

The Freethinker

Vol. LXXIII—No. 26

Founded 1881

Editor: F. A. RIDLEY

Price Fourpence

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

*The most valuable thing that
this world affords*

— By F. A. RIDLEY —

IN the course of the recent Coronation Service one of the high water-marks was represented by the presentation to the Queen of a Bible by the Anglican Primate, with the admonitory description of the Holy Book as, "the most valuable thing that this world affords." Her Majesty presumably took this description seriously; for had not her last feminine predecessor, Queen Victoria, informed

a visiting Mohammedan potentate that "the greatness of England" was founded upon the inspired precepts of the Sacred Volume. However, the fact that she bears the title of "Defender of the Faith"—a title inherited, ultimately, from that great theologian, Henry the Eighth—does not automatically endow Her Majesty with an accurate knowledge of the science of Comparative Religion. If the present Monarch possessed even a rudimentary acquaintance with this science she would have realised that the sentiments regarding the Bible expressed by His Grace of Canterbury are, nowadays, about as archaic as the old-world English in which they are expressed.

If, however, the excuse of ignorance can be pleaded by Her Majesty, the same can hardly be said about the Archbishop. Dr. Fisher is what is commonly called "an educated man," though this appellation does not necessarily, it seems, exclude what the late George Orwell once aptly described as "double-think," when and where his professional interests require such mental duplication. We may assume that, as, we believe, an Oxford graduate and as one who has been professionally connected with education for most of his adult life—he is an ex-headmaster—Dr. Fisher is familiar with, at least, the broad outlines of the modern scholarship and research in the field of Biblical studies. If so, and it is hard to conceive that it is not so, we must assume that, at least, the fundamental conclusions of the modern "Higher Criticism" are familiar to His Grace.

It is true, of course, that theological eminence has not usually been the hall-mark of Anglican Archbishops; a negative distinction which they share with their yet more august "brothers-in-Christ," the Bishops of Rome. The qualities that lead ecclesiastics to Rome and to Canterbury; to Popedom and to Primacy; are, other things being equal, the same sort of personal and mental characteristics which lead men to success in the worldly "callings" of Big Business and of the bureaucracy. Shrewdness, personality, and worldly wisdom, have been much more common amongst the occupants of Lambeth Palace than have saintliness or theological learning. One could, in fact, count on the fingers of one hand all the Anglican Archbishops specially distinguished by either virtue or by exceptional intellectual qualities. Is not the Founder of Christianity himself alleged to have declared that "the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light"? His Church has usually accepted this distinction in its appointments to high ecclesiastical office.

However, whatever his theological qualifications or lack

of them, Dr. Fisher and his episcopal colleagues must, at least, know that the modern "Higher Criticism" of the Bible has torn to shreds the traditionally orthodox view of the "Holy Word of God." Far from being a single Book, written under the general direction of a single author, the Bible is now revealed as a miscellaneous collection of Hebrew and Greek documents independently compiled over a period of about a thousand years—c. 800 B.C.—c. A.D. 200—and reflecting customs, beliefs, and literary and religious cultures which differ about as completely as, say, the theses of some of our modern "reverent rationalists," on the one hand, and the barbaric literature of primitive

African and Polynesian races on the other. As and when examined under the critical microscope, the "indivisible revelation" of the theologians turns out to be merely a collection of fragments of Jewish literature and history preserved by accident and originally bound in a single volume upon uncritical assumptions as to their date, authorship, and nature, which have been completely dissolved by modern critical analysis.

Every primitive superstition and every primitive form of savagery in the annals of barbarism can be found explicitly recorded and commended within the compass of what is now so strangely described as "the most valuable thing that this world affords." Well, that is as it may be! Within the covers of this single volume one will find the *lex talionis*—"an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth"; the reality of witchcraft; the efficacy of ritual murder; and the origin of the term "Sodomite." Not to mention such minor peccadilloes as polygamy, assassination and—in the Book of Ezra—a lucid and laudatory exposition of the entire "master race" theory of Hitler, which Dr. Fisher himself was so busily engaged in denouncing a few years ago in its modern non-biblical form.

No doubt, it is true that there are other, and better things than the above also to be found in the Holy Book: for example, the sceptical wisdom of *Ecclesiastes*, that ancient *Ruins of Empires*, and the poetry and drama of *Job* and the *Book of Psalms*, and in the Prophets and Gospels one finds golden grains of ethics buried amid mountains of superstition. But this, after all, is only to be expected on any evolutionary view of the world's literature. Evolution applies, even to those who reject it! The ancient Hebrews, the compilers of the Bible, were a people very limited in both their physical terrain and in their mental outlook. However, they had their points; how, otherwise, could they have survived? And the Bible reflects faithfully both the strong and weak points of its authors: such is only to be expected of any literature; and the fact that the Bible conforms to this "law" affords the sure proof of its human origin—"all-too-human" in parts!

The fact is that Free-thinking critics would be well advised to stop using the expression: *The Bible*. For, in reality, "there ain't no sich thing"! In point of fact, *The*

Bible exists solely in the imagination of the Jewish Rabbis and of the Christian clergy. In the eyes of Comparative Religion no such book exists. What we actually have is a collection of ancient books only united in a single volume in the imagination of their rabbinical and clerical editors.

The above facts, elementary deductions from the findings

Whither Freethought?

By Mrs. K. C. ALLPRESS

MR. CUTNER, in his recent article on "Freethought and Some Critics," bewails the disappearance of the pioneer spirit of attack from the work of the modern Rationalist. One answer is so obvious as to be overlooked, namely, that the modern Rationalist is no longer a pioneer! This is no mere verbal play, but a reference to the truism that the Great Men are those who in fact blaze a new trail, while those who merely follow, tend to be lesser men (in that field at least), otherwise they would themselves be blazing further new trails. Great men, of course, could emerge from the ranks of disciples and remain within the fold, so to speak, but their tactics and perhaps their quality would be very different from those of Bradlaugh and Paine, etc., which Mr. Cutner is so anxious to see revived. For, fulminate as we will against the established churches, dogma and superstition, our efforts, because they are not new, must lack the shock of courage with which the titans of last century hurled their spears of criticism into the theological arena. This toning down is historically inevitable, and Freethinkers should consider themselves fortunate if they have not, like the heirs of so many religions and other movements, debased the original teachings of the "Masters" beyond all recognition.

