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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

The Invention of a New Religion

HISTORY is full of impostures. "a vast Mississippi of falsehood," as that "eminent Victorian," Thomas Arnold, once described it. Nor has religion been backward in contributing its share to the fraudulent pool. Whilst it would be, no doubt, an over-simplification to ascribe religion entirely to interested clerical fraud, as for example, in the opinion of Voltaire, one should not be too hasty in rejecting such a point of view. Cold, calculated lying has, alas, played a not inconspicuous part in shaping "this sorry scheme of things," and there have been only too many occasions in recorded history when, in practice at least, religion has accepted "The Economic Interpretation of History" which it is now the fashion in religious circles to attribute exclusively to "marxist materialism."

We do not know whether many, or even any of the present readers of *The Freethinker* have ever read that unique and extremely suggestive pamphlet by the late Professor B. H. Chamberlain, and published way back in 1912 by Messrs. Watts for our friends of the R.P.A. Despite its small size, Professor Chamberlain's small masterpiece constitutes, in its own way, a classic of the history of religion. The present writer, at least, does not know any other work which covers precisely the same ground; under its expressive title of *The Making of a New Religion* the learned author surveys the deliberate and artificial creation of "a new religion," viz., Shintoism, by the ruling military-official caste of Japan during the closing decades of the 19th century. Chamberlain, who was himself a professor in a Japanese university during the formative years, was an eye-witness at close quarters of what one of its creators actually described frankly as "The Religion of Imperialism." As he points out very appropriately, Voltaire's theory, now often regarded as outmoded, that religion was a conscious fraud deliberately perpetrated by self-interested priests and by their secular backers, whilst it may not be as universally true as its author supposed, is, notwithstanding conformable with the facts in certain actual cases, of which this contemporary Shintoism was as authentic as any.

For the benefit of our readers, we may briefly recall the historic circumstances which actually attended the Japanese "invention of a new religion" in the closing decades of the 19th century. Japan, a "hermit land" since the early 17th century, thanks to the deliberate policy of "insulation" adopted by the rulers of the island-empire, was forcibly "opened up" by British and American warships towards the middle of last century. Again, the (in itself, not unjustified) fear of foreign invasion and conquest provoked a Japanese patriotic renaissance. The "national revolution" of 1868 abolished the immemorial feudal system and unified the entire country under the rule of the Emperor (Tenno or Mikado), who had previously been a kind of sacred recluse used as a puppet by the feudal lords.

There followed that startling political and military

renaissance which, in the course of a generation, raised Japan from a feudal backwater in world-affairs to the status of a world power; a dramatic evolution destined to be dramatically concluded five years ago, by the Atomic Bomb which obliterated Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a criminal record, itself ended by an unparalleled crime.

In transforming Japan, however, the astute rulers of the new Empire soon found that brute force and Western armaments were not enough. A revolution in the national ideology was equally necessary in order to convert the peaceful Japanese Buddhists of the 19th into the warlike Jingo imperialists of the 20th century. This startling transformation could only be effected by "the invention of a new religion" by the effective substitution of warlike Shintoism for pacifist Buddhism, hitherto the dominant Japanese religion. In place of the cosmopolitan ethics of non-violence, which Gautama Buddha had preached twenty odd centuries before Gandhi, "the new religion," Shintoism, a crude cult of ancestor worship, of extreme nationalism, and of militarist ethics, was deliberately fostered, revived, and even clothed in artificial forms, by its imperial creators.

B. H. Chamberlain goes on to describe the intensive generation-long hothouse cultivation of the new creed, by the Japanese ruling caste: how the national history was blatantly falsified to magnify the Imperial cult, and how modern science was deliberately stretched on to a procrustean bed of fiction in order to fit it into the crude mythology of Japan's "new religion." Beneath a transparent façade of primitive ritual, officially sponsored by the State, Shintoism boiled down to a creed of ultra-chauvinism, which centred upon Emperor-worship and the glorification of an ultra-military ethic, which impelled the Japanese armies in their continental wars against China and Russia, to military feats that, inspired by this new fanaticism, aroused the astonishment of the world.

However, Shintoism, with its military ethic of "Bushido," was not allowed to take root and grow only by its own inherent merits. Contrarily, Shintoism was a hothouse plant imposed where necessary by force and protected against hostile criticism by the full force of the police and the State; the famous Japanese law "against dangerous thoughts" was directed initially and primarily against the domestic critics of "the Religion of Imperialism," the cult of "Emperor-worship," Shinto.

In the real world, unlike that of fairy tales, violence often succeeds, at least temporarily. Whilst Nemesis may come, its retributory operations are often long-delayed. Nemesis came, and in a peculiarly frightful and non-discriminatory form, to Japan, when "the Religion of Imperialism" along with the Imperial power which created it, was vanquished in a night by Western science in the shape of the Atomic Bomb. However, prior to August, 1945, Shintoism had enjoyed a long run and sensational military and political deeds had been wrought in its name and at its behest. But for the historical accident that Japan encountered ultimately superior military power, instead of its actual half century, the military

cult of "Emperor-worship" might have lasted for untold centuries.

The example given by Professor Chamberlain is timely as well as impressive. Voltaire is not so outmoded as is sometimes supposed: even in our own sophisticated age, priestly imposture, backed by cynical secular self-interest, is still possible on a gigantic scale. That other historical religious forgery, Judaism, also referred to by Chamberlain, has lasted for upwards of 2,000 years and in the newly recreated State of Israel, has just got what looks like a new lease of life. Whilst Hitler made a gigantic and all but successful attempt to found what was, in effect, a new pagan religion, with himself as the new Odin, the "Aryan" Messiah.

It is much to be hoped that *The Invention of a New Religion* may be re-issued in this country. For while Shintoism is dead, it would be too optimistic to assume that we have seen the last example of religious fraud, and "forewarned is forearmed."

N.B.—The Roman Catholic Church, in its worldly wisdom, allowed Japanese Catholics to worship the Emperor "as a civil rite!"

F. A. RIDLEY.

THOUGHTS OUT OF A BOOK

It is a truism, on which we have all at sometime or other dwelt, that man's inventions have brought about as much, or more, evil than the good intended, and sometimes realised. To thinking-people, probably the most outstanding case is that of printing. This has multiplied man's opportunity to read, and at the same time for some of us, our chance to reach a wider audience than our voice, or letters, or hand-written manuscripts could possibly attain. This seems grand, and we are loud in our praises of our Gutenbergs and Caxtons, until we recall that Herr Goebbels and our Press Lords are also printers. Broadcasting, of course, is only an extension of printing, and the daily newspaper only a dilution, or aeration, of matter and arguments, more solidly set forth in books.

The Freethinker, therefore, who rejoices in his treasure, Freethought, and wishes to share it with his fellows, is brought up sharply against this question: Does book-learning aid man in the task—and as we think, duty—of thinking freely, clearly, and rightly, more than it hinders him from so doing? This is what the cliché-ridden politician and journalist calls a "nice question," meaning that there is so much to be said for both sides, that he must hurry to resume his cautious but uncomfortable seat on the fence.

Such ways are not for the Freethinker. Perhaps he will never be able to decide on this question, but if that be so it is no cause for shame. Men are not gods that they should know everything. However that may be, I would like to marshal here some of the arguments in favour of the view that overmuch of book-learning is more an enemy to Freethought than a state of, shall we say, semi-illiteracy. In other words, I think there is more hope that the cinema-sodden mob of our days will come down on the right side of the fence than the university graduate with his head full of the Classics of Greece and Rome and much of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures contained in the Bible.

