E. B. Tylor, is belief in spirits, the basis of religion.

I am then informed I quote the pantheist Spinoza as contending that "mind is a spiritual entity which is in line with Tylor's animism," and I agree with Macdougall's definition of Materialism because I see it from the same point of view. Further, I am reproached for not quoting my "rigid principle of necessity." Of course, not because I learn from my sublime teacher that "clear reason is infallible," and that reason is understanding which again is, by the use of the imagination, mental seeing. Necessity is what is known as immediate perception, not "foresight" insight, but "at sight." Necessity is ultimately based in the axiom of identity "what is, is." Necessity is one of the qualities or attributes that compose identity. To deny this is to deny that anything exists, which is absurd. It is that principle which makes all else possible, it is the principle of sameness, of cosmos, and not chaos, the *sine qua non* of evolution, of morality, and of science; in short, of all method and organisation.

How little does Mr. Preece understand either primitive animism or Spinoza's majestic Monism with its universal thought, immaterial spiritual attribute and extension! Mr. Preece so little understands this, he pontifically informs us that "one is negative." Of course it is, three is the logical unity; from this we can synthesise to infinity; this is one of the self-evident truths of Spinoza's thought: "Spiritual and Material triune by their relation" otherwise, "cohesion." Mr. Preece utterly fails to understand the objective nature of the principle of necessity, he thinks it is subjective, contributed to objects by the mind. Conception of it is by abstraction, and generalised as a universal, omnipresent quality in things. It would serve no useful purpose to track Mr. Preece's irrelevant references to great names of the past, all wholly *non sequitur*.

He concludes with this pontifical pomposity, "Science arises in human needs, Science is not merely theoretical, it is practical, it is not a matter of explanation nor prediction, but arises as a social product in the social needs." Surely the object of science is to fulfill our needs and not to deny our potentiality. The first purpose of science is the pursuit of truth for truth or knowledge's sake. Science appears at a certain stage of social culture, its practical implications are incidental. All sciences are parts of unity which in thought are arbitrarily separated and considered and experimented with. Confusion of thought arises from failure to understand this and to conceive of the universe as a whole, a unity. Science unified into a philosophy is capable of giving a working, reasonably true explanation of the universe and human destiny.

M. BARNARD.

A NEW VIEW OF RELIGION

THAT there are many rational views of religious problems he would be a bold man who attempted to deny. The Society of Friends, the Unitarians, the Modernists within the Church of England—all these take a view of religion which can be supported by the most straightforward arguments. Freethinkers and Rationalists, needless to say, think that they have answers to those arguments; but that the case for Unitarianism or Modernism is an arguable case is something which I, for one, would not wish to contradict.

But there is another type of case, superficially clear and yet fundamentally irrational. This is the case for what one may call the "crank." Now, I do not wish to be abusive; a "crank," in the generally accepted sense of that word, is a man who takes some part of a case and makes it into the whole, who gets things so out of proportion or focus that he cannot, as we say, see the wood for the trees.

Now, when I received a book called *God and Science*, by John W. Doorly (Frederick Muller; 10s. 6d.), I hoped that I might be about to read a worth-while consideration of the inter-relationships between science and religion, a book, perhaps of the same calibre as those of Jeans, Eddington, and Whitehead—authors who, whether we agreed with their philosophy or not, did at any rate set out a sensible attitude to life. But I am afraid that I have to report that, in my opinion, Mr. Doorley's book, after a most promising first chapter, tends to degenerate into what I have called a "crank" book.

Why do I say this? Well, primarily because Mr. Doorly has the irrational outlook of the numerologist. He thinks that the numbers three and seven, for example, are of special importance, and he tries very hard to show that those who wrote the books of the Bible found these numbers of importance. Hence, among other things, the doctrine of the Trinity and the fact that there are seven days in the week!

I am frankly surprised that a person of Mr. Doorly's obvious intelligence and intellectual power should allow himself to be so deceived by a superficially plausible theory as to accept this curious idea of numerology. He apparently considers that he has a genuinely scientific basis for his ideas. Repeatedly he states that it is possible to construct a scientific religion, which will contain the best parts of the physical science and the theology that we know to-day. But, every time that he says this, there is a tendency to come back to the theory of numbers. And this obsession with the matter of numerology is what makes me describe *God and Science* as a "crank" book, which may be studied with some gentle amusement by those who wish to understand the psychology of the religious. But it will not convince a single Freethinker; and it will probably not convince any of the more orthodox religious folk of any denomination.

J. R.

THE CHAPTER HOUSE, WESTMINSTER ABBEY

THERE was a game known as, "The Beadle of the Parish has Lost His Hat" and this medley of, "some say this and some say that" has been applied to the Dean and Chapter of Westminster Abbey, who lost his Chapter and his hat, according to the old time "Broad Sheet."

But, as a matter of history, he never had a Chapter to lose, because during the dissolution of Westminster Abbey in 1540, the Chapter House was seized by the Crown under the reign of "Bluff Hal," King Henry the VIII, and the ecclesiastical authorities, therefore, have

no jurisdiction to charge entrance fees. That is why visitors are able to inspect this charming historical Chapter House free of all charges; and 'tis true this monetary loss to the Dean makes him lean; financially, the Chapter House is now owned and controlled by the H.M. Office of Works; and here are points of interesting facts about the Chapter House in the Eastern part of the Cloisters, which dates back to the year 1250 A.D.

When entering, one can well imagine being ushered into some holy place in the East, because at the entrance each visitor is supplied with a pair of soft over-shoes so as not to damage the antique tiled floor. These rubber soled sandals are supplied free of charge, and it is a quaint sight, in London, to see persons fitting borrowed slippers to inspect this one-time sanctified sanctuary, now secularised!

