

The Freethinker

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Editor: F. A. RIDLEY

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ON Christmas Day it so happened that the present writer was crossing Smithfield Market when he was aroused from the thoughts appropriate to the holy season by the sight of an inscription at the entrance of the cattle pens for the unfortunate victims of the human taste in meat. The inscription in question was couched in a sonorous Latin which, we should imagine, is scarcely comprehensible to the experts in the meat trade by whom it is, presumably, intended to be read. The Latin quotation ran as follows:—

“Subjectis sub pedibus omnia oves et boves.”

Or, rendered freely: “All sheep and oxen hath He placed beneath the yoke of man.” No doubt, a consoling thought for the “sheep and oxen” destined for slaughter at the hand of man! We must confess that our verbal knowledge of the text of Holy Scripture is not all that it should be, and is, in fact, far surpassed by quite a number of our readers. However, in this instance, we seem to remember that the quotation in question comes from Genesis. Anyway, it has, we feel assured, authentic Biblical sanction.

The Lord of Creation

The quotation with which the directors of Smithfield Market have seen fit to adorn the metropolis of the meat trade reflects entirely the Christian view of life and, in particular, of the purpose of the original creation, which the Christian Church, like the Jewish Church before it, has consistently taught throughout its existence. That view is, we may relevantly add, the original authentic view of Christianity, not the “Modernist” view now fashionable in “Liberal” Christian circles, based upon an illogical attempt to “reconcile” the plain narrative of the creation in *Genesis* with modern evolutionist views entirely inconsistent with the ancient Hebrew account of *The Origin of Species*. That original view, still taught by “Fundamentalists,” is taught with, at least, perfect clarity in the opening chapters of *Genesis*. By a direct and peremptory degree, the Hebrew god, Yahveh, created the universe out of the formless void and, in a carefully distinguished order, created the various kinds of life one by one, culminating in the animal kingdom. Finally, Yahveh made man in his own image, as his deputy, to bear rule over the entire creation. After which exhausting labour in six days—a record, one imagines, in productivity—Yahveh “rested from his labours,” thereby, as a witty French Socialist once remarked, affording a divine example to the workers of the world!

“The Animals Were Made for our Use”

Such is the Christian account of Creation. Obviously, the ancient Hebrew scribe who wrote or, rather, “edited” the *Genesis* narrative from older Babylonian sources, viewed everything from an entirely anthropocentric point of view. Man is the centre, Man is the master of the entire Creation, subject only to his anthropomorphic god,

the man-like Yahveh, who “rested in the cool of the day” like his terrestrial worshippers. It is abundantly clear that this mental outlook is entirely ignorant of the actual origin of life, and has no conception that Man has any duties towards the lower species of life over whom he has been divinely created to rule. Such was the static, non-evolutionary view of life which Christianity took over from Judaism. We may relevantly add that no other view has been entertained by the Christian Churches prior to the late 19th century, when the evolutionary concept became too strong to be ignored. Even to-day, this is still the view of the most powerful of the Christian Churches. A Christian

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

The Lord of Creation

By F. A. RIDLEY

evolutionist, Dean Inge, relates how, when he sought to interest his Catholic friends in a movement to humanise the treatment of animals, they unanimously replied, “The animals are made for our use; we have no duties towards them.” We may add that the author of *Genesis* would have agreed with them, as, also, would the Jesus of the Gospels, to judge from the miracle of the Gadarene swine.

Evolution versus Genesis

The modern concept of evolution is, we submit, entirely inconsistent with such an anthropocentric view, not only in theory, but equally so in practice. The killing of animals for food is a grim necessity imposed upon Man by a harsh and parsimonious Nature, “red in tooth and claw.” It is not a divinely ordained gift of God, to be boasted about in such bragging inscriptions as that in Smithfield Market quoted above. Indeed, the very fact that the human race can only exist in this murderous manner, by the continual extermination of his distant animal kin, or, in the case of vegetarians, by the systematic massacre of our still more remote vegetable kin, itself constitutes one of the most overwhelming arguments that “God” is a myth, and a “God of Love” an obvious absurdity in the actual world in which, through no fault or choice of ours, we find ourselves placed. The grim definition, “History is the conjugation of the verb, ‘to eat,’” is, if obviously one-sided, at least true as far as it goes. Also one-sided, but also probably true as far as it goes, is the terrible aphorism of Schopenhauer, “The animals live in a hell, of which Man is the Devil.” Either of these pronouncements has certainly much more warrant from human history than mystical meanderings about a god of love. The record of human dealings with “the lower animals” is *not* a pretty story!

Turkeys do not Love Christmas

That the view expressed in *Genesis* is, at bottom, the view of all Christians, including the “liberal” ones, was also forcibly illustrated last Christmas Day. For the B.B.C. “featured” on that day a service conducted by that eminent pillar of Christianity, Dr. Donald Soper, with whom, many years ago, the present writer had the pleasure

of debating. Dr. Soper is by no means a "Fundamentalist," and his point of view on non-theological subjects is often progressive and worthy of respect by opponents, as well as by supporters of Christianity. Yet even Dr. Soper publicly called down the Divine blessing on the Christmas dinner of turkey which he announced that he was going to eat with his family at the conclusion of the service. Again, whilst the turkey is not the most intelligent of birds, it, no doubt, enjoys its life as much as any other. It certainly seems a peculiar "God of Love" who enjoins his followers to celebrate his birthday by a gastronomic orgy of innumerable slaughtered birds. The "gloomy Dean" Inge once remarked that, if the animals could imagine a devil, they would certainly nominate Man for the infernal role! Were turkeys capable of a religion, we do not imagine that Christmas Day would probably constitute their favourite religious festival!