Let us consider for a moment for what purpose we read. It is also germane to this inquiry why men write books, but in order not to encumber our argument let us stick to our first question. We read, then: (1) to gain knowledge of facts, and, hardly less important, men's

opinions about facts; and (2) for pleasure, or pastime. To these reasons the cynic might add that we read because we have nothing better to do or because we wish to avoid thinking our own painful thoughts. But here the cynic will be dismissed with the contumely to which he is quite accustomed. Having cleared the ground, we can proceed by comparing the imbibing of facts and arguments to the partaking of food and condiments. The facts are as necessary to mental life as food is to bodily existence; condiments, or other men's thoughts, are not a *sine qua non* to mental life, but they serve the purpose of condiments—to give appetite and to heighten our enjoyment in assimilating the facts.

Item 2, the pleasure we get from reading, is due to many causes, and often has little to do with the matter of the book. Good prose, like good poetry, has an aesthetic appeal to our ear, almost independent of the sense. Even the jabberwocky of Lewis Carroll brings great joy to much older beings than children. When sense and sensibility combine, reading becomes one of the front-rank pleasures of life.

But there is a serpent in our Eden, variously named Surfeit, Satiety and Indigestion. We all know what these words mean in connection with our daily bread. One half at least of the complaints about which we consult our doctors are due to intestinal stasis, or to give it a less elegant name, constipation. We all know also what our doctors advise for dealing with this trouble: eat less, eat non-constipating foods, and keep your bowels open. It is surely not necessary for me to complete our analogy, it suffices merely to echo the medico's words: read less, and, I would add, think more. Thinking more is the brain's way of excretion. Thinking has been compared by Georges Cabanis (1757-1808) to this necessary physical process. He wrote that "the brain secretes thought as the liver secretes bile." It will be noticed that Cabanis used the word *secretes*, which has practically the same meaning as *excretes*, the latter word has the meaning of secreting-out. Readers who may not have heard of Cabanis will not be surprised to hear that he was a French physician and a materialist. My *Petit Larousse* says that his former great influence on ideas and morals is to-day extinct. If true, a pity. He seems like most great healers to talk sound sense. At any rate one of the greatest of Frenchmen, Mirabeau, was pleased to number Cabanis among his friends.

If the reader has been carried with me so far he will readily see that for mental health we must strike a balance between reading and thinking, in other words, other people's thoughts (in a book) must be balanced by our own. Even if our thoughts lack clearness, depth, and vivid expression we shall be healthier and more fitted to grapple with life's problems if we think our own thoughts and not someone else's. The greatest of the philosophers of ancient Greece, Aristotle, counselled the "golden mean," but, as Horatio observed in *Hamlet*, "there needs no ghost come from the grave to tell us this."

One final reflection. Poetry, in our present day a drug in the market but through centuries highly esteemed, has, in the main, been written by men of small book-learning; rather have they found their sermons in stones, books in the running brooks. The yearly prize for poetry at Oxford University, the Newdigate Prize, has generally been won by those who made no great splash in poetry when they quitted their studies at that ancient home of learning. May it not be that, like Strassburg geese, their brains have suffered.

as the goose's liver, from three or four years of mental cramming and consequent stasis? Could be, I think. At any rate I think it is a fact that the self-taught Keats, Blake and Bunyan are not markedly inferior to Byron and Shelley, the products of Harrow and Cambridge and Eton and Oxford. And even if the great Shakespeare (whoever he was) in his clown-like ignorance provided Bohemia with a sea-coast he was fly enough to know a hawk from a handsaw.

I have touched but lightly on the pleasure of reading. There is a consensus of laudatory opinion on this point from all sorts and conditions of men, many of them writers, who, by pernickety persons, may be said to have a vested interest in books. I will not add to this hymn of praise, but content myself by quoting from a Victorian novelist, by many called great. Not having read any of his books, I cannot say whether Anthony Trollope is great in the true meaning of the word, but his output of novels was certainly great in footage. In a speech made in 1868 he said: "The habit of reading is the only enjoyment in which there is no alloy; it lasts when all other pleasures fade." That thought seems to be a suitable note on which to close.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

ON SHAKESPEARE—AND MY CRITIC

UNLIKE Mr. Cutner, I feel I must apologise for again entering on the already much-discussed subject of Shakespeare's authorship. My excuse is that in his article (*The Freethinker*, June 4) Mr. Cutner makes certain statements, both in reference to the question in dispute, and to my share in it, which require an answer.

He begins by telling us that he "wants a little say on a problem that is still unsolved, though," he adds, "some of us think that it is getting a little nearer solution." His contribution towards its solution is to nominate Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, as "the probable author of the plays of Shakespeare."

His reasons for so doing are, briefly stated, (a) "That he was an Atheist." (b) "That his contemporaries recognised in him the greatest of the Court poets, and the greatest writer of comedies then living."

As Mr. Cutner adds nothing further to these evidential items, we must take it that he regards them as sufficiently cogent for all purposes of proof. Let us examine them.

In the first place, what connection is there between Oxford's alleged Atheism and his supposed authorship of the plays? As disbelief in a god is, in itself, no guarantee of dramatic ability, Mr. Cutner must have some ulterior reason for insisting on it in Oxford's case. His reason is not far to seek.

It is generally allowed that there are passages in some of the plays which, though not positively Atheistic, may nevertheless be construed as inconsistent with Christian doctrine. Such being the case, there is, according to Mr. Cutner's logic, but one conclusion, and he reaches it thus—the passages were written by an Atheist: the Earl of Oxford was an Atheist, and a writer of plays; ergo, he was the author. Brevity would appear to be the soul of logic as well as of wit.

And now for his second item. He tells us that Oxford's contemporaries recognised in him the greatest of Court poets, and the greatest writer of comedies then living.

As we are not discussing his poetry, and as Mr. Cutner is careful to limit the sphere of his poetic excellence to the "Court," I let his assertion pass without question.

From the scanty specimens extant, critics are agreed that he was not without some merit as a poet.

How far, however, "his contemporaries" were right in thus estimating his abilities as "a writer of comedies," we have no means of judging, for, strange to say, not one of his comedies has survived. There is no record of a single play of Oxford's ever having been published. Even the titles of them have never been discovered. Who among his "contemporaries" recognised in him the greatest writer of comedies then living, Mr. Cutner does not say, and it is just as well that he doesn't. They dwindle down to Lyly, the author of *Euphues*, and one or two more who looked to Oxford for pay and patronage. Not a single great writer of the time refers to him as a dramatist. So much for Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford.

I will not dwell on Mr. Cutner's log-rolling reference to "the part so ably borne" by Mr. Kent in a recent controversy. We may dismiss it as a debt duly paid in requital of similar services. Nor is it necessary to linger over his next two paragraphs in which he gleefully recounts his easy triumph over the obvious blunders of some former correspondents, and his amusement at their discomfiture. I pass on to his remarks on my last article.

He says I "seem to be completely unaware that my arguments have been answered over and over again," and that "they were dealt with by Sir George Greenwood in his two masterpieces."

This is beside the point. I was not dealing with Sir George Greenwood and his two masterpieces, but with Mr. Kent and his "masterpieces"; and in so doing was quite aware that I was saying nothing but what (considering the absurdities I was discussing) might readily occur to anyone else. If I were stupid enough I might retort the charge on Mr. Cutner, for most of his "arguments" on the subject are a mere rehash of what he has gathered from other sources.

As a would-be critic he should know that, in most cases, it is not in the facts themselves, but in their arrangement and presentment that any originality can be shown.