The entrance is very ancient, as may be judged from the decayed stone statues of the Virgin and Child which have crumbled, and of the two guardian angels, one on either side, parts only of which remain. The vaulted passage within is none too high and is rather dark, an emblem of difficulty to enter, something after the style of the camel and the needle's eye story.

Further inwards, hangs "The Gate Beautiful" wrought iron, most delicately designed as to appear like a lace curtain. This metal gate was wrought at the ancient smelting works in Sussex, where also the railings surrounding St. Paul's Cathedral were cast.

Among the debris turned over during the re-building of the Cloister, when Henry III reigned, were the bones of Edwin, a friend of Edward the Confessor, and Abbot from 1049 to 1071; also the remains of Sulcard the monastic historian, 1075. Two copies of Sulcard's MSS. are still in the Cottonian Collection, from which present day knowledge can be verified, in the British Museum.

The vestibule has several doors; one of these opens into the ancient monastic treasury, now re-named the Chapel of the Pyx. This "Pyx" door formerly had a covering of human skin, a piece of which is still to be seen, fastened near the top hinge. This gruesome relic is the remains of flaying alive, and here is a section of the tanned skin of a thief, caught robbing the treasury. The Pyx was the assay office for testing the quality of gold and silver for minting money.

From the ghastly to the beautiful is up the stone steps, where a spacious and gorgeous but faded beauty is painted. Much of the brilliant colouring has been destroyed by defacing the walls, when one religion superseded another and the irreverent iconoclasts disfigured or tore down the most innocent emblems, as being superstitious and idolatrous; Catholics versus Protestants.

There are left a few traces of the paintings in vermilion, blue and gold, to show in pictorial panorama episodes of events of early days, and scriptural stories from the Apocalypse. These mural paintings extended around the whole of the circumference of this spacious Chapter House, appropriately named the "Incomparable." They are to be renovated by H.M. Office of Works.

Here are outstanding features, especially its central pillar, 55 feet in circumference and about the largest in England. This pillar supports the huge octagonal roof with a graceful fan-like spread; but this central pillar was also used as a whipping post for disciplining refractory monks. The sculptured foliage of the spandrels represents arcades of roses, and against this natural elegant workmanship there stands out in grotesque contrast, as is the case in all early church buildings, exceedingly hideous figures, both of men and beasts.

This Chapter House, during the Tudor Period, afforded accommodation for the State Papers, before these were removed to the Tower for safer keeping and afterwards to the Rolls Office in Chancery Lane, E.C.

In this Chapter House, Wolsey received with great pomp and ceremony his cardinal hat, and not long afterwards Henry VIII held his "divine" assembly and signed the "deeds" for the destruction of the abbeys and monasteries and similar religious houses "of ill fame."

During the 19th century, the old wooden flooring was removed, and to the astonishment of all true lovers of archaeology there was uncovered the original tiled pavement in practically a perfect condition; the colours in many places as brilliant as when first laid down during the year 1255! And to protect this antique masterpiece, visitors are admitted only when wearing special overshoes already mentioned.

This tiled floor is the innovation of Abbot Ware, and probably from his name, the word "ware" as applied to "ear-thenware," etc., originated in the year 1255.

The figure tiles are "encaustic," that is fired or burnt with alkalies. The figures upon the tiles represent historical subjects and among these, Edward the Confessor, founder of the Abbey, is giving his ring to a beggar; Henry III, playing with his hound; his Queenly wife Eleanor, with a hawk upon her hand; and the Abbot blessing his monks.

The outer tiles have fine eastern patterns of roses and also the Royal Arms, while a large bordering is made up of rows of fish, something like pike. These fish probably reflect the legend of the monk's vision while fishing in the Thames, and afterwards caused the Abbey's first foundation to be laid, according to a heavenly voice and visitor.

The glass lid cases contain many curious documents of very early ages, such as charters, foundation deeds, seals, and richly illuminated MSS. Among these are the interesting household account book of Henry VII's mother, the Lady Margaret, and also a peculiar piece of evidence in the form of a legal transaction known now as an indenture. This legal document also explains the meaning of the term "indenture" as a proof of "identification" by the "tooth-like" indents, or bites out of the paper edges, as a proof of identity for legal contracts.

The Westminster Abbey Chapter House is unusual for its many fine characteristics. Its vast size gave room for more than 80 monks on the stone benches surrounding the "House," besides seats for the Abbot and his chief brethren.

Here was held the first Parliament House for the Commons before the M.P.s used St. Stephen's, in the old Westminster Palace.

Under the Chapter House the Regalia or Crown Jewels were kept, as well as the Treasury of the King; also, the original Domesday Book, now in the Rolls Office.

W. AUGUSTUS VAUGHAN.

A railway porter was recently charged with stealing a Bible from a shop and was discharged, and the magistrate presented him with another Bible with the advice to read the Ten Commandments. It seems fairly clear that the porter had no idea of the kind of book he stole, for surely he would not have run the risk. However, it is not quite clear whether the magistrate intended his gift to be a punishment or not, but he certainly condemned the porter to read it, no doubt in order to make the punishment fit the crime.

FREETHOUGHT AND POLITICS

IN addition to Mothers' Meetings, Sewing Guilds and any other activity of mankind, Communists "infiltrated" the Freethought movement, seeking to further the theories of Karl Marx.

In Australia the Communists burned their fingers in the Freethought movement, for Freethinkers silenced them with the reprimand that in openly associating with organisations which espoused atheistic causes they were, to use their own expression, deviating from the party line, the Communist policy in Russia being to tolerate religion, doubtless believing that materialism will eventually extinguish it.

It is a pity that Communists, or any other theorists in economics, ever used Freethought platforms and publications for expressing their views, for economics is a mundane subject. Whenever religious organisations advocate any economic system it is because the sorcerers' sustenance is endangered by the opponents of that economic system. For example, would the Vatican say such nasty things about Russia if Socialists did not secularise education, thus reducing the intake of religiouses, and nationalise the land, of which the Roman Catholic Church owns so much?