But are shock tactics nowadays really so desirable? Freethinkers have hammered out much sound criticism year in, year out, in the wake of the pioneers, but the effect may have gradually decreased as the victims became inured to it and knew roughly what to expect. They were shock tactics no longer. Moreover, it is now well known that if you persist in pointing out to a child only his faults and scolding him perpetually, you will do little but raise in him a stubborn resentment against you and the course you wish him to follow. He may even become anti-social when he grows up. And the lovers of religion are not so unlike small children, very often, in their emotional attitude to life. They shut their eyes and ears, dig in their toes and let the storm of criticism blow harmless and unheeded over their heads.

There are other widely recognised causes, too, that would check the expansion of Freethought. The times, indeed, are out of joint. The feeling of insecurity consequent on two world wars has so undermined Western self-confidence that frantic attempts are being made to clutch at the old stable faiths and certain kinds of religious revivals are taking place. Less extreme, there are, as Mr. Cutner mentions, the millions of Vicars of Bray up and down the country who for economic reasons, or through fear of the herd's disapproval—a very real and potent force among the not-great!—dare not voice any doubts they may happen to have. To heckle them and show them the error of their ways will merely frighten them the more into clinging to their safe perches, from which heterodoxy would tumble them head-first into the Unknown. Such will always adhere to popular beliefs, and once these were corrected, could be relied on to toe the line without further argument.

But the problem, I think, goes deeper than this. It goes right down into the very roots of human behaviour, to the

of modern Biblical criticism are, we assume, known, if not to Dr. Fisher, at least to his more learned colleagues. It is much to be hoped that by the time of the next coronation they will be known to everyone, including the monarch and, perhaps, even to, who knows, the then Archbishop of Canterbury!

instincts themselves. The "religious instinct" may be a complete misnomer for an urge that is nothing more than an atavistic fear of Nature's mystery and ruthlessness; or it may simply be that childish dependence and longing for the security of the womb evinced by those whose faulty upbringing has arrested their development towards maturity; or it may indeed be just an instinct to worship with awe something beyond and above the little Self. But whatever it is, it is there, present in quite a large majority of people, and has to be reckoned with by all who would regulate the beliefs and actions of their fellow men. No creed or philosophy which does not reckon with it rightly and adequately is going to make any real headway even among the thinking, let alone the unthinking, masses.

Does the Freethought Movement do this sufficiently—or at all? It seems to me that in basing itself, with justifiable pride, on Reason (which is a biologically recent growth but shakily established among the minority), it is deliberately opposing, if not condemning the instincts and trying to draw man right up and away from his old, baser self. But man—or most men, not having achieved the brilliant detachment adumbrated by Shaw in *Methusalem*—cannot live by Reason alone, and recoil in affright from the abyss which seems to open at their feet when the protective functioning of any instinct is threatened. They much prefer to be accused of an undistributed middle premiss, for instance, than an undistributed meat supply, and it is only when they are shown that faulty logic might in some way affect their meat supply adversely, that they will begin to take an interest in logic at all. That is to say, men's ideas and beliefs, if they are to be vital, must not be boxed up in a separate compartment from the rest of himself, but must grow fundamentally out of the whole organism of which they are at once the result and the mainspring. Rationalism may be such a growth for a certain type of individual—never, I hope, merely an outlet for bitterness and revenge against a society that has wronged him!—but for most men a system of ethics, however broad and lofty, is far from being an adequate substitute for the religion of which they would be deprived. Freethought, as it were, tears off them the comfortable jerseys and thick red flannel petticoats of orthodox thought because they are worn out, old-fashioned and non-immunising against the cold of strange ideas, then proceeds to offer the naked shivering fellows garments of cobweb deductions beautifully and strongly woven out of truth, no doubt, but hardly a protection against the indifferent and therefore unfriendly-seeming elements. Small wonder that they rush back into their ludicrous old clothes without a second glance!

(To be concluded)

NOW READY

THE FREETHINKER

VOL. 72

Bound green cloth, lettered gold

PRICE 24/- Postage 1/-

Robert Taylor

The Devil's Chaplain (1784-1844) By H. CUTNER

(Continued from page 195)

WITHOUT Pye Smith's *Answer* and Taylor's *Syntagma* before him, no reader can hope to understand the witty and crushing reply contained in the latter book. Taylor shirked nothing, and met his opponent point by point. But he "had a way wi' him," and it is this way which marks the *Syntagma* as something new and original in Freethought criticism. It was not just a "reply" to a criticism. It was far more than that. It was a lesson in which a man with an original mind and character showed how to deal with a coarse-mouthed bully who was beside himself with rage and even terror at an attack on his religion which could not be answered.