For some inexplicable reason he takes exception to my reference to him as "a writer who has shown his predilection for an aristocratic authorship of the plays," and says "my coy reference to him is not worthy of me." He does not care "two hoots whether the author was an aristocrat or not." But, in urging the claims of the aristocratic de Vere in preference to the plebeian Shakespeare, does he not show such "predilection?" There is no meaning in the word else.

Again, what does he mean by "coy"? His use of it puzzles me. Taking the term in any of its received senses, I assure Mr. Cutner that when I referred to him I never felt less "coy" in my life.

I now come to Mr. Cutner's "masterpiece" of refutation which he ushers in with his usual affectation of amusement at the presumed ignorance of his opponent. He says I mention Green's "famous allusion to the 'upstart crow,' and obviously imagines I am the first to mention it." May I remind him that if it is a "famous" allusion I could hardly "imagine" I was the first to mention it. "But what is really amusing," he says, "is Mr. Yates' remark 'that Green in his *Pandosto* not only furnished the plot of *The Winter's Tale*, but that in his *Groatsworth of Wit* furnished good evidence that Shakespeare wrote it.'"

My reason for making the above statement was that, in so far as Green's malicious diatribe furnished evidence

of Shakespeare's dramatic authorship, it *thereby and to that extent* is good presumptive evidence that Shakespeare wrote the play. That he did refer to Shakespeare's work as a playwright is shown by his parody of the line in *Henry VI*: "his tiger's heart wrapped in a player's hide." I did not go beyond that position.

In his eagerness, however, to make a point, Mr. Cutner grossly misconstrues my statement. He gives us an imposing array of names and dates to prove that the play was not written till some years after Green's death in 1592, and, waxing sarcastic in his imagined triumph, says "And thus it is at once apparent that poor Green knew in 1592 that Will Shakespeare of Stratford wrote *The Winter's Tale* on some date between 1604 and 1611."

All that is necessary to prick this bladder of misconstruction is to point out that I did not assert that Green "knew" that Shakespeare wrote the play.

As *The Winter's Tale* is the only play in which anything of Green's is embodied, his reference to an "upstart crow beautified with our feathers" would seem to have no pertinence or justification unless he was aware that Shakespeare had plagiarized from his work. All we know of the date of the play is that it was printed in the Folio of 1623, but how long before that it had been written and acted there is no evidence whatever to show.

A. YATES.

[Mr. H. Cutner writes: "I have no intention of discussing the Shakespeare problem further with Mr. Yates—I should not have done so at all if he had not referred to me. I consider this article to contain no reply to mine."]

PSYCHOLOGY AND SCIENCE—I.

PROF. LEUBA showed religious mysticism as no more than a form of a common everyday fact; the brain wave, the bright idea or the happy thought. This not only applies to mystics, artists or poets, but also to philosophers or scientists, in the historic development of science. Science is empirical; it is based, psychologically, on the five senses; and as the method and the purpose of instruments used determines the results achieved, we, ourselves, are intimately concerned, and so we eventually find mystical paradox. But with all this mystical confusion, it is argued that psychology can never be a science because science is objective; as if the subject was not involved.

Psychologically, as Jung said, it makes a world of difference whether the sun moves round the earth or the earth round the sun. Before Copernicus, as to the Ancient Greeks, man was the measure of all things. Although Hippocrates argued Natural Law, and Democritus that nothing happens by chance but of necessity, in those days the soul was of the substance of mystic fire. If a solid was simply a uniform geometrical shape and astronomy a problem in geometry and mathematical demonstration, the heavenly fire of the sun and stars involved this Necessity with Plato's ideal Good and the purpose of Aristotle's Final Cause in the hopes and fears of astrological fatalism, with psychological complications in teleology.

The astrology of Aristotle and Ptolemy, implying Divine Purpose in the logic of Augustine's doctrine of predestination, became to Aquinas a vital matter of

Necessary Being; of good and evil in mystical passion. The theological notion of a hierarchy of spiritual causes, seen also with the cabalistic Astral Light, involved personal feeling in alchemy, described by Jung as a pseudo-psychology. Mystic implications as well as intensity of passion is shown in the language used, as when, expressing his determination, Kepler wrote: "I will indulge my sacred fury." There is also the expression of feeling in the quaint fantasy of the arguments put forward, for personal feeling in conviction is given as justification. These arguments give some idea of how the confusion arises.

Copernicus only claimed that his system needed fewer epicycles in the relativity of motion. But Kepler raked up all the arguments he could find, allegorical, curious, mystical. The majesty of the sun fitted him to be the centre; and the aesthetic beauty of geometrical construction and mystic delight in simplicity of mathematical demonstration; with mathematical harmony of the music of the spheres; supported the argument that, with computed accuracy, it followed that the planetary orbits are as they are and not otherwise. The notion of mathematical accuracy, conceived as causal necessity, was also advocated by Galileo and Descartes.

Galileo distinguished between primary qualities, as number, size, motion, and secondary qualities, as colour, sound, taste; raising the question of the relativity of the world of sense and sensation as such. This leads to the dualism of Descartes, with the realm of thought as unaccountable yet indubitable. The physical world of extension and permanence, is contrasted with one in which secondary qualities exist only as sensations or thoughts; a world designed by God the mathematician, and sustained by His "general concourse." This concession to theology was challenged by Hobbes who argued thinking and sensation as forms of activity or motion.

Some philosophers, as More and Malebranche, identified Descartes "first matter" or ether with God as the potentiality of Space, and though urging empiricism Isaac Newton argued aesthetic beauty, harmony and design in Nature, and suggested ethereal spirits, with God forming and re-forming the universe, thus taking over these ideas in his relativity as well as Galileo's force and Gilbert's mass and magnetic attraction; with God as cause of gravitation; as Absolute Space and Motion; and to explain the "solidity" or hardness of bodies; for objects exist in the "sensorium" of God just as they exist for us in our sensorium. To him, these ideas were no more absurd than "action at a distance."

This is as mystical as Bishop Berkeley's notion that we exist in reason as ideas in the Mind of God. But Newton, trying to be consistent in his relativity, disparaged idle speculation; and could not square disharmonies, which are our problems, with the Perfect Creation of Leibnitz's Pre-established Harmony. But this relativity in space also concerned hopes and fears in time or eternity, and if his forgotten theology intruded into his science, which is remembered, it involved problems and filled gaps, many of which have been filled. To-day, the ether hypothesis is discarded, and with Einstein the speed of light is absolute motion in a space-time continuum; a mystical notion in which time involves memory and tradition.

Such irrelevant arguments and the persistent psychological complication shows, not the separation of psychology and science, but the gradual elimination of theological pre-conceptions. Not only are instruments

virtually extensions of the senses, but methods in theory and imagination give intellectual and mystical confusion in animistic attribution of objectivity to subjective abstract concepts; which continues in dialectic metaphysical dualism, not only with body and soul, good and evil, but also matter and mind, force and motion, space and time. But these are aspects of experience, there is no separation in fact, and the idea that science is objective is just another theological misconception.

Roger Bacon had suggested experiment as test, and Copernicus, relativity. Kepler said his ideas were deduced from experience Galileo had argued that it was experience that was to be explained and that final appeal was to experience in demonstration. That Isaac Newton combined these ideas in a complete statement of scientific empirical relativity was not the least of his achievements. But science is not merely physical and no aspect of experience is to be excluded. It involves the relativity of all the sciences, in the personal relations of social life, in empirical psychology. A consideration of this calls for a further article.