But would the world be so jittery about atom bombs and their big brother the hydrogen bomb if the Roman Catholic Church was not leading the propaganda section of capitalism? And now the Moslems have entered the lists at the Vatican's side. If neither religion existed the world would be calmer, and that is where the Freethinker's task lies.

Anyway, why should the Freethought movement be disrupted because of economics? Despite thousands of years of turmoil, mankind had not found a perfect agricultural economy, and it is obvious that it is making heavy weather of industrialism. Perhaps, as the Bible says, man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward; or, as a Frenchman wrote, there will be no peace on earth until the last politician has been strangled with the entrails of the last priest; or, as Jehovah's witnesses claim, there will be no bliss until Christ returns to earth, a happening made more remote by the promise of a hydrogen bomb which might destroy this planet. (The Lord would be well advised to stay where he is for a while.) A free mind in economics is as desirable as a free mind in anything else.

Turning to Russia, is it true that materialism there has triumphed over supernaturalism? Or is it correct to say that supernaturalism has been brought to earth? Catholics kiss the Great Toe in the Vatican; but the Red Army keeps a permanent guard over the embalmed Lenin in the Kremlin. Has, as Wells wrote, worship of the embalmed taken the place of worship of the crucified? Freethinkers in Russia will have a lot of cleansing to do some day.

Freethought can function efficiently if it does not take sides in politics. The religious organisations do not take sides, as was illustrated in England during the recent General Election when the Roman Catholic Church offered its vote to both sides, expecting State aid for their parochial schools as a reward. A similar situation exists in New South Wales at this moment, with a General Election near. If Russia offered a substantial contribution towards Peter's Pence the Vatican would proclaim another Holy Year for thanksgiving. The Black International has become the Black Blackmailer.

B. CALCUTT.

ACID DROPS

In the ultra Tory paper, *The Recorder*, Major Tufton Beamish has let himself go about the "Godless" M.P.s who prefer affirming to taking the oath. He obviously is horrified—quite as much as practically the whole House of Commons was before 1888, when the indomitable Bradlaugh managed to pass his now famous Act allowing affirmation to all who object to kissing the Bible and ejaculating "S'elp me Gawd!" Major Beamish is literally frightened that we shall become a "Godless Marxist State," though if he only opened his eyes a little more he would see that quite a number of people object to both religion and Marx. Let us reassure the Hon. Member. It is he who will have to pull himself together, and realise that what he calls religion is being increasingly recognised as so much primeval Oriental superstition and rubbish, based on sheer ignorance. Major Beamish cannot turn the clock back.

In the same journal, we get the Rev. E. B. Henderson lashing out in this wise: "Perhaps there is some significance in the fact that the words sin and pride have in the centre of them the letter 'I.' Pride is the parent of sin." And he goes on, in the true Salvation Army style, to drag in the devil: "It was through pride that the devil became the devil." For Mr. Henderson, the devil is "an immortal being fallen from Grace and as real as himself; and *The Recorder* no doubt thinks this twaddle will give the Conservative Party a necessary pious "uplift." And in an age of science too!

That free land of the Noble Colour Bar, dominated by a very Christian government, South Africa, gave full proof that it will tolerate no "blasphemy." An American tourist there wanted to send a cable to the U.S.A. with the words "For God's sake" in it, and the Post Office clerk refused to send it. He did not mind "For heaven's sake," but "For God's sake" in a Christian country was far too blasphemous. Yet Christians are always telling us that whatever it was in the past toleration and freedom are now the two dominating factors in the Christian religion. But can a leopard change its spots?

Apparently the news that this planet is round has not yet reached the Moslem theologians in Malaya. For these great Pooh-Bahs are very concerned that so many Mosques have been built the wrong way. Thus, when the devout pray to Allah they do not face Mecca and consequently the prayers have been taking the wrong turning for many years, and Allah alone knows whether the prayers have arrived at all!

The World Council of Churches is to send an investigator to report on the South African racial question. Perhaps the representative will be in time to probe the case of the minister who was fined £20 for officiating at the marriage of a girl who was "slightly coloured." The whole idea of "investigating" seems rather superfluous, and sounds like a case of "Beelzebub casting out Beelzebub." Dr. Malan is also a Christian, isn't he?

During the election, the "floating voter" was well and truly courted. Now evidently the "floating worshipper" is also regarded as important, for a

floating church is to be anchored in a Rotterdam canal. Useful for Baptism, but only the hardest of Christians is likely to walk the plank in this weather.

As we expected, some bright Christian with obviously vivid recollections of the disastrous results of the wartime National Days of Prayer has suggested that we try *International prayers*; and the *Methodist Recorder* appears to approve and thinks that a "universal act of submission to God will surely bring light into our present darkness." We seem to be the only ones to have a thought for the Lord, for how can he ever hope to disentangle the meaning of millions of prayers wafted upwards in a thousand tongues? Perhaps it would require an *ultra* miracle.

Our religious journals still talk of "unity," but of course many of them are beginning to realise that there can never be any where the multitudinous sects of Christianity are concerned. As one Catholic journal puts it, there can be "no new road to reunion." There can be "no change, mitigation, or relaxation of the fundamental Catholic position throughout the ages." That is what we said at the outset of the proposal. Why should there be? Rome, as far as Christianity is concerned, is in the strongest possible position and need never give in an inch. The real struggle will never be between one Christian sect and another, but between Christianity and Freethought. And it does not require any prophet to declare what the outcome must inevitably be.