And here it is illuminating to see how that great historian of Freethought, John M. Robertson, has dealt with Robert Taylor in general, and the *Syntagma* in particular. In his *Short History of Freethought* Taylor is merely noticed as identified with the propagandist and publishing work of Carlile, and as the author of the *Diegesis* and the *Devil's Pulpit* about which, as propagandist works, nothing is said. In his more detailed *History of Freethought in the Nineteenth Century* Robertson felt he ought, perhaps, to examine Taylor's work for himself; but seemed even then rather afraid to pass his own critical judgment upon it, for he immediately quotes Charles C. Hennell's account of the *Diegesis* in a letter to his sister Sara—it will be given later when dealing with that work. But at first nothing again is said of the *Syntagma*, though Robertson has by this time discovered that Taylor was a "more remarkable personality" than William Hone. When, however, the question of the historicity of Jesus was being dealt with, the historian discovered that Taylor had also said something about the question; and Robertson appended a long "historical note" in which, for the first time, he allowed himself to criticise the *Syntagma*, even giving the complete title page of the work, and mentioning also—of interest to [notorious] William Dugdale of Holywell Street, Strand. Here is Robertson's criticism:—

Robert Taylor, author of the *Diegesis* and the *Devil's Pulpit*, propounded very definitely the non-historicity doctrine on critical grounds, in a work of 128 pages, dated 1828, in vindication of an earlier manifesto. Here the arguments of his other works are vehemently colligated and developed. His previous contentions had been rejected with unmeasured scurrility on the Christian side, his fire being met with fury. To this he retorts with a fire which is rather more scathing than persuasive, even for a friendly reader. But Taylor's exuberance and extravagance, genially noted by Hennell, does not nullify his stringent attack alike on the gospel records, in respect of their history and on the whole body of their narratives. His criticism of the documents as such, based on the whole apparatus criticus, was as furiously denounced as his inferences. As to the problem of the historicity of Jesus, he follows the untenable assumption that the gospel narratives are not merely paralleled but derived from the similar legends of Egypt, Greece, and India.

The scholarly inquiry calls for a much closer analysis of the process of growth and composition. But Taylor's general criticism of the assumption of historicity is on the line of the modern argument, and raises the central issues. Of the *Syntagma*, as of his work in general, the lesson appears to be that little effect on thought is to be won by pyrotechnics. Yet he had a good many later readers, and influenced among others, Judge Strange.

Robertson has made an unaccountable mistake here in saying that "the arguments of his other works" are developed in the *Syntagma*—for the simple reason that the *Diegesis* and the *Devil's Pulpit* were both written after the *Syntagma*. Moreover, while it is true that the *Diegesis*

deals with Christian documents and origins the lectures contained in the *Devil's Pulpit* deal with an exposition of the Sun-myth theories so ably put forward by C. F. Dupuis in one of the most remarkable Freethought works ever written—*The Origin of all Worshhips*; though Taylor put a great deal of his own original research into his lectures. There is very little of the Sun-myth theories in the *Syntagma*.

Again, the *Syntagma* is a reply to a blustering bully, and one must expect some "pyrotechnics" in the performance. On the question of scholarship Taylor had been contemptuously treated by Pye Smith, though the truth is that he was immeasurably superior in this matter to the pretentious Christian who—it should be noted—never ceased to extol his own wonderful knowledge on every page of his *Answer*. Yet Pye Smith had to admit that at least one of Taylor's translations "is fairly made." As a matter of fact, Robert Taylor was an exceptionally fine linguist, and in the *Diegesis* in particular, he often gives the actual words of his authority, whatever the language, together with, in many cases, his own translation. It has almost always been part of Christian apologetics to disparage the learning of an "infidel."

In any case, the "pyrotechnics" were confined to the *Syntagma*; both the *Diegesis* and the *Devil's Pulpit* will be found sober disquisitions—though naturally Taylor allowed himself a certain amount of "colloquialisms" when delivering lectures.

The great work accomplished by the *Syntagma* is that it called attention to the absolute dearth of genuine evidence for Christianity as a "revealed" religion from the documentary standpoint. This was defiantly denied by Pye Smith and apologists like him, but Taylor had no difficulty whatever in maintaining his position. When were the books of the New Testament written, by whom, and when were they collected into volume? We have, answers Pye Smith, "the most satisfactory evidence that the Books of the New Testament were written at the time which they intimate and by the persons to whom they are attributed." Few modern apologists would dare to make such a silly answer. Indeed modern apologetics almost completely are devoted to attempts to answer the question in any way which can save the face of Christianity. Taylor quotes Mosheim—"The opinions or rather the conjectures of the learned concerning the time when the books of the New Testament were collected into one volume; as also about the authors of that collection, are extremely different—this important question is attended with great and almost insuperable difficulties to us in these later times." And the hundred thousand books written since Mosheim on the question have left the problem as he left it. Conjectures and opinions by the score can be found, but definite evidence is simply not there. Taylor's first two propositions stand to-day as firmly as a rock.

(To be continued)

To an Advocate

Sing-Sing Death House was made ready for the sixth time for the Rosenbergs. And Mr. Bloch, hearing the news in Washington, shrugged his shoulders and said: "That ends it."—(News report).

No, it is not so; only now begins

The payment that the gods exact for crime;

Endure a space to witness how state sins

Are fully paid for; soon will come that time.

This Believing World

At the religious ritual accompanying the Coronation, the Bible was given to the Queen as the world's greatest blessing from God to man. It would be fairly correct to say that it is doubtful if she has ever read more than a small portion of the Precious Word. What does she know of the wonderful Message of Zephaniah or Nahum? In any case, if it was the Authorised Version given her, everybody who knows anything about Bible criticism knows also that it is packed with errors. If not, why all these new translations?

No doubt, all the members of the Royal Family have had to repeat the Lord's Prayer at one time or other. Yet there are two distinct versions in English and both cannot be right. In the A.V. there are 66 words. The editors of the Revised Version found out this was quite wrong. They have given us a Lord's Prayer with only 55 words—though, of course, nobody is taught this one. Actually, 15 words were expunged from this part of the Precious Gift, others were added, and others were revised. Yet so ungrateful is our Bible public, that they all prefer the wrong version. Exactly what is the true one?

We used to think that the people responsible for Scripture Tracts, those excessively dull expositions of Christianity at its worst—if that is possible—had ceased their efforts. Not at all. We have just seen one very nicely printed, issued by the Scripture Gift Mission, though it is not done on exactly the old lines. These almost invariably described what happened to the unbelieving wife beater, or child torturer, who, though a humble workman, used to drink two or three bottles of the best brandy every day. He always died a horrible death, holding a bottle of liquor in one hand, a well-thumbed Bible in the other, and uttering the most horrid blasphemies before dying.