H. H. PREECE

THIS MONKEY BUSINESS AND THE B.B.C.

CHRISTIAN endeavour for the suppression of non-religious views is on the warpath again! A certain Mr. Johnson, Councillor of Southend and one time its Mayor, has raised his voice against one of the B.B.C.'s rare essays into the realm of science. For 50 years, he tells us, he has been preaching the gospel, and he wants to ensure that "freedom" remains the privilege of the Bible-banger and does not become the common right of the Freethinker.

The programme which roused this gentleman's ire was entitled *How Things Began*; it committed the crime of suggesting an evolutionary explanation of Nature. This, according to Mr. Johnson, is wounding to Christian susceptibilities and a profanity against the Sacred Texts. Making the common false assertion that evolution declares man to be "descended from monkeys," he wants to put a stop to this monkeying with the Book of Genesis. And Genesis says man was created on unlucky Friday and not evolved from a lower species, not even from a lower species created by God. For Mr. Johnson is a purist. He will have no truck with compromisers; not for him is any theory of God kicking the evolutionary ball into play and of letting the play go on with only an occasional interference, in the way of a miracle. No, the ex-Mayor is a whole-hogger Genesis, the whole Genesis, and nothing but Genesis. Creation was a piece-rate job and was finished in a working week (we hope an eight-hour day basis with no overtime). And like any other honest son of toil, God took the seventh day off. The B.B.C. has no business to monkey about with these divine revelations.

This outburst of sanctimonious zeal induced me to peruse my last two numbers of the *Radio Times* and the *Listener*. My conclusion from this arduous labour was that Mr. Johnson was not being quite fair to the B.B.C., which, in my jaundiced view, hands out religion by the shovelful and science by the thimbleful.

Daily we have a dose of *Lift Up Your Hearts* to wash down with the breakfast cup of tea, a *Daily Service* to help us over our elevenses, and a *Think on These Things*, or the like, to drive us to bed. There is, however, no daily dose of monkey business. Sunday is, of course, the day for Christians really to spread themselves; there are usually half-a-dozen items, at least, on that day, to

spread the gospel, not to mention Sandy, who always gives us a hymn to sleep on. On Tuesdays and Fridays there is an extra *Service for the Schools*, lest our youth forget the straight and narrow path. Against this there are other talks under the heading, *For the Schools*, parts of which purport to be "science," though they are mostly about such things as the Government's town planning schemes, growing crops, etc. And even here they manage to interlard religion; for instance, a 20-minute sermon on "Philosophy and Religion" has been running in recent weeks. On Monday, June 12, we were entertained by *Hymns* on the Third Programme; on Tuesday, we drank our tea to chants of *Vespers*; on Wednesday it was the kiddies who were regaled with *Prayers*; on Friday it was Art's turn to be served up with a religious sauce, and on Saturday we wound up with a Litany. Much the same sort of thing, in about the same quantity, was doled out in the following week.

The high spot in religious fare, however, has been a series of eight lectures by a canon of the Church, under the pretentious title of *Religion and the Decline of Capitalism*.

Against this surfeit of religious entertainment, science comes off not even a poor second. We had a brief quarter of an hour on *Do Electrons Think?* relegated to the Third Programme, as was also an hour on *Temporary Areas*, on Saturday evening, the 17th. Then there was another 15 minutes' talk, on Wednesday afternoon, the 14th, on electricity. Nowhere could I find anything about this monkey business which so scandalised the ex-Mayor. Evolutionary doctrine cast no shadow over our June radio, unless Mr. Stevenson managed to slip over a fast one in the *For the Schools* programme of Friday, June 23, when he is announced as "putting the anthropologist's view of Sir James Frazer's book, *The Golden Bough*."

Turning to the *Listener*, I found the talks on *Religion and the Decline of Capitalism* fully reproduced, and, in the issue of June 15, I noticed the leading article was also a religious topic, under the heading *Christian Heritage*. There was also a talk reported on an Indian "Saint of Arunachala." But of the scientific talks there was no mention; science had no place in the *Listener* of June 15, or of June 22.

I have made no reference to the many allusions *en passant* to religion in other items of the B.B.C. programmes, or in articles appearing in the *Listener*. Nor have I included semi-religious items such as *The Creation*, a musical composition of Haydn.

In view of all this a protest by Councillor Johnson or anybody else against the anti-religious attitude of the B.B.C. is nonsense. What the erstwhile gospel preacher really would like is a "clerical" dictatorship—of a Nonconformist character, preferably—in the B.B.C. and the total suppression of Freethought or Rationalist views. It is but one more example of what I always maintain, and that is, that no Christian, however progressive, is really democratic; he *always* wants privilege for his own teaching; he is *never* ready to concede to Freethinkers and Rationalists equality of expression. What Christian, for instance, would agree to Atheism being taught in the Children's Hour?

P. C. KING.

LIFT UP YOUR HEADS, An Anthology for Freethinkers.
By William Kent. Price, cloth 5s., paper 3s. 6d.; postage 3d.

MATERIALISM RESTATED. Fourth edition. By Chapman Cohen. Price 4s. 6d.; postage 3d.

ACID DROPS

The Rev. W. H. Elliott has just produced another smashing argument against our blatant Atheists. It comes from that clever novelist, John Buchan, who said that "an Atheist is a man without invisible means of support." And Mr. Elliott adds, "Clever that, and profoundly true."—a remark which sounds the depth of his mentality. What he would now like, we suppose, is for Atheists to go bodily over to "Christ," with his Devils, Angels, Miracles, and Hell. In any case, what Mr. Buchan said was just sheer twaddle—as anybody could prove if he analysed it.

Under the beautiful and tolerant rule of Rome in Eire, its bishops have condemned the opening of pubs there on Sunday, and are going to oppose a Bill introduced in the Irish Parliament which wants to sanction it. "It would be," whine the bishops, "a serious violation of ecclesiastical law... and would be particularly repugnant to the sanctity of the Lord's Day." In other words, Rome's bishops in Ireland are just as anxious to carry on the Puritan tradition as is our own insufferable Lord's Day Observance Society. On that point, at least, there is complete Christian unity.

Two years ago, a Gallop Poll showed that about 27 per cent. of the people questioned were in favour of divorce by mutual consent. The figure now is 34 per cent., and the *Universe* is very hurt at the increase. Rome insists that unhappily married people, if they leathe each other, or if one of them is incurably insane, should never be given the freedom of divorce. They should live in hopeless misery all their lives. Fortunately for all concerned, English law is not—yet—under Rome rule, and though not yet ideal, our divorce laws give most people a chance of rectifying past errors or misfortune, and even living "happily ever after."

The "Universe" wants far more religion broadcast by the B.B.C.—the Rome brand, of course. The reason is that "there is a very clear danger of a new form of 'undenominationalism' emerging"—as if this new form could be any worse than the old Oriental one! The fact is that, with all these religious broadcasts, every now and then a scientific one gets slipped in "blatantly" Materialistic, which must infuriate our grovelling believers.

Take those broadcasts by Fred Hoyle recently—they were quite contemptuous of Christianity, and must have made pious listeners shudder in cold fury. So the B.B.C. had to provide the antidote. This was undertaken by Sir E. Whittaker, F.R.S., Emeritus Professor of Mathematics at Edinburgh University. This very religious old gentleman must have been in his glory as he told us so reverently what a marvellous event in the world's history was the "Incarnation" and what it means to the world at large. He is, alas, too old to change, but we hope somebody will tell him that the day has long since passed when his particular form of religious twaddle can have any effect on the progress of science.