Cardinal Griffin, praising St. Theresa of Lisieux recently, said that "she was the greatest modern saint because she taught people the simplest and most direct way to get to heaven." We cannot help feeling that most people strongly object going to heaven any way, and would prefer to be taught the best and easiest way of staying down here; and we are quite sure that this applies to the Griffin himself. Still, a little nonsense even from a Cardinal brightens things up in a drab and tired world.

The Church loses no chances of publicity, and next year's Festival of Britain celebrations are a heaven-sent opportunity. It seems to have got to work with a will on Mr. Morrison, who has promised that "due care will be taken that religion will have its proper place" in the Festival.

Of course it will be the Churches who will want to settle what is meant by the "proper place" and not Mr. Morrison. What about some pious *tableaux vivants*? The famous one of our coloured brothers shown first with their land and the whites with their Bible would make a good beginning. The second act could then show the blacks on their knees with the Bible and the whites with the land—it would have an excellent effect on all religious visitors.

A piece of rock, ten miles in diameter, described by the *Daily Mail* as a "baby planet" is approaching the earth at a rate of a million miles a day. This is, of course, part of God's plan. He was fully aware in the year 4004 B.C. when He "set them (the stars) in the firmament of the heaven," that in the year 1950 A.C., a baby planet would refuse to stay put and hurtle out of sheer cussedness towards the earth. Silly, isn't it? However, it is going to miss us by millions of miles.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, R. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, 17s.; half-year, 8s. 6d.; three-months, 4s. 4d.

The following periodicals are being received regularly, and can be consulted at "The Freethinker" office: THE TRUTH SEEKER (U.S.A.), COMMON SENSE (U.S.A.), THE LIBERAL (U.S.A.), THE VOICE OF FREEDOM (U.S.A., German and English), PROGRESSIVE WORLD (U.S.A.), THE NEW ZEALAND RATIONALIST, THE RATIONALIST (Australia), DER FREIDENKER (Switzerland), DON BASILIO (Italy).

Lecture Notices should reach the Office by Friday morning. Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1, and not to the Editor.

Will correspondents please write on one side of the paper, and keep their letters brief. This will give everybody a chance.

SUGAR PLUMS

Prof. H. Levy's closely knitted and well reasoned lecture on "The Meaning of Proof" was well received by a good audience in the Conway Hall. Questions were on a high level and the applause at the close of the meeting was a sure indication that those present had thoroughly enjoyed the whole proceedings. The lecture was under the auspices of The National Secular Society, and a good deal of our literature changed hands.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti will have a busy weekend in Manchester. On Sunday evening (April 2) he will lecture in the Chorlton Town Hall for the local N.S.S. Branch on "Man's Animal Ancestry," at 7 p.m., and on Monday at mid-day he will address a Manchester University Secular Group, recently formed among the students, on "God or Man." Both subjects look attractive and should provide the respective audience with plenty of interest and discussion.

The Merseyside Branch N.S.S. will have a visit from Mr. F. A. Ridley to-day (April 2). He will speak in Coopers' Hall, 12, Shaw Street, Liverpool 6, at 7 p.m., on "Rome and Reason." The subject is one that Mr. Ridley can handle well and with authority on the ways of Rome. It also provides the local saints with an excellent opportunity for inviting the better type of Roman Catholic to attend and put questions.

Bradford Branch N.S.S. takes the open air to-day (April 2). Mr. Harold Day will be the speaker at the usual place in the Broadway Car Park at 7 p.m. Mr. Day is a very hard worker for the cause and really enjoys himself on the Freethought platform. We wish him and his branch every possible success during the season.

The suggestion that church attendance shall again be made compulsory for service men is in the air, which rather contradicts the claim made that attendance at church is better since it was made voluntary. The truth is, of course, that a padre would rather have a full church of conscript "worshippers" than a few volunteers. And so yet another British shibboleth, so fervently believed in, that "a volunteer is worth ten conscripts," goes by the board.

The recent crime wave is causing grave concern and many are the solutions that have been propounded. We think, however, that the Rev. W. H. Elliot should take the first prize for the best solution. He thinks that "Christian Commandoes, rugged blues and tough young men, organised and pledged to tackle teen-agers," is one of the answers. We could also try the Christian faith with the love that casteth out fear: that is, if it is really tested. The whole trouble, according to the Rev. Mr. Elliot, is that the world is so irreligious to-day. The fact that there have always been "crime waves," even in the days when people were "religious," seems to be forgotten.

Trappist monks of the Chapel of St. Mary-on-the-ladder-to-heaven, are (we quote verbatim), "exorcising a demon in a beautiful 22-year-old fair-haired girl. The demon growls fiendishly through the lips of the beautiful girl and throws her to the ground." Of what moment are H. Bombs and jet-planes? Trappist monks will still use the age-old technique of cursing the demon from his head to his feet and intermediate parts. It is stated that doctors can find no reason for her blazing temper and internal pains. Indigestion?

A new ally for those who are pressing for Disestablishment of the Church of England is Dr. Garbett, who is in favour of de-nationalisation of the Church, but the snag is Disendowment. In short, he is in favour of the privileges, but wants none of the responsibilities.

THE PROBLEMS OF MATERIALISM

III.

THE fascinating problem of time is dealt with by Dr. Worrall in his *Energy and Matter* very lucidly and from the materialist point of view. It is so easy to lose oneself in a maze of words when dealing with it, especially from a metaphysical standpoint.