We believe these true stories are still extensively used in rural districts, but the tract before us is simply "The witness of God," and it consists of extracts from the Bible telling us what God thinks or says. If the compiler were asked to prove these extracts came from God, he would indignantly answer that they are in his Holy Word. And if he were asked, how does he know it is the Holy Word, he would triumphantly point out that it enshrines the Witness of God! Is it any use discussing with these people? We do not think so. They are of the same breed as a Hindu Yogi and as dead to reason.

Most intelligent people are beginning to see the Christian Church as "big business," the directors getting fat salaries, and the "clerks in holy orders" very often pitifully small ones. But what's in a name? The Rev. J. Wildman of Burnham, Bucks, is highly indignant that the Electricity Board "classifies churches as business premises," but we wonder why? Are they not? And in any case, does he expect the Board to give churches electricity free?

It is very amusing to find the Duke of Edinburgh severely criticised for desecrating the Lord's Day by playing polo; and no doubt if he had an accident the Wee Frees, who are horror stricken, would immediately point out how God Almighty punishes anybody, regardless of rank, for such a horrible insult to his command "to keep the Sabbath Day holy." The Rev. J. P. Young of Greenock implored the Church to speak out on behalf of the conscience of the nation and did his best to lead the way. We have an idea that even though he is "of Edinburgh" the Duke will ignore Mr. Young and his friends. And maybe the Queen will agree with him!

Joe in Limbo

By LESLIE HANGER

LAST Tuesday, St. Peter looked out of his window and saw Satan hurrying heavenwards, a queer-shaped parcel under his arm. Hastily he locked the golden gates, for at a second glance he detected the head of Joe Stalin sticking out of the parcel.

"Open up!" shouted Satan, puffing and blowing from exertion. "I want to see your boss."

St. Peter shook his head. "He isn't at home."

"Don't give me that," Satan yelled furiously. "I know better."

"He's gone to London for the Coronation."

That might be true, Satan reflected, all kinds of queer people were doing that.

"You will have to let me in, just the same," he continued, "I've got something here that belongs to you."

"What, meaning him? Not on your life!"

"He was delivered to my place by mistake" explained Satan, trying to sound matter-of-fact.

"There's been no mistake and you know it" replied St. Peter firmly. "I can't think of a better place for him."

"Maybe you can't, but I can. I tell you Hell is a democracy just like the United States. We are a free people and everybody is at liberty to do as they please, provided they keep within the laws and constitution, which are framed to prevent anyone doing anything of which the rest would disapprove. That's democracy."

"Joe's a good democrat, aren't you Joe?" St. Peter cast a hopeful eye at the parcel.

"Certainly," replied Joe, "and in a well organised democracy there would be no question of anyone disagreeing with anyone else. All would say yes and no at the same time. Give me a free hand in Hell for six months and I —"

"Don't bother to tell us. You'll never get the chance" interrupted Satan. "Democrat, my foot. Joe ruled with god-like omnipotence when he was alive, and it is only right and proper that he should dwell with God in Heaven now he is dead. Divinely ordained laws and divinely inspired dogmas should be right up his street. It is just that he who laid down the law should now have it lain on him."

"I have no doubt that Heaven is as badly organised as Hell," observed Joe. "Now, if I could —"

"Heaven has no need of reforms," St. Peter assured him. "It is finely balanced on the peak of perfection, and not a bit like what you have been led to suppose. It is a constitutional monarchy very like the United Kingdom. God is king, with Jesus, Mary and the Holy Ghost as his chief ministers. Then come in due order the Archangels, Angels, Cherubim, Seraphim and finally the Souls of the Faithful, and each enjoys perfect freedom provided they observe the laws and constitution and do nothing to offend those in authority over them. No one could wish for anything more democratic than that."

"O, shut up, you old humbug and let me in!" Satan was getting exasperated.

"And let Joe in, too? Not likely!"

"I'm certainly not taking him back with me."

So the two wrangled until St. Peter settled the issue by withdrawing his head and slamming the window fast, so that the panes rattled. At this Satan rushed off in a furious rage, leaving Joe in Limbo, mid-way between Heaven and Hell.

"I couldn't care less," said Joe.

THE FREETHINKER

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

"THE FREETHINKER" FUND.—Previously acknowledged, £75 2s. 6d.; A. Hancock, 3s. (28th donation); Mr. Berckmans, £2; Anon., 5s.; F. Newell, 6s. Total: £77 16s. 6d.

M. GOMPERTZ AND C. MCCALL.—We must apologise for our slip of the pen. It was, of course, Moses, and not Elijah, who was privileged to behold the Lord's "hinder-parts"—Exodus 33-23. We must congratulate our correspondents on a knowledge of the text of Holy Scripture, which few Christians possess in these degenerate days.—EDITOR.

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, £1 4s. (in U.S.A., \$3.50); half-year, 12s.; three months, 6s. Correspondents are requested to write on one side of the paper only and to make their letters as brief as possible.