Pasquin, of the "Universe," who sometimes gets in a good body blow at ignorant Protestants, hates anyone who suggests that Peter was never in Rome—which, in any case, is a position which now has to be discarded, he claims. Well, that may be so—in some quarters; the

position now—in others—is a much more formidable one. For it is simply, what evidence is there that Peter ever lived at all? Or for that matter Paul? Some of us are beginning to feel that here we have the old twin myth in its latest form. Cain and Abel, Romulus and Remus, Esau and Jacob, and many others. Still Catholics can take heart. Quite a number of Rationalists will fight to the death for the historicity of Peter and Paul.

America, which has seen the birth of many new and extraordinary religions, has never taken kindly to the idea that our Lady has never favoured the American people with a genuine visit. So we are not surprised to learn that a Mrs. Anna Van Hoof, of Wisconsin, has startled the world with her account of seeing the Mother of God seven times—not six or eight, but the truly magic number of seven. She has, it might be added, seven children also. Naturally she has already got a pious and reverent crowd of believers with her, and photographs have been published of them all grovelling on the Holy Place where stood the Blessed Virgin. All we need now are news-cameramen to give our cinemas factual shots of her next appearance—and then the whole world will go right over to Rome. Maybe.

Considering how often our modern English Buddhists claim that Buddhism is Atheistic, it is curious to note that the Buddhists of Hiroshima want the Jesuits to build "a Catholic shrine there for perpetual prayer." They are certain that "Catholic prayers reach heaven," and they want nuns to go on their knees "and ask help from God all day." Well, why not? After all, prayers to reach Heaven as any from the regular Buddhist Praying Wheels.

What a cheerful prospect would be in store for England should some of our Christians get their own way! Not only have we "Misery" Martin whose organisation of doleful Jimmies have the avowed object of making this country a miserable desert, we now have Pastor E. Carter joining the cheerless throng with sermons and advertisements on "Idolatrous Brighton" wherein he threatens "London by the sea" with a fate worse than Sodom and Gomorrah because people will go to cinemas and dance halls. He is even more miserable than "Misery," for he thinks that cinemas are sinks of iniquity on every day of the week. Perhaps Pastor Carter has seen the report in the *Sunday Pictorial* which places the assets of the Lords Day Observance Society at over £100,000, and wonders whether he could have a finger in the pie.

By the time our leading Christians have finished censoring the Bible, church ritual, hymns and the Prayer Book, there will be so little left of their religion that Christians of a hundred years ago would consider modern Christianity almost atheistic. Bishops object to passages in the Bible, committees have purged some of the blood-thirsty hymns, and now we have Canon Dewar, Principal of a theological college telling his students that the Visitation of the Sick Service from the Prayer Book should be ignored because it is so gloomy and pessimistic that a sick room visit by many clergymen is enough to kill some patients. So the old story that sickness was sent by God to punish his children is wearing thin; but the Church must look back wistfully to the days when she could cash in on such occasions by scaring the wits out of a dying person.

"THE FREETHINKER"

Telephone No.: Holborn 2601.

41, Gray's Inn Road,
London, W.C. 1.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

Readers will be sorry to learn that the well-known contributor to these columns, Mr. T. F. Palmer, was involved in a street accident last week in which he sustained a fractured skull. He is at present in the National Temperance Hospital (Ward F), Hampstead Road, N.W. 1. Visitors are allowed at any time. We wish him a speedy recovery.

T. SNORROCK.—Glad you think the "Freethought Dictionary" is instructive and amusing. As long as the author, Mr. F. W. Rennie, continues to write we will retain this "Mark Twain column" as you so flatteringly term it.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, John Seibert, 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).

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.

Lecture Notices should reach the Office by Friday morning.

SUGAR PLUMS

At the Market Steps, Darlington, to-day (July 23), Mr. J. T. Brighton will hold a Freethought meeting in connection with the revival of the Darlington Branch N.S.S. Local saints are specially invited to meet Mr. Brighton, and to help in putting Darlington on the Freethought map again.

A large number of intelligent citizens would welcome some reading matter of an aggressive Freethought nature, and there is a large supply of leaflets at the N.S.S. Offices, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1, ready to meet such citizens; we will supply the leaflets if you will help make the contacts.

Out of 104 religious broadcasts by the B.B.C. only seven are Catholic. There are quite a number of thoroughly believing Christians who think that even these are seven too many, but no doubt if the Vatican squeals loud enough the B.B.C. will call in a few priests and change all that. The Universe complains that the head of the religious broadcasting "is always an Anglican, the assistant is always a Free Churchman," even in the regional districts. To get over this, we suggest a few broadcasts from the Vatican in Italiano-English which might get in a few priests—just as a few Yiddish-English broadcasts from Israel might get a few Rabbis into Broadcasting House. And what about Buddhism and Christian Science and even Theosophy? Or—may we suggest in all humility—what about a secular B.B.C., and let religionists pay themselves for their own teaching in their own churches, etc?

THOUGHTS ON RELIGION

XV

EVERY pleasure which has existed has probably been outlawed by the religionists. There must be causes for this; and in addition to those which I have discussed in an article on the subject of religion and pleasure another cause is no doubt that the pleasures of the world are hard to get and give no real satisfaction when gotten and that, since there is a kind of satisfaction in asceticism and denial of pleasure, men who cannot find pleasure themselves outlaw it for the human race. The result is to stunt life and make it wretched and more worthless than it is as a product of nature. Some men by nature like to see their fellows miserable; and this explains the ardour with which the religionists pursue their task of condemning the pleasures of men.

Some Christians seem to believe that the world is a sinful paradise of pleasures which must be renounced in order to go to heaven; but the world is not a paradise of any type. I have heard it said in the pulpit that there is pleasure in sin; those who teach this would more thoroughly express the principles of Christianity if they said that pleasure is sin; and they would show a better knowledge of life if they admitted that there is no danger of men finding too much pleasure.

The admonitions of the moralists in sacred books against sexual indulgence seem to indicate that men have learned early in the life of the human race that sexual indulgence gives little pleasure and much pain.

This life is not sufficiently poor in pleasure; so a miserable crew of deceivers, generally incapable of pleasure themselves, teach that innocent pleasures are wrong and productive of eternal damnation amid flames and devils. I have said before that pleasure is the motive for living itself; and a man's attitude toward pleasure is of considerable importance in his life; it is indeed of too much importance to be formed by the teachings of such a religion as Christianity which, with its abhorrence and repression of the flesh vitiates the natural life.

The Christian doctrine of the creation of the world out of nothing is not supported by Genesis but is a development of later religious writers, Hebrews, XI, 3, already quoted in the discussion of the Word, is no doubt an expression of the doctrine. The theory of a world made out of nothing based on Genesis would depend on what interpretation was made of the word "bara" (created) in verse 1 of Chapter 1 and of the following language in verse 2: "And the earth was without form, and void. . . ." "Baro," the infinitive from which "bara" is formed, means primarily to cut or to carve and by extension to form or to create. The first meaning of the Latin *creare* is to bring forth; the English *create*, which has been derived from the Latin, has the fundamental meaning of to bring into being or to cause to exist; but "bara" if the common process of association of related ideas was followed by the Hebrews in the fixing of its meaning, could scarcely have the same meanings as the Latin and English words even though the latter might be used to translate it. It is not impossible that the ancient Jews who were not a race of metaphysicians regarded creation as a cutting or carving of the world by God from matter already existing just as a man might carve a piece of wood into some design. There is an Arabic word "bara" which is directly related to the Hebrew "baro" and means to cut or to create; and therefore among two Semitic peoples the idea of cutting or carving is associated with the idea of creating. It might be concluded that the account of the creation in Genesis referred to a cutting out or carving of the world

from chaos. By this mode of interpretation Genesis, I, 1, literally means: "In the beginning God cut out the heavens and the earth."