As with other problems of materialism, Dr. Worrall gives us an historical survey with copious quotations from classical and other famous writers. Plato, for instance, considered time "an independent entity distinct from motion," while his pupil Aristotle "stated explicitly that time is but an aspect of motion." Newton, who was always religious, and who was influenced by Henry More, Isaac Borrow, and the German mystic, Boehme, followed Plato's ideas of space and time; but "the theory of relativity demolished the concept of absolute time which Newton adopted . . . and excluded the false supposition that clocks measure the flow of a time which is independent of motion." We can measure time—in a way—by a clock, but what is a clock? Einstein said in 1921, "We understand by a clock something which provides a series of events which can be counted . . . the series of events . . . is formed of elements all of which can be regarded as equal." Dr. Worrall elucidates all this and much more, dealing with many abstract theories (like Dunne's *The Serial Universe*) and eventually shows that:—

According to these philosophical idealists (Mach, Weyl, Jeans and others) the universe was timeless until man arrived on the scene. Yet long before man existed, clocks were keeping time as they are to-day. Before the ape-like ancestors of modern man began to walk the earth, the planet itself was sweeping out the days of its periodic motion. But *mathematical representations* of time are, of course, products of the human mind.

Cosmic space, says Dr. Worrall, that is, "the space demonstrated in the general theory of relativity, is the quantitative aspect of the gravitational field's extension." And to understand thoroughly what this means requires a careful reading of his chapter on space. I cannot give here anything like a clear précis of his detailed discussion of the problems set before the materialist. But there are one or two quotations on matter in this chapter worth repeating.

As is perhaps well known, Bradlaugh always refused to call himself a materialist unless his own definition of matter was accepted. What was this definition? "By the word matter or substance or nature," he says in his *Has Man a Soul?* "is intended the sum of all phenomena, actual, past, possible, and of all that is necessary for the happening of any kind and of every phenomena." That was written about 90 years ago. And what does "modern materialism" according to Dr. Worrall in 1948 tell us? "Matter is the sum total of all physical structures and all the physical processes which constitute change." There seems very little difference here. Even the one-time "Bible of Materialism," d'Holbach's *System of Nature*, written in 1770, says, "The only existence is matter, i.e., physical substance and the motion that is inherent in it." Even when Dr. Worrall says, "As a whole, each structure, state or process is a physical quality; that is to say, a mode of existence or mode of behaviour of matter," he is using familiar expressions known to all who have read the almost forgotten discussions on philosophy which made Bradlaugh so magnificent a defender of Atheism.

The final chapter in *Energy and Matter* deals with energy, and Dr. Worrall appears to me to equate modern materialism with dialectic materialism. If this is so, I am sorry to differ from him. Anyone who wants to see how dialectic (or dialectical) materialists agree with each other should read *Aspects of Dialectical Materialism*, in which Bernal, Carritt, Macmurray, Levy, and others, have a high old time in telling us what it is, and why their own individual conception of it is the only true one. And Prof. Bernal makes a special point of insisting that dialectical materialism is not mechanical (mechanistic) materialism. He puts it thus: "The world view of the mechanical materialist is distorted as a result of a different but equally dangerous ignorance: the simple materialist invokes God, but in a way so indirect that he is unconscious of the fact. . . . Mechanical materialism . . . while ostensibly based on science, is really based on a mythological abstraction from science. . . ." This is just drivel.

Prof. Bernal, of course, stands by Marx right or wrong, exactly as past generations stood by Moses. He confidently tells us that the "success of Marx was possible only because he was not, in contrast to the founders of most philosophic systems, an ignorant man. . . ." It is a pity that we have not the opinions of the philosophers concerned.

What do I mean by "mechanistic materialism?" Simply the absence of "Vitalism." I do not believe that there is any evidence of something "supernatural" in the Universe—say, a Vital Force which explains all the problems confronting believers and unbelievers alike.

Prof. East deals very effectively with the battle between the Vitalists and the Mechanists in his *Mankind at the Cross Roads*. He points out, "The Vitalist insists on an essential difference between the living and the non-living. He maintains the inadequacy of mechanistic description of all properties of living

matter." And he adds, "This strife has always seemed to me to be a particularly useless form of occupation caused by a philosophical type of mind that can form no true conception of the real problems of science. Of course, as the Vitalist says, the Mechanist has not explained life. Science has not explained anything. The object of science is to codify knowledge and to describe relations between phenomena in the simplest possible terms. The simplest terms found to be useful are terms of motion. And it has been found just as useful to describe life phenomena in terms of motion as it has been to describe the movements of planets, the actions of molecules of water, or the vagaries of the electrons of radium. How far one can go in such descriptive terms no one knows."

When, therefore, the dialectical materialist opposes mechanistic materialism, it is he who has brought in "something," a vital force, the ghost of a God, something supernatural, and not we, the true and only logical materialists. I am sure that there will be some violent reactions to this statement.

But whether Dr. Worrall means by his dialectical materialism what I mean by mechanistic materialism or not, does not really detract from his very fine work which I strongly recommend to all who wish to study energy and matter based on the latest scientific methods and discoveries.

Yet we may ask one question — have we advanced very much in these problems? For even Dr. Worrall has to go back to 1874, to Prof. Tyndall's famous Belfast Address, to end his book. "We see in matter," said Tyndall, "hitherto covered with opprobrium, the promise and potency of every form and quality of life. That has been the stand of nearly all the great Freethinkers. The others don't matter."