Lecture Notices should reach the Secretary of the N.S.S. at this 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.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

- OUTDOOR**
- Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Café, 40, Cannon St., off New Street).—Sunday, June 28, 7 p.m.: GEORGE BRIDGEN (B'ham.), "Freethought and the Colour Question."
 - Blackburn Branch N.S.S.—Friday, June 26, 7-45 p.m., Baxenden; Sunday, June 28, 7 p.m., Blackburn Market; Monday, June 29, 7-45 p.m., Chatburn, J. CLAYTON.
 - Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Every Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: H. DAY and A. H. WHARRAD.
 - Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, June 28, 8 p.m.: J. W. BARKER and J. MILLS.
 - Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Bomb Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK and BARNES. Every Sunday, 3 p.m., at Platt Fields, COLIN MCCALL.
 - North London Branch (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, June 28, noon: L. EBURY.
 - Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Saturday, June 27, 7 p.m.: Messrs. T. M. MOSLEY and A. ELSMERE.
 - West London Branch N.S.S. (Marble Arch).—Every Sunday from 4 p.m. onwards: Messrs. O'NEILL, CLEAVER, WOOD, EBURY, TAYLOR, and RIDLEY.
- INDOOR**
- Junior Discussion Group (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Friday, June 26, 7-15 p.m.: Dr. HANS JAEGER, "The Crisis of Democracy."
 - South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, June 28, Prof. T. H. PEAR, M.A., "Growing Up Mentally."
 - West Ham Branch N.S.S. (Community Centre, Wanstead, two minutes from Wanstead Station).—Thursday, June 25, 8 p.m.: Open Meeting.

NOTES AND NEWS

In consequence of the Immediate Practical Object of the N.S.S. calling for the legal protection of animals against cruelty, including all types of blood sports, the League Against Cruel Sports has made friendly overtures to the N.S.S. which it is hoped will lead to joint activities of the two bodies in the aim they have in common. Branches of the N.S.S. that are arranging lecture programmes and would like to hear a capable speaker on the rights of animals should write to Mr. J. C. Sharp, Secretary, League Against Cruel Sports, 58, Maddox Street, London, W.1. He will also be pleased to send details of the League to any of our readers who write to him.

We recently received an inquiry from abroad as to whether *The Freethinker* adopts any particular theory of Christian origins. Upon this question, Freethinking scholars have pronounced various opinions based upon their reconstruction of the available evidence. *The Freethinker*, in common with all Rationalist journals, rejects the supernatural origin of religion in general and of Christianity in particular. Obviously, no Freethinker can believe in the historical existence of the Jesus of the Four Gospels, a Divine Being compact of miracle, marvel and mystery. We do not, however, officially endorse any of the numerous, more or less, plausible theories of Christian origins put forward by modern non-Christian scholars. The question as to whether an historical and human Jesus ever existed is one upon which Rationalist scholars are divided in accordance with their views of the evidence. Bona fide Freethinkers—e.g., J. M. Robertson and Joseph McCabe, hold opposing views on this question.

For some time past a vigorous controversy has been briskly conducted in our columns on the views expressed by the eminent Brazilian scientist, Dr. J. de Castro, in his recent much-discussed book, *The Geography of Hunger*. This book was highly commended in this journal by its reviewer, Mr. Bayard Simmons, and by the Editor. Some of its propositions, however, were sharply criticised by our contributor, Mr. H. Cutner, from the standpoint of neo-Malthusianism. Dr. de Castro has now sent for the relevant issues of our paper and proposes to deal with our criticisms in the Second Edition of his book, which he is now preparing. We shall await its appearance with interest.

The tragic conclusion of the grim Rosenberg drama is extremely disquieting to all legal reformers. Apart from the dubious nature of the evidence which failed to convince many who could not be regarded as sympathetic with Communism, the infliction of the death penalty for espionage in peace time marks a definitely retrograde step in legal practice. Whilst the "cat and mouse act" played with the condemned can only be described as frankly barbaric. The world-wide protests, in which the Executive Committee of the National Secular Society joined, against the infliction of the death penalty in this case represented a significant portent which a more experienced statesman than President Eisenhower would probably have noted and responded to with a conciliatory gesture. Whilst the Rosenberg case may not rank with such now generally recognised judicial murders as those of the Chicago anarchists or Sacco and Vanzetti, it reflects no credit on either the American legal system or the political intelligence of the American government.

Again the appeal of the N.S.S. Secretary for more of our readers to join "The Organisation of Militant Freethought" has brought him a useful batch of applications, which will be laid before the Executive Committee on July 9. We are asked to mention this date to encourage others to send in forms before then. Mr. Morris believes that hundreds of our readers, although not yet members of the N.S.S., are strongly in favour of its outspoken and uncompromising exposure of the follies and lies of religion, and of the tricks used by modern priesthods and their friends to maintain them in a position of intolerable privilege. He urges such sympathisers to drop the rôle of onlookers, asserting that they will find greater inward satisfaction from being "in the movement" that is fighting for the ideas and ideals in which they believe.

Holy Oil

Quoted from *The Faith* (R.C.) Malta

IMMEDIATELY after the singing of the Creed, Queen Elizabeth will be anointed. It is this rite, and not the putting on of the crown, which makes her the Sovereign. The crown is simply a symbol of monarchy, the visible sign of royal dignity and responsibility, put on by one who is already a monarch. When Elizabeth II opened her first Parliament she had not been anointed, so the Imperial State Crown was not worn, but was carried before her.

The Recognition derives from paganism, but the anointing is of far more ancient and holier origin. Under the Old Law, the Law of Moses, kings, priests and prophets were anointed to their high offices. Thus, Samuel the prophet poured a little vial of oil upon the head of Saul, the first king of the Jews; and when Saul fell from grace, David in turn was anointed.

Oil, that gives light and heat, is a symbol of the Holy Ghost, the third Person of the Godhead, Who enlightens the hearts of the faithful and enkindles in them the fire of divine love. Even as the sevenfold Spirit of God was poured out upon Christ the King, oil was poured out upon the Christian king; and for a long time the chrism employed in the consecration of bishops was used in coronations. Hence, kings were said to be "consecrated" as well as crowned.

Possibly this rite came from Israel via Byzantium, for the Byzantines occupied Spain during the sixth century, and the first European monarch to be anointed was Wamba, the Visigothic king, who was consecrated at Toledo in 672.