If the translation given above for a part of verse 2 is used, we might suppose that an earth without form was a chaos from which the present world was fashioned; but it is impossible to understand what a void earth was; for to say that the earth was void is like saying that the earth which existed did not exist. The words "tohu" and "bohu" are masculine nouns and not adjectives as they are translated in the authorised version and mean nearly the same thing, that is, wasteness, and are used three times, in assonance with each other in the Old Testament.* The passage in question might be literally translated: "And the earth was a desolation and a wasteness." Such a translation brings out the repetition of ideas contained in the phrase. "Bohu" also has the meaning of emptiness; so it is debatable what the passage means. Exact ideas are not to be expected from primitive people; but it is against the process of natural logic to say that the earth was void or empty; however, contradictions of all types occur in human thought and expression. No doubt the Jews like other ancient peoples believed that the earth and the sky were made from a chaos. At least, there is evidence that they believed in a creation from pre-existent matter, as in the apocryphal book, the Wisdom of Solomon, XI, 17, where God is addressed as having created the world out of senseless matter.

The Christian doctrine of a world made out of nothing is well expressed by Saint Thomas de Aquinas in the *Summa Theologica*. He wrote in Part I, Question 45: "Is to create to make something out of nothing?" After a profound discussion, he concluded: "Thus, as the generation of man comes from the non-being which is the non-man in the same way the creation which is the emanation of the whole being, is made of the non-being, which is nothing." No theory could be more contrary to experience and reason than the Christian doctrine.

It is almost as easy to imagine other worlds unseen by us, past and future existences, reincarnations of the soul, etc., as it is to imagine the existence of the world in which we live; but the facts confirming the existence of these other worlds and other worldly things cannot be found.

In the childhood of the human race, as revealed in fables and sacred writings, all is prodigy and miracle. Fauns and satyrs inhabit the forests; nymphs live in fountains and rivers; serpents talk; and the more an apparition or imaginary event violates the laws of nature, the more in favour it is; and I think that this is caused by the uneradicable bent of men for excitement and their distaste for the commonplace. The miraculous and the sacred have among all races been connected; without the miraculous primitive or ignorant men can scarcely believe the sacred. When men as a race become more mature and intelligent, they do not mistake dreams for the waking state; nor do they see the prodigies which once covered the earth. Yet, Christians make the demand that intelligent men should accept the religion of a primitive people like the Jews of Biblical times and believe what no one who has advanced in intelligence with the human race could believe.

You might conclude from reading the Old Testament that the Jews chronicled in it were among the biggest lechers who have ever lived, who extended their sexual

activities from women to men and to animals and outdid in lechery even the ancient Greeks. "Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith: neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: it is confusion." (Lev. XVIII, 23.) This commandment is a remarkable example of Jewish jurisprudence.

Sexual grossness, repeated as it is throughout the Old Testament, is generally absent in Hindu religious writings.

WILLIAM RITTENOUR (U.S.A.)

MEN—MIND YOUR MUSCLES

THE myth of a weaker sex is dying. Woman is gradually being considered the equal of man. Whether it is a good or a bad thing counts for very little. It is happening, and every male knows it.

I became increasingly aware of the fact last week while travelling on a bus with a friend. I noticed a lady standing and made to offer her my seat. My friend put his hand on my shoulder, "Stay where you are man," he said. "If these women consider themselves the equal of men they can stand just as well as you can. Let the lady stand."

Mr. 1950 has been aware for a long time of woman's equality as a sex. He is aware more than ever to-day as she takes her place alongside him in art, literature, industry, politics and sport. The male has never admitted this equality, not because he is afraid of woman as an equal, but rather because he fears that, given the chance, she may prove herself in many ways his superior. Man feels he has something to lose in openly declaring equality of the sexes. He has been the master sex since the beginning of the race. Why should he have to forego his supremacy now?

In the ancient world the qualities of the governing race, sex or animals, were size, prowess and physical strength. In the human race man excelled in all these qualities. Only now when he can no longer drag his mistress around by the hair or show off his physical strength and prowess (which has been considerably reduced by sedate, city life) do the qualities of the female become more evident.

The climax came during the two Great Wars when women doing men's jobs realised for the first time their capabilities and their right, in more ways than one, to equality with men. The political and social trend of the post-war world proved a brilliant opportunity for them to establish and declare this equality. Without the current political, social and ethical conceptions woman's claim to equality would never have been made at the particular time that it was and still is being made. With them one can easily see it was inevitable.

Surely it is about time man abolished from his mind, from his actions, from his attitude to women, the conservative man-made notion of a "weaker sex." Why can't he stop conjuring up false reasons to support this notion. It is dead. Let it lie. Or must he be reminded of statistics? That biochemically woman is his superior, that her average life span far exceeds his own—but statistics are dull and man needs no reminding.

It is obvious that with equality of the sexes many of the existing chivalries of the past eras will go. But what is good for one century is not necessarily good for another. The modern Miss demands to be regarded as an individual standing on her own two feet, with a brain and power to think and give judgment. She does not expect to be

* See *Compendious and Complete Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament* edited by Benjamin Davies.

treated like Grandmama was in 1850. She should at least be given the chance to show her worth as an equal in peace just as she did in war. Man cannot lose very much by it, for woman will always call upon him for physical protection.

No matter whether she be universally recognised as the weaker or the stronger sex, the female will always make it her duty to nurture the new generation. She will always look to the male to supply her with a home, food and protection. Man himself will always fuss over her every need. Even in this, her weakness, she has power over him. One wonders if this weaker sex theory is merely man's defence against such a realisation. Maybe he sees visions of Music Hall sketches where the female hurries off to the foundry while the male minds the baby. Maybe he thinks this will come to pass. Man is sometimes silly that way.

Whatever the answer the fact remains, the conception of a superior and a weaker sex exists only in the minds of men.

That is until such time as man loses his muscles.

K. EASTAUGH.

A "HANDBOOK FOR THINKERS"

It is always good to get two sides of any question and here, in *The Thinker's Handbook* (Watts & Co., 2s. 6d. paper, 6s. cloth), Mr. Hector Hawton has given us a valuable work, accurate and comprehensive, dealing with many vital problems and "classic controversies."

Religions of all kinds have given birth to enormous discussions—at least to many thousands of books, sermons, and articles; and in addition, as many books have been written on such questions as free will and determinism, on reason and revelation, on anthropology and the supernatural, and many other kindred subjects. Mr. Hawton refers to no fewer than 151 books, most of them modern, and even if one mastered these, there are probably another 151 to go through to keep well in hand with modern thought.

Here then are many carefully chosen arguments taken from all these writers giving us the pros and cons of hotly disputed subjects—though, it is only fair to point out, that Mr. Hawton himself takes the Rationalist side.

What is Rationalism? Lots of us use it as a sort of common word instead of Freethought or even Atheism. Some people make it synonymous with Agnosticism, and there are quite a number of Rationalists who are stout champions of Jesus, and bravely welcome the description, "reverent" Rationalists.