H. CUTNER

A VOICE FROM INDIA

THE Editor of *The Hindu*, a Madras daily paper, invited Mr. S. Ramanathan, a Vice-President of the Indian Rationalist Association, to contribute an article for a special issue of 92 pages to mark the inauguration of the Indian Republic on January 26. Congratulations to the Editor; perhaps one day, the editor of a British daily will have the courage to extend a similar invitation to a representative of active Freethought in this country—though it may be a long time. Here are some extracts from Mr. Ramanathan's article as they appeared in *The Hindu* of January 26, 1950:—

Primitive man had to fight the tyrant chief of his clan, the medicine man who interfered with every movement of his life. Later there was the fight against the Priest, the feudal Lord, the King, the Church. Now the fight is against the State which masquerades as the Church and the Church which masquerades as the State:

The fight was at the time of the Vedas: between Vasishtha and Viswamitra, whether privileges go by birth or by merit. The fight continued down the ages: Brihaspathi, Kapila, Buddha and Sankara. Shall we shove on the responsibility of life to an external God or should man have to shoulder the responsibility by himself? That is the opposition between religion and reason, Theism and Atheism. The Rationalist faces the issue and takes the responsibility on himself. The religionist avoids the issue and throws the burden on God. Buddha was a non-conformist. He denied God and the soul, but was caught in the pseudo logic of *Karma*. According to him, man does not survive death since he has no soul, but his *Karma* lives, even as the fruit lives in the plant that sprouts out of its seed and the parent lives in the offspring. After Buddha's death, his Atheism earned him a place among the Gods but his teaching was banished

from India. Sankara was more subtle. He was a conformist, although he was accused of being a Buddhist in disguise. He did not say "There is no God," but said "I am God." He got away with it. Others could not be subtle. They got it in the neck. Socrates was made to drink poison because he corrupted the youth by speaking against current superstitions. Giordano Bruno was burnt at the stake.

The World Union (of Freethinkers) has now active National branches functioning in many countries in both the hemispheres. It is interesting for us in India that the President of the last Congress of the World Union held at Rome on the 9th September last year was Charles Bradlaugh Bonner, the grandson of Charles Bradlaugh who along with Annie Besant led the campaign for militant Atheism and Freethought in England. The personalities of Bradlaugh and Besant are interwoven with the history of India's struggle for National Independence. Bradlaugh came to India to speak at a session of the National Congress and championed the cause of India from his seat in the British Parliament. Annie Besant became one of us and led us in many a battle against foreign domination. The Indian rationalists excuse her later theosophy as an aberration and remember with gratitude her earlier fight for the cause of Rationalism.

South India took the lead in starting the movement twenty years ago. There are small groups functioning in Delhi, Bombay and elsewhere in India. An All India organisation has been set up at the first Convention of Indian Rationalists which met in Madras on the 18th December last. Dr. R. P. Paranjpye is the President and leading personalities like K. T. Shah and M. N. Roy are in the Working Committee. Messages expressing solidarity with the Indian Rationalists were received from the President of the World Union and many of the National branches. It remains for the Indian Rationalists to take time by the forelock and march abreast of their fellows in other countries.

R.H.R.

THE ANTI-SHAKESPEARE CRAZE

I WILL begin my reply to Mr. Kent by assuring him that if anything could further strengthen my belief in Shakespeare's authorship it would be his article in *The Freethinker* of 5th February; and I venture to add that such must be its effect on every reader who can discriminate between plain evidence and far-fetched supposition.

All he can give us in support of his contention is a medley of irrelevant statements, unwarranted assumptions and pointless questions.

No mention is made of the contemporary references to Shakespeare's character and work found in the writings of Jonson, Greene, Francis Meres, Chittle, Hemming and Condell, most of whom knew him personally. In fact, he shows the weakness of his case equally by what he omits and commits.

Before proceeding to discuss some of his "arguments," I would draw attention to a curious instance of oblivion on his part. In his opening paragraph, referring to a remark of mine, he says: "I do not know who are the people with a 'foregone conclusion' that William Shakespeare of Stratford-on-Avon did not write the plays." That is very strange, seeing that Mr. Kent, himself, is one of them, as is sufficiently shown in his letters on the subject. I could mention another—a prominent writer for *The Freethinker*, who, if my memory serves, has, on more than one occasion, shown his predilection for an aristocratic authorship of the plays. However, be that as it may, after padding out the rest of the paragraph (a lengthy one) with a lot of inconsequent matter, he asks: "Will Mr. Yates explain why Jonson wrote nothing whatever about Shakespeare until he had been dead over six years? It is just what you would expect if the author was a concealed nobleman, Jonson would discreetly wait to be asked."

We have it at last—the "concealed nobleman" stunt. Will Mr. Kent explain how, if the nobleman concealed his authorship, Jonson knew of it? Also, what it was that he discreetly waited six years for permission to do? Was it to write the following? "I do love the man and do honour his memory on this side idolatry as much as any. He was indeed honest, and of an open and free nature. He had an excellent fantasy, brave notions and gentle expressions." Was Jonson the man to write thus of one whom, according to Mr. Kent, he knew at the time to be a supposititious fraud? If Shakespeare was an impostor, then Jonson was, on his own showing, both hypocrite and liar. Will Mr. Kent explain that?"

But who was this "concealed nobleman" who could so lightly forego immortal fame in favour of an obscure actor? Several are named, Derby, Rutland, Oxford, and it may be one or two more (Bacon is at present under a cloud). There is no reason to stint the number of blue-blooded candidates for dramatic honours except the obvious one that each rules out the other, and consequently, damages the claims of all.

But what an outrage on probability! That anyone, nobleman or commoner, should spend time and labour on the composition, whole or part, of 37 plays constituting the greatest effort of dramatic genius the world has known, to father them on another!

What conceivable motive could the supposed author have had for such conduct? Are we to believe that the mind that produced such works was unconscious of their transcendent merit, and incapable of estimating the effect they would have on posterity? We are told that the theatre was not held in high repute, and that it would have been derogatory to a nobleman to write for it. Then what was his object in writing the plays? The concealing of his authorship does not explain why he wrote them. In this case it could have been neither desire of gain nor fame—two of the strongest incentives to human exertion. To a nobleman the profits arising from dramatic work would at that time be trifling, and by assigning his work to another, all hope of fame was precluded. I cannot conceive any argument that could make such behaviour credible.