As the chrism is poured on the monarch's head, the Holy Ghost is invoked: the choir sings *Veni Creator Spiritus*. Meanwhile, the clergy recite a beautiful prayer that has come down, with the change of a few words, from the coronation of Edgar:—

"Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Who by His Father was anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows, by this holy anointing pour down upon your head and heart blessing of the Holy Ghost, and prosper the work of your hands: that by the assistance of His heavenly grace you may preserve the people committed to your charge in wealth, peace and godliness; and after a long and glorious course of ruling this temporal kingdom wisely, justly and religiously, you may at last be made the partaker of an eternal kingdom: through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen."

When once this "consecration" has made into the Sovereign the man or woman anointed, he or she may put on the crown. The old Catholic rite, regarding the crown

as a sacramental, prayed God to "bless and sanctify" it and fill its wearer with "Thy manifold graces, and all precious virtues." But, in 1685, the Protestant Archbishop Sancroft, faced with the task of crowning the Catholic King James II, changed this into a prayer for the Sovereign:—

"O God, the crown of the faithful: bless, we beseech Thee, and sanctify this Thy servant, our Queen: and Thou dost this day set a crown of pure gold upon her head, so enrich her royal heart with Thine abundant grace and crown her with all princely virtues, through the King eternal, Jesus Christ Our Lord."

Praying thus, the Archbishop of Canterbury sets upon the Queen's head the crown of St. Edward. This beautiful diadem is not in fact that worn by the Confessor, for the ancient regalia was destroyed by the Commonwealth of Cromwell. But, on the restoration of the monarchy, in 1660 Charles II rightly sought to revive the other national traditions also; and the new crown of England was named St. Edward's Crown. In shape it is an Imperial crown—that is, a jewelled band supporting arches surmounted by a cross.

In medieval Europe the kings wore floriated circlets. The Emperor alone, who theoretically held the supreme power in the temporal order, as the Pope held supreme power in the spiritual order, closed his crown with an arch that signified the heavens above—

"... the wide sea, the earth,

All that the rich cope of heaven encloses."

topped by a cross symbolising the power of Christ the King, to whom all authority in heaven and earth belongs.

As the crown is placed upon the new monarch's head, all the nobility put on their coronets; the trumpets sound, the bells of the Abbey crash out; and all the people with and without the great church cry: "God save the Queen."

This is the peak point of the coronation, but not the ceremony of the queen-making. The monarch is now the Lord's Anointed," crowned and sceptred, and as such enthroned—assisted to seat herself in the Chair of St. Edward, there to receive the homage of clergy and laity. This, again, recalls Catholic days, when it was held that "the earth is the Lord's," and the monarch was God's Steward, charged with caring for a part of His domain. As a consequence of this belief there was not, and is not, in England to this day there is not, absolute ownership of land. The landholder is "a tenant in fee simple," theoretically holds of the Queen as the Queen holds of God, in return for service.

Church and Printing Press in Holy Russia

BY ANNA KARENINA

STALIN, man of steel, is now gathered to his fathers, and all eyes are turned to the new leaders of the Soviet Union. Now that new hands are on the wheel of the Russian ship of state, hopes have arisen that an era of greater personal freedom may befall the 200 million inhabitants behind the Iron Curtain. Very scant news is yet available on this matter, but one can, it would seem, affirm that any advance in that direction will depend largely on the attitude of the new rulers of Russia towards two outstanding questions. These are: (1) Nationalism; and (2) the Orthodox (or Eastern) Church.

The late Mr. Stalin, in the course of his long reign, had much to do with these problems, but his views were more than once reversed during his overlordship. On nationalism

during the early years of the Revolution he (being himself a Georgian) was the outstanding champion of self-determination and self-government, within the Union, naturally of the great number of peoples and nations that make up that Union. In connection with the Supreme Soviet that was set up a Soviet of Nationalities, somewhat resembling the (pre-Hitler) German upper house of Parliament. The "liberal" policy no doubt helped to the firm establishment of the U.S.S.R. But with the threat of, and actuality of, World War II, Russian nationalism was emphasised. Mr. P. C. King so well explained, in his review of Mr. Kolarz's book, "How Russia is Ruled" (*The Freethinker*, May 1), other nationalisms in the Union were regarded as "bourgeois" or "counter-revolutionary." Mr. King

in this connection the refusal to allow the Turkmenians to adopt the Roman script which Ataturk (Kemal of Turkey) had forced on "his" people, thereby opening up the West to them, and (subtly conceived) weakening the hold of the Koran on them, as the Koran is printed in Arabic.

The resuscitation of the Holy Orthodox Church in Russia during the War was probably an act of great statesmanship. This was called for by the fact that Russia's allies in the fight against Hitler were pious Christians, especially the Americans, and "Paris was worth a Mass." Also it was good business to let the Vatican have it all its own way, as it did in the twenties and thirties. If this is doubted, inquire how many Russians are in Addis Ababa now and in the between-the-war years. And the restored Patriarchate of Moscow was able to secure for the U.S.S.R. the Holy Places in Israel, which were in danger of passing into the hands of the Russian Whites.

At the present time it is not known what attitude the new rulers of the U.S.S.R. will take to the Orthodox Church. If they still wish to boost Russian nationalism, they will still support this Church, especially if the hierarchy is useful to the state. But, as Russian history shows, the boot has often been on the other leg, and the Tsar, though head of that Church has often been lesser partner in the Court-Church set-up. A Tsar is perhaps easier to dominate by the Church than an oligarchy, and the oligarchs, being well up in their country's history, may remember how even the great Tsar Ivan IV (the Terrible) was forced by the Church to abandon a reform of which he approved and sought to promote. The story of the arrival of printing in Russia, and its banishment, has been told before, but it may be well to repeat it here in connection with the two subjects with which we have been dealing.

The Christian hatred of knowledge which manifests itself in many lands was most strikingly shown by the Church's opposition to this new-fangled manner of multiplying books. During the reign of the aforesaid Ivan, who, though a monster of cruelty, was an able monarch, like his contemporary Henry VIII of England—also no gentleman—the first printing-press was set up in Moscow: to be precise in 1563. Printing therefore arrived in Moscow about a century later than in Western Europe. The Tsar was quick to see its value and to encourage its establishment in his realm. The first printing machine was, naturally enough, brought from neighbouring Poland; housed in a specially-built "Printing Yard" and a skilful Russia, Ivan Fedorov, engaged to manage it. He knew his job well, having probably learned it in Italy.