Mr. Hawton endeavours to "re-examine" the words "atheist, agnostic and materialist," to find out "whether or no they have outlived their usefulness." The Rationalist, he maintains, "rejects what seems to him the vestigial remains of ancient mythology and accepts the scientific account of the universe, not as the last word to be said, but as the best kind of knowledge that we can obtain." Is that all? Well, "Rationalism is not based on any specific scientific theory; it is a way of thinking, of approaching problems . . ." In short, "Rationalism and scientific method are synonymous," and, I may add, the necessity for a God is just ignored.

How does this differ from the position of the Atheist? Mr. Hawton is asked, are all Rationalists Agnostics? What is the difference between Agnosticism and Atheism? Is it impossible to be a Rationalist if you believe in God?

At the outset, he points out that "one answer" is that "within the Rationalist Movement in this country there are Agnostics, Atheists, and those who believe in God"; and if this is so, even at the risk of being denied the term, some of us still prefer to be known by something less vague. There is a world of difference between an Atheist and someone who believes in God. And Mr. Hawton, who asks, "Atheist or Agnostic?" does not appear to answer his own question. It does not particularly matter, of course, for Rationalist or Atheist will think and say what he likes: that is one of the advantages of being a Free-thinker.

"Neither Mill nor Huxley," Mr. Hawton points out, "were mechanical Materialists." But I seem to remember that something like mechanical Materialism was urged against Huxley, and I am fairly certain that there is very little difference between Huxley's Agnosticism and mechanical Materialism. Did he insist anywhere on "Vitalism"? It is Dialectical Materialism which opposes mechanical Materialism; or, in other words, it is the Atheistic Communism of modern Communists which opposes true Atheism—that is, mechanical Materialism. It is the true Atheist who will have no truck with Vitalism.

But the greater part of Mr. Hawton's book is not concerned with the meaning of all these words. Rather does it discuss with clarity, simplicity, and force, the origins of religion, the problem of evil, God and the Universe, the record of the Churches, the mystery-God, and cognate questions, and he is to be congratulated on the way in which they are elucidated for us with fairness to both sides.

Even the subject on which I have devoted a great deal of time—the historicity of Jesus, has some excellent pages of valuable commentary. At the outset, however, he says that, "The myth theory goes back to the eighteenth century, when Volney published an essay suggesting that Jesus was a solar myth derived from Krishna. A similar view was put forward by Dupuis." These references must have escaped me and on looking through Volney and Dupuis again, I have not been able to find them. Perhaps Mr. Hawton could oblige us with chapter and verse.

Volney simply points out that the birth of the child Jesus was based on sun-worship, and that Jesus was called Chris or Conservator, Chrisen or Christna, Christos, and Yes. Dupuis points out that Mithra and Christ were born on the same day, and that day was the birth of the Sun; and he adds that "Vichnou, incarnated in Christnou, has many common traits with Christ." It is a trivial point, of course, but I have been astonished how often the most careful Rationalist becomes the most careless when it comes to dealing with the Myth theory. Still, Mr. Hawton might prove me wrong.

For the rest, he gives as impartial a view of the discussion as is possible for one who prefers (I am nearly sure) to be on the side of a real Jesus. But there is one point I wish to make. It is for Christians to produce evidence that their Jesus had a real existence. Whether it can be proved that there was a pre-Joshua cult or not, or whether W. B. Smith proved his case for a symbolic interpretation of the Gospels, is a matter of more or less academic interest only. In any case, some of us, who have carefully examined Dr. F. C. Conybeare's *Historical Christ*, can only wonder that a man with the reputation of Prof. F. C. Burkitt can find in it, "the best refutation" of the Myth theory. It is one of the poorest, and in my opinion, an ignorant and hysterical diatribe.

We are so used to assuming that the Bible is true,

that even when we know it is not, we still talk of it as true. In passing, for instance, I noted that Mr. Hawton says that "Paul used the Septuagint, whereas Jerome employed the Hebrew version." I certainly would like the evidence that Paul used the Septuagint—which is rather a different statement from saying that where the New Testament quotes the Old, it is from the Greek version. Somebody, of course, wrote the Epistles of Paul, but who? Does anybody know? Who was Paul? And Peter? It seems to me that if one does not admit the historicity of Jesus, it is going to be difficult to admit that Peter or Paul ever lived. What is the evidence?

Mr. Hawton's *Thinker's Handbook* is not exactly a Handbook for Freethinkers, but it comes very near one. Almost all of it I can thoroughly recommend as containing some of the best presentation of the Freethought (he would call it Rationalist) case I know. All who have occasion to proselytise or who want some telling arguments against religion, will find it invaluable.

A book of this class, beautifully printed, and with over 250 pages for half-a-crown, is a marvel of cheapness. Both author and publishers can be congratulated.

H. CUTNER.

THE ORIGINS OF LAW

NOT merely legal authorities and criminological experts are interested in the early development of systems of law. The way in which laws have come into being is something which links on, in some directions, to theology, and, in other directions, is related to economics.

Dr. A. S. Diamond's *Primitive Law* (Watts, 15s.) is therefore a book which might be expected to have a wide appeal. The fact that it is written from the point of view of the legal expert, indeed, will not dissuade the well-read person without specialised knowledge from finding interest in it.

The book contains handy summaries of many of the early codes of law—the famous Hammurabi Code, the Hittite Code, the Assyrian Code among them. The main part of the book, however, is filled with a well-argued attempt to destroy the widely-accepted view that there is a necessary relationship between the evolution of religion and the evolution of law. Dr. Diamond holds (his expression here is not very happy):—

"The theory that law has its historical origin in rules of religion, or rules of mixed religion, morality and law, holds undisputed sway."

How law can have its origins in "rules of mixed religion, morality and law" it is difficult to see. In fact, Dr. Diamond may to some extent be accused here of setting up a kind of Aunt Sally and then demolishing it. But Dr. Diamond's suggestion that in none of the early codes of law are there to be found any traces of religious rules, is something which has to be carefully studied. He admits candidly enough that in such legal codes as have come down to us there are very often found traces of such rules, but adds that these have been added at comparatively late dates "by ecclesiastical hands." To many readers it is to be feared that this will appear a piece of special pleading not unlike that by which the late J. M. Robertson claimed to have found the work of many hands in the text of Shakespeare's plays. Yet the writing of Dr. Diamond is so much better than that of J. M. Robertson that his book can be read with pleasure, even by those who dislike and disagree with its conclusions.

Indeed, I must confess that to me its conclusions seem often to run directly counter to common-sense. We do

not need to believe (as people did in the past) that all primitive tribes have a religion, to see that most peoples in the early stages of their development have certainly had a fear of the supernatural which provided something like a religious bias in their outlook. This will then certainly mean that the early development of totem and taboo will give a religious twist to their laws, or a legal twist to their religion (whichever way one likes to look at it). Anyone who has studied the work of anthropologists of various schools (that of Frazer and that of Lord Raglan) will realise that myth and ritual became very early entangled with the laws of savage tribes. In other words, where Dr. Diamond errs is where most legal experts would err when considering a question of this kind—in thinking that the earliest codes of law necessary to examine are *written codes*.

When peoples start to write things down they are strictly speaking, no longer primitive. And the legal attitude that they take will then not be "primitive law." That the really primitive law of the early natives of almost any country in the world will be found to have some admixture of religion seems to me to be totally incontrovertible. Indeed, is it not the proud boast of the modern Atheist or Agnostic that he has reached his position because he has been able to move on with the advance of science and civilisation?

For these reasons, then, I consider that Dr. Diamond's book states a case which is not easy to support. I am no legal expert, and I have no doubt that Dr. Diamond could demolish any arguments which I put forward on purely legal grounds. But, on grounds of anthropological discovery and development, I think that his attitude is extremely difficult to justify.