In my last article I pointed out that, as a classical scholar, Bacon would not have been guilty of many of the errors contained in the plays. To which objection Mr. Kent (with the view of rehabilitating the "sere and yellow" Baconian craze) replies by quoting an editor of Bacon's Essays: "For accuracy of detail he had no care whatever . . . carelessness of detail is certainly one of the characteristics of his essays." When it is a question of discrediting Shakespeare Mr. Kent insists on the necessity of scholarship. When the errors in the plays indicate that no classical scholar could have written them, we are told that Bacon was habitually careless of details. In Shakespeare's case, correct scholarship is made a necessity of authorship. In Bacon's case it becomes a negligible condition.

Again, "Mr. Yates does not seem to know that *The Winter's Tale* was based on a story called *Pandosto*, by Robert Greene, and that he, who was attached to both Universities, gave Bohemia a coast."

I was well aware that Bohemia had a coast-line in the thirteenth century, but I am not so sure that Greene knew any more than Shakespeare that it had none in the sixteenth, despite the fact that he was "attached to both Universities." Political changes in the boundaries of some European countries were not generally known in England at the time.

I was also aware (as who that has examined the sources of the plays is not?) that Greene, in his *Pandosto*, not only furnished the plot of *The Winter's Tale*, but that in his *Groatsworth of Wit*, he also furnished good evidence that Shakespeare wrote it. "Yes, 'trust them not,'" he writes, "for there is an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his tiger's heart wrapt in a player's hide, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you; and being an absolute *Johannes Factotum*, is, in his own conceit, the only Shakes-scene in a country."

I do not suggest that Mr. Kent was ignorant of this disparaging, but conclusive piece of contemporary evidence. On the contrary, I believe he knew it and—suppressed it.

Replying to my expressed agreement with Prof. Raleigh's statement regarding Shakespeare's "unerringly sure touch with the characters of his high-born ladies," Mr. Kent says: "Shakespeare as actor would come into contact with the nobility! Presence does not imply contact."

A nice etymological distinction! When we meet a friend, we are not in contact with him unless we actually get hold of him—excellent! "Are the King and Queen of Denmark shown chatting with the players?" he asks. What the devil would they want chatting with the players when the plot of the play does not require it?

"Mr. Yates," he says, "may be surprised to know that there is hardly a point he raises that I introduce in debating on this issue." On the contrary, after reading his present attempt, I should be surprised if he did.

The rest of his article consists of a string of questions founded on vague surmises which prove nothing—unless it be his industry in gleaning for trifles. I will cite two as examples of the rest. (1) "How does Mr. Yates explain the fact that Shakespeare's own company did not visit the town until he had been dead six years, and then were not allowed to perform?" (2) "How does he account for the fact that no First Folio or Quarto has ever been found there?"

Will Mr. Kent explain in his turn how these questions, and others like them, disprove Shakespeare's authorship. Taken in the bunch they do not yield a scrap of positive evidence.

A. YATES.

PROFESSOR HOYLE AND THE UNIVERSE

THE B.B.C. and Prof. Hoyle are to be congratulated on that extraordinarily interesting series of lectures *The Nature of the Universe*. It must always be with some trepidation that the lay mind ventures criticism on abstruse, technical subjects. But Prof. Hoyle went beyond the mere recital of the latest finding of scientific research in his own particular field and impinged on the field of rationalist thought. This is not said in any sense derogatory to him; on the contrary, all rationalists especially have reason to be grateful to him. Through the B.B.C., Hoyle has trumpeted the scientific approach to millions, as we could never hope to do.

Briefly, Hoyle's position seems to be this. In his own words, "the creation issue simply cannot be dodged." So he proceeds to deal with it and to arrive at a theory of "continuous creation" as the explanation of our Universe's origin. He presumes that out of nothing—the true nothingness of science, a vacuum where no material, corporeal or incorporeal mass or force exists—that in this vacuum an extremely tenuous gas, which he calls "background material," is being continually

created. From this rarified gas develops the interstellar gas, which concentrates in greater density to form the galaxies, producing finally semi-solid or solid bodies like stars and planets. It follows from this that the pressure of this continually forming background gas forces the other elements, namely the galaxies, outwards, and thus we have the phenomenon of an expanding universe. The galaxies are moving outwards with ever increasing speed as they get further away, until they are travelling at a speed greater than light—out, out into an infinite space!

We have, therefore, two revolutionary ideas here, with which we rationalists are concerned—continuous creation within the measure of Time, and an infinite universe within the conception of Space.

To take the former contention first; Hoyle tells us that the idea of continuous creation is not new but "what is new is that it has been found possible to put the hitherto vague idea in a precise mathematical form." Unfortunately he gives us no information about this mathematical formula; perhaps he will elaborate this point in the book about to be published, embodying his B.B.C. lectures.

In the absence of any explanation we must indulge in our own speculations as to whither this theory leads us. The concentration of stellar gases into galaxies, the rotation of masses and the laws of gravity are things which can be understood by anyone of ordinary intelligence. But in a vacuum, where there is neither force nor mass, where neither the law of gravitation nor any other law can operate, how can the formation of matter occur? It almost looks as though Hoyle is indulging in the principle of shifting the difficulty one stage back, like the Deists do. If we Atheists say we cannot explain the Universe in terms of starting or eternal continuity of "origin," the Deist retorts, "Where there's where the Divine Architect comes in. When we reply that this merely shifts the problem, 'Whence came the Universe?' to, 'Whence came your Divine Architect?' we are told He has existed eternally. To which we object that such a phrase is a contradiction in terms; for if He created everything that exists, then by the very nature of the definition we give to the word 'existence,' he cannot be said to have existed prior to his own creation. Existence is something inherent in a characteristic inseparable from, the existing Universe. But I need not elaborate an argument familiar to every reader of this journal.