The next year, 1564—that of Shakespeare's birth—the first book was completed, naturally, as befitted Holy Russia, a religious tome dealing with the deeds of the Apostles. The devout Tsar was delighted, and the future of the Russian press seemed to be assured. But mark what happened.

The Holy Church moved in, supported by the reactionary *boyars*, or nobles. The Tsar's favour and the skill of the printer availed nothing against these reactionary forces, supported as they were by the intrigues of the prelates and a threatened vested interest. The prelates and nobles instinctively felt in this innovation something dangerous to their power. They also resented Fedorov's advancement in royal favour. Only one further book was he able to print in Moscow. His downfall came when he was accused of heresy—potent weapon of medieval reaction. With his assistant, Peter Mstislavetz, Fedorov fled, first to Lithuania, then to Poland. It is an old, old story. This enlightened and beneficent Russian was the victim of the fearful and angry Church. The silken curtain hanging before the sanctuary of a temple has often the texture of iron.

Review

THE Summer Number of *The Plain View* (subscription, 4s. 6d. a year, 4a, Inverness Place, Queensway, London, W.2) worthily upholds its own high standard. In the first pages of its Commentary are some sarcastic references to the "Intelligentsia," which H. G. Wells defined as "an irresponsible middle class with ideas"; and the writer—Mr. H. J. Blackham?—points out that "freedom of thought is worse than worthless unless the result is the predominance of responsible disciplined thinking." And he adds: "British indifference to ideas is bad enough, but the metaphysical mania of the Germans, the passionate dialectics of the French, or the voluminous verbosity of the Americans is not any more assuring." All this would make a good subject for further discussion.

We expected Mr. Blackham to say a few words on "Encounters of Belief" which the B.B.C. started and then suddenly stopped. It was too dangerous to allow any subtle attacks on current beliefs—"in fact," comments Mr. Blackham, "the encounters were very civil and upheld the honour of the respective contestants rather than downed any of them. . . . Neither side could hope to convert the other." And he notes that such discussions on the Home Programme "was a shock to many simple people." Of course. The B.B.C. will take good care that there are such simple people and they must be perpetuated. Otherwise, what excuse can be given for some of the religious broadcasts?

Very carefully Mr. A. D. Howell Smith discusses vital problems in "Values and the Cosmos"—such as, "Can we draw a rigid line of demarcation between the living and the non-living?" Between "a living man and a stone there seems," he says, "an impassable gulf"—though the present writer would ask why the word "seems"? Is there not? However, the reader should see for himself how Mr. Howell Smith deals with this and similar questions. Not the last word has been said on Truth, Beauty and Goodness, but what he has to say is well worth pondering over.

Miss Virginia Flemming's contribution is, "Mankind is one and should be respected" and she has many things to say which should also promote some vigorous discussion. For example, "Excessive emphasis upon political achievement might bring despair of a false kind. Humanism lies deeper, as does Christianity." It would be interesting to learn what this means?

In his "Power factor in the struggle between the Communist and the West," Mr. M. L. Burnet has many things to say about Russia and Communism which will be heartily disliked by Leftists. From the point of view of Humanism, Mr. J. Henry Lloyd examines the problem of "Property owning and using," with suitable quotations from R. H. Tawney. Miss Evelyn Belchambers (who has contributed to these columns and who is a fine linguist) has translated from the Magyar, Ivan Barko's "Neither Nor." This is an excellent article on Freethought, though he thinks that "God is necessary as the support of the weak and the solace of the desperate."

And for those who are interested in philosophy the reviews of two books on Hume will be specially welcome. Hume is still one of its biggest names. But the other reviews are all written with expert knowledge and form most valuable contributions. This is an excellent number in every way.

H. C.

It is quite easy to tell a lie, but very difficult to support it after it is told.—THOMAS PAINE.

Correspondence

ACHILLES' HEEL.

SIR.—I wish to commend this fine article of Mr. Du Cann with its timely criticism, and relate a horrible experience. I dreamed that I saw Jesus standing before Pilate. The mob was shrieking: "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Jesus standing calm and almost cheerful. Pilate, addressing the court, said: "I find no fault in this man." The howling of the mob dies away. Jesus turns pale, his knees shake. "Oh, but my crucifixion," he pleads, "ordained in Eden, prophesied in the Bible, and only confirmed last night at Gethsemane, the supreme achievement of my visit to the earth. If the Christian scheme of salvation fails, millions will perish in hell." Pilate calmly turns to the Jewish elders and priests and confers with them. Then addresses the court: "The Jewish authorities intend to drop the whole of these proceedings forthwith. According to Roman law the prisoner is entitled to worship whatever God, Gods or no God, as he pleases. Case dismissed." Then pandemonium broke out, Jesus throwing himself down on the ground, sobbing: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." God Almighty, thundering and bellowing incoherently in Heaven. The Holy Ghost tearing his feathers to shreds. Then I woke up. The world had been saved!—Yours, etc.,
J. R. DUNCANSON.

THE BLASPHEMY LAWS

SIR.—Blasphemy Laws show that free speech, free press, free country and democracy do not exist, and believers in such superstitious things will find themselves in jails supported by superstition spreading clergy. Why?

Blasphemy Laws protect the wealth and power of the Church built by clever clergy on superstitious people. According to Blasphemy Laws we are not allowed to teach superstitious people to open their eyes to the opium of religious superstition because religion is the method to enforce superstitious ideas for human minds. Superstitious religious human being is hardworking bee "piling up" honey for non-working parasites living in hive, for non-working clergy living among hardworking. When hardworking bee will lose its superstition it will lose its good will to make honey for parasites. In such case, Blasphemy Laws are superstition and parasite protecting laws. Atomic Age and Dark Middle Age with newly introduced Blasphemy Laws go together. How about Mau Mau in Africa? Have they Blasphemy Laws to protect their religion, or Christian missionaries must introduce our Blasphemy Laws?