JOHN ROWLAND.

LOURDES, 1950

AND still they come from every corner of the Catholic world, a morbid multitude of hypochondriacs and truly sick, of blind, diseased and dying—come because they dwell in medieval mists or have no other hope. But year by year they get a little older, bring a shrinking list of maladies; for while a cripple now and then has thrown aside a crutch to walk in wonder near a mountain stream before an unhealed chanting throng, in quiet rooms clear-eyed tenacious scientists have worked for all mankind, discovered radium, X-rays and penicillin, M and B and insulin—and saved a million lives, which once were doomed, but claimed no miracle. And scores of new incurables will spare themselves a contemplated pilgrimage next year because of some prolonged research; treatment, drug, or vaccine newly-found will give their bodies health and justify a newer, saner faith.

If all that will be spent on ships and trains and French hotels, on amulets and beads and fancy flasks of water from a hillside spring, were used instead on scientific work, perhaps another statue could be taken down and put in some museum to amuse the people of a more enlightened age.

F. L. MAYELL.

EGGS.ACTLY

Which came first, eggs or the hen?
A question that puzzles women and men.
Science explains this old time notion;
"All life evolves from slime in the ocean."
Men and women now will ken,
God never made first eggs or hen. (Genesis 1, 21.)

CORRESPONDENCE

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Sir,—It appears that there is considerable confusion even among Freethinkers in respect of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. I think that you should publish the following explanation.

The doctrine holds that the Blessed Virgin Mary, from the first instant of her conception was, by a most singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the human race, preserved from all stain of Original Sin. It is a doctrine revealed by God, and therefore to be firmly and steadfastly believed by all the faithful.

The Immaculate Conception should not be confused with the Virgin Birth which asserts Mary's perpetual virginity.

The dogma was defined as "of Faith" by Pope Pius IX in the Bull *Ineffabilis Deus* issued on 8th December, 1854.

To make the matter quite clear, it should be understood that the Immaculate Conception is a privilege over and above that immunity from personal sin conceded to Mary. By it, Mary, in view of her dignity as Mother of God, was immune from original sin in which all descendents of Adam are conceived, and from which they are freed by baptism. Sanctifying grace was infused into her soul simultaneously with its creation by God.

Freethinkers will no doubt perceive the sound reasoning behind this doctrine, and will have little or no difficulty in accepting the Holy Fathers' assurance as to its truth!—Yours, etc.,

E. W. SHAW.

DOES GOD EXIST?

Sir,—In reply to Mr. V. H. Smith's request, "What is regarded as the strongest argument against the existence of God?" may I point out that the Christians' Holy Infallible Bible gives divine proof of God's non-existence by stating that God Almighty kneeling and with hands scrapes dust of the earth into a heap to make a man; face, hair, eyes and nose, like unto himself, the creator!

This religious biography is "clotted bosh," and is the strongest proof there never was a God.—Yours, etc.,

WM. AUGUSTUS VAUGHAN.

CONTRACEPTION

Sir,—The way of thinking as shown by Mr. W. O. Bowers is much to be regretted, but unfortunately large numbers of people think upon similar lines.

Had Mr. Bowers carefully read the splendid articles by Mr. G. Whit Libby, he might have reconsidered his attitude. Two things emerge from Mr. Bowers' article; first he feels that people ought to be prepared and conditioned for the benefit of some lord and master. Otherwise who is he preparing them for? Secondly, he feels that he is better able to judge what is good for other people than they can judge for themselves.

In addition, he more or less accepts the religious, particularly Christian, idea of sex relationships, which of course promotes hypocrisy to a fine art.

Coming back to the first point, Mr. Bowers appears, perhaps unconsciously, to have appointed himself the high priest of the unnamed lord and master, further he has opinions as to the behaviour of the common people. On the second point, he says, "Personally, I am all for progress towards mental and physical perfection," which he qualifies thus: "And consider that uncontrolled sexual passion vulgarises and weakens moral fibre." May I ask how does he know the effect of "uncontrolled passion," and what does "moral fibre" mean?

As regards the progress part of the quotation, may I suggest that it will take each one of us all our time to reach anywhere near the perfection mentioned, without worrying about the next person.

Here he substitutes himself for his lord and master, and thinks that some mental and physical condition that he likes, or thinks he likes, should be imposed upon people who may, or may not, agree with him.

It is difficult in a short note to fully explain about the blood stream carrying certain glandular products through the brain, causing a reaction upon both the body and the brain for the purpose of preserving both the individual and the race. In the process many secondary mental conditions are set up. Out of this we have the unreasoning inhibitions shown in the ill-balanced exhibitions of many speakers and writers.

Mr. Bowers is trying to take the world upon his shoulders, he thinks for its good, but in fact he is only playing unconsciously down to certain inhibited selfish motives, although

consciously he is actuated by, he thinks, the very highest of motives. To finish: there is no future as understood by the Christians, only the present.—Yours, etc.,

J. TURNER.

OBITUARY

"DON" FISHER

It is with extreme regret that we have to announce the death of Wordsworth Donisthorpe ("Don") Fisher which occurred suddenly on July 4, whilst on holiday in France. "Don" Fisher came of an old Freethinking family who were ever in the vanguard of unpopular and progressive movements. He will be missed at N.S.S. Conferences which he regularly attended and at which he was a familiar figure. His extreme individualist opinions were well known, and his contributions to Freethought were always appreciated and will be remembered. He was a keen member of the National Secular Society deeply interested in its work, and a regular reader of *The Freethinker*. The suddenness of his death was a great shock to his family and friends. We extend our deepest sympathy and condolences to the surviving members of the family.

J. S.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

OUTDOOR

- Burnley Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.
- Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. H. DAY.
- Darlington (Market Steps).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON.
- Hancoat.—Wednesday, July 26, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.
- Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. J. BARKER.
- Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Platt Fields).—Sunday, 3 p.m.: Messrs. C. McCALL, L. SMITH, G. WOODCOCK and R. BILLINGS. (St. Mary's Gate, Blitzed Site).—Sunday, 7-45 p.m.: Messrs. C. McCALL, L. SMITH, G. WOODCOCK and R. BILLINGS. (Alexandra Park Gates).—Wednesday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. C. McCALL, L. SMITH, G. WOODCOCK and R. BILLINGS. (St. Mary's Gate, Blitzed Site).—Lunch Hour Lectures every weekday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. C. McCALL, L. SMITH, G. WOODCOCK and R. BILLINGS.
- North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, 12 noon: Messrs. A. CALVERLEY and L. EBURY. (Highbury Corner).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. F. A. RIDLEY.
- Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: Messrs. W. KENT, A. ELLSMERE and T. M. MOSLEY.
- Read.—Monday, July 24, 7 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.
- Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barker's Pool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. A. SAMMS.
- South London and Lewisham Branch N.S.S. (Brockwell Park, Herne Hill).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. L. EBURY.
- West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park, Marble Arch).—Sunday, 4 p.m.: Mr. C. E. WOOD.
- Worsthorne.—Friday, July 21, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

INDOOR

- South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "Food and People," Mr. ROY WALKER (Sec., London Vegetarian Society).
- West Ham Branch N.S.S. (Loco. Men's Institute, 62, Forest Lane, Stratford, E. 15).—Tuesday, July 25, 8 p.m.: A Meeting.

WANTED—Saladin's "Confessional Exposed" and Anti-Roman Catholic Books. Offers to Box 111, Pioneer Press, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1.

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