Now let us turn to the second contention of the Professor, that of the galaxies moving out into unlimited space. Though astronomers and astro-physicists have been cautious in their pronouncements on this subject, the theory of a "finite but unbounded" universe seems to have received general acceptance. Einstein's theory of the curvature of space would seem to imply such a principle.

Nothing that we know of, or which we can subject to physical test, has the characteristic of infinity. Infinity is merely a symbol. Ten divided by three may give us the symbol of the ever recurring decimal three, but in the realm of reality we know that ten marbles just cannot be divided into three equal shares. Greek mathematicians may have amused themselves with the problem of a length of wood that can be cut in half, halved again, and so on, *ad infinitum*; but in the real world any carpenter knows there comes a time when there is no more wood to be sawn, there is only sawdust. Infinity gives peculiar results; it admits of no qualification. We know that in any determined length there are always twelve times as many inches as feet.

but in an infinite length there are the same number of inches as feet, namely, an infinite number.

Prof. Hoyle says that in spite of its extreme tenuity the background gas exceeds "by about a thousandfold" the combined quantity of material in all the galaxies put together, as the interstellar gas outweighs the material in all the stars put together. Yet if the Universe is infinite, then obviously the amount of gas, background or interstellar, and the galaxies, are equal in quantity, namely, infinite in quantity. I do not see how Prof. Hoyle or anyone else can gainsay this. The idea of an infinite universe is a metaphysical one, not one of the realm of physics.

Space forbids me to deal with the many other absorbing problems brought up by Prof. Hoyle. He does not think that future studies in cosmology will reveal anything so sensational as the last 500 years have given us. It may be, indeed, that cosmological study may decline, as it did after the Hellenic Age. "Secrecy, nationalism, the Marxist ideology, these are some of the things that are threatening to choke the life out of science." Religion appears to him "but a blind attempt to escape from the truly dreadful situation in which we find ourselves. . . . I do not like the situation any better than they do. The difference is that I cannot see the smallest advantage to be gained by deceiving myself." On the subject of life after death he remarks pertinently that the subject would be advanced if we had a clearer idea of what our minds are. But "if something we call mind does survive death, then this something *must be capable of physical detection.*" (My italics.) I think we Rationalists can leave it at that!

As regards Christianity and eternity, Hoyle confesses "I am already very much aware of my own limitations and I think that three hundred years would be as long as I should like to put up with them. Now what the Christians offer me is an eternity of frustration: And it is no good their trying to mitigate the situation by saying that sooner or later my limitations would be removed, because this could not be done without altering me." The great lesson of adult life is, he says, that one's consciousness is not enough; but if we could share the consciousness of a Shakespeare, or Beethoven, or Michelangelo, etc., "such a dynamic evolution would be more in keeping with the grandeur of the physical universe than the static picture offered by formal religion."

Every Rationalist should endeavour to get Prof. Hoyle's book when it comes out.

P. C. KING.

CORRESPONDENCE

WAS PLATO A SOPHIST?

Sir.—I fail to see how I can be considered guilty of "echoing some theological assertion" when I merely ask H. H. Preece to show how any scientific method he cared to choose can be applied to psychology? I feel that your correspondent attempts to ring the change, both here and also when he accuses me of being (in his opinion) a "poor Sophist." Whether I am or not, is irrelevant to the point under discussion, namely, "Was Plato a Sophist?" H. H. Preece affirmed he was, and again I merely asked him for the authorities for such a statement. I note that such authorities are not forthcoming. It would appear that your correspondent prefers to hang a sermon on my questions rather than answer them.—Yours, etc.,

VERNON CARTER.

MATERIALISM EXAMINED.

Sir.—I must agree with the first sentence of Vernon Carter's well-written article in *The Freethinker*, 5th March, 1950. Yes, it certainly is clap-trap.

Materialism is easily understood by the man in the street, and that must be its interpretation. The error that many of our clever writers on such subjects make is to assume that humans hold a more unique place in Nature than, say iron, or that mankind is more of a miracle than, say aluminium. Once having recognised that man is just an accident of no particular consequence, or importance, we can then begin to understand what we are talking about.

Unfortunately, owing to certain mechanical effects and defects of the brain, some of the clever writers cannot get away from the idiotic religious training that makes them still imagine a postulated god whilst perhaps denying it. Their brains are clouded with a metaphysical uncertainty, trying either to separate that which does not require separating, or combining incompatible words and sentences together, like for instance:—"Lions drink water; and they are strong." Two simple sentences that may have no connection.

Not being clever, but only simple minded, it seems to me that all things act in relationship to one another, somewhat like the cogs in a clock; anyway, without bodies we should not think or act, for we only think and act first, as our bodies demand, secondly, we are very often deluded into taking false steps to fulfil that demand.

Owing to faulty knowledge and faulty brains, and being purely mechanical, responding to those faults, we find it very difficult to avoid being deluded.

Everybody with the exception of idealists, metaphysicians and some philosophers understand the meaning of mechanical and material: humans, like all other things in Nature, are purely mechanically material.—Yours, etc., P. TURNER.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

INDOOR

Lewisham Branch N.S.S. (Hope Hotel, 73, Loampit Vale, S.E.)—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: "The Curse of Immortality," Mr. L. EBURY.

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: A Lecture.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Chorlton Town Hall, All Saints).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "Man's Animal Ancestry," Mr. R. H. Rosetti (President N.S.S.).

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Coopers' Hall, 12, Shaw Street, Liverpool 6).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "Rome and Reason," Mr. F. A. RIDLEY (author *Evolution of the Papacy*).

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "General Elections—Ancient and Modern," Prof. G. W. Keeton, M.A., LL.D.

OUTDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. HAROLD DAY.

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. J. BARKER.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Bombed Site, St. Mary's Gate).—Lectures every lunch hour, 1 p.m.: Messrs. G. Woodcock and C. McCALL.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, 12 noon: Mr. L. EBURY.

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