According to *The Freethinker* the Archbishop dare not televise the anointing. Maybe he can televise the Blasphemy Laws to Mau Mau, because refusing to work cheap for white landlords possessing Mau Mau land is real blasphemy.—Yours, etc.,
K. LIDAKS.

DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

SIR.—Is it too much to ask Mr. H. Cutner to try and find something wrong with my article on "Dialectical Materialism," instead of indulging in cryptic remarks, in his letters, which do nothing to illuminate what should be an interesting subject to your readers?

Is it impossible for him to understand that philosophy can be, and is, used as a guide? May I also inform him that I never deal in revelations that appear within inverted commas?—Yours, etc.,
JIM GRAHAM.

THE FINANCIAL ROOT OF CHRISTIANITY

SIR.—Many readers will agree with C. G. L. Du Cann in his advocacy of striking at the heart of Christianity by attacking the absurd doctrine of the atonement.

However, it is questionable whether this monstrous doctrine is really the heart of Christianity.

It is very difficult for any Freethinker to explain why millions upon millions of men and women who have had the advantages of education, believe that a God went through the horror of a congestion in a woman's inside for nine months, and decided to be born in an insanitary stable, amongst a lot of very superstitious and ignorant semi-barbarians, nearly two thousand years ago.

Personally, I do not believe that any Christian scholar accepts this barbaric conception of the atonement, and the belief is kept

virile because there is much money to be made out of it. Take this prop of money away, and it would fall flat. Recent articles in *The Freethinker* demonstrate that Christianity to-day is internationally paying handsome profits and, what industry is lagging behind for want of capital for social development, Christian frauds (as the daily Press proves) are robbing people right and left in taking deposits on houses that do not exist, whilst the more clever frauds of the Christian Church keep inside the law by offering the masses, not houses on earth, but mansions in the sky, in that blessed land, far far away—note the two fars.

Money making is at the root of all supernatural religion, and a criminal Christian would rather by far be forgiven by an invisible God than be given six months' hard labour by a visible judge.

Any observant man or woman can see how jealous the various sects are of each other. Poor old Evan Roberts, the Welsh revivalist, whom I often chatted with, informed me once, as he sat in Roath Park, Cardiff: "I made a good bit. Paul. But it wasn't for the jealousy of the churches who put a sprag in my wheel, I could have made a hundred times more. They used me for their own ends, and to-day they don't care a damn how I am." There is no doubt that if this one-time useful collier had been the same cunning as a Yankee revivalist, he would have made a pile. The heart of the Christian Church is made of gold. Let us not forget that the Roman, the Protestant, and the American fancy religions are taking millions upon millions out of industry and are supplying no commodities in return.

Strike at Christianity's golden heart. This is the vulnerable spot. And for a start, let every Freethinker demand that all Churches pay rates and taxes, and also an entertainment tax, and let us unload these purveyors of superstition and ignorance of a good part of their ill-gotten gains.—Yours, etc.,
PAUL VARNER.

WHY ABOLISH THE MONARCHY?

SIR.—Since the abolition of the Monarchy would not put a penny actually or metaphorically, into anybody's pocket, and since the existence puts a term to the ambitions of any home-grown Hitler or Stalin who might like to become No. 1, there seem to be good grounds for Freethinkers to support Royalty as we know it here.

Freethinkers should also favour the establishment of the Church of England. While established it keeps the Roman Catholic Church from occupying first place. The fact that the C. of E. is the church of a minority is, from the Freethought standpoint, an argument in favour of the advisability of its remaining established.—Yours, etc.,
W. E. NICHOLSON.

[We would remind our correspondent that the Mussolini regime in Italy, the prototype of all subsequent Fascist dictatorships, came into existence with the active support of the Italian Monarchy.]
EDITOR.]

GOD SAVES THE QUEEN!

SIR.—If ever God saved a Queen he has saved the Queen of England with all his might. Without God, I doubt if we could have saved her. God has not saved them in other countries, which points out that he is more present here than in these other countries, which to me proves that the people are more backward here, that they are more easily led and more lazy in thought.

It looks to me as though God is going to stay with us for a long time, and unless we can in some way get rid of God and his this performance which works hand in hand with him, I cannot see our people or country advancing.

When one thinks that hundreds of people from all over the world are helping God to save the Queen, it makes me wonder what help there is for humanity.

Unlike most people, I will feel very sad on Coronation day. I do not blind myself to what is going on behind all this.

I wonder what people in Korea will be thinking on this day rejoicing? I wish God would turn his mind to that country for a moment, and save some of those people who are suffering from day to day. I sometimes wish I could be as selfish as these people who have God on their side, they feel more comfortable than I. I cannot suffer from feeling as I do, I have not a God to stop thinking and knowing.

How much more easy life must be with God. I have never had him with me. He helps the people who suffer, and he helps people who make the suffering, and it is true that we have the world without him.

Give me the hell every time. I am thankful to be free of a God which blinds people, and makes them live such worthless and cruel lives. I would rather know, and feel the suffering by knowing it.—Yours, etc.,
KATHLEEN TACCHI-MORRIS.

MISTAKES OF MOSES. By Col. R. G. Ingersoll. Price 3d. postage 1½d.

THE MOTHER OF GOD. By G. W. Foote. Price 3d.; postage 1½d.

PETER ANNET, 1693—1769. By Ella Twynam. Price 2d.; postage 1½d.

BLANKENBERGE (Belgian Coast).—Hotel Astoria. Seven days £7 10s. inclusive; English spoken; special terms for parties.