Christian and Secularist Ethics

Secularism, Humanism, Freethought, call it what you will, differs from supernaturalism essentially in the fact that its notions of right and wrong—of ethics in the broadest sense—spring ultimately from the needs of Man in society, and not from the arbitrarily-imposed fiat of an

omnipotent god. As the old Greek sage remarked: "Nothing is made for our use, but many things that exist are useful to us." Modern evolutionary theory endorses this aphorism of Epicurus. In the world in which we live—a world for the creation and character of which we have no responsibility—we have to do many things in order to exist which cannot be justified ethically except by the essentially unethical principle: "Necessity"—the necessity of existence—"knows no law." Mankind's dealing with the animal kingdom, with his less successful evolutionary relatives, is, and probably always will be, guided by this fundamental principle. He is obliged, and probably always will be obliged, to kill for necessity. He is *not* obliged, and he ought to be forbidden, to kill for pleasure. No god ordained this essentially amoral state of things in which we find ourselves, and no *moral* being could, by definition, have created such a state of things. A god who made, for examples, turkeys specially to be eaten at Christmas, would be a monster, not an object of worship. We may hope that, in view of the current acceptance of the *fact* of evolution, its *ethics* will eventually be accepted as well. If and when that day eventually arrives, we may still have Smithfield Market, but we shall not thank God for it.

The Life of Abraham

By A. R. HILL

(Concluded from page 3)

Ussher says the Creation was 4004 B.C., so that from the Creation of Adam to the death of Noah is one-third of the time from the Creation to the present day.

There is no need for comment, except when we are told that years then were different to the present ones. The Bible proves them the same.

The Flood started 17th day of the 2nd month and ended 17th day of the 7th month, and lasted 150 days (Genesis 7, 11, 8, 3-4).

The number of days from the 17th February to the 17th July in a non-leap year is a total of 150 days. Q.E.D. Further, see Genesis 8, 22.

We end these two incidents with a remarkable coincidence.

Isaac repeated his father's second incident by telling the same king, Abimelech, King of Gerar, that Rebekah, his wife, was his sister—for the same reason, he was afraid they would kill him, 26, 1, 6 and 7.

Abraham went into Egypt and Isaac went into Gerar for the same reason: there was a famine in each land, 26, 1, 12, 10.

Here is another instance of the writer of Genesis not knowing what he had previously written or did more than one man write Genesis?

Abraham and Lot decided to part. Abraham told Lot to choose his land, saying "If thou take the left hand, then I will go to the right." Lot chose the plain about Sodom and Gomorrah "And Abraham dwelled in the land of Canaan" 13, 1-12. Canaan was the land the Lord had promised Abraham, 12, 6-7.

It was a remarkable coincidence that Abraham's wife Sarah was barren and gave birth to Isaac; Isaac's wife Rebekah was barren and gave birth to Jacob; Jacob's wife Rachael was barren and gave birth to Joseph. 11, 30-31; 21, 3; 25, 21; 25, 26, 29, 31; 30, 23-24.

The most astonishing statements given by the writer of Genesis are the disparity of ages of the individuals. Abraham at the age of 99 (17, 24) was old, because it says "Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age" (18, 11), yet he must have been brought up amongst

exceedingly old men. Noah died at the age of 950 (9, 29), when Abraham was 60 years of age and all Abraham's ancestors, from Noah, died either during his lifetime or after his death, see chapters 5 and 11.

Abraham laughed when God told him he should have a son by Sarah when he was 100 years old, yet Noah was 500 years of age when his sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth were born (5, 32).

We have seen that Abraham laughed at the idea of having a son at the age of 100 (17, 15-17, 18, 10-14, 21, 5), yet after Sarah died at the age of 127 and he was 137. "Then again Abraham took a wife and her name was Keturah. And she bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah" (25, 1-2), not one, but six and we are not told that the Lord assisted him this time. If this life story had been written as fiction would any firm publish the book?

The title of this book is "The first book of Moses, called Genesis" and so it is claimed that Moses wrote it. There are several proofs that he did not, but as we are dealing with the life of Abraham we will give the one found in it. Abraham was called a prophet (20, 7) yet Samuel was called a seer (I Samuel, 9, 11), and this is what is said about a seer and prophet: "For he that is now called a prophet was beforetimes called a seer" (I Samuel 9, 9). Genesis must have been written after that title had been changed. We don't know when, but it must have been after Samuel's time.

NOW READY

ROBERT TAYLOR

THE DEVIL'S CHAPLAIN
(1784-1844)

By H. CUTNER

A detailed account of a remarkable Freethinker
and his work

Price 1s. 6d.

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Homosexuality—Morals and the Law

By C. H. NORMAN

THE boycott of this subject in the Press has been raised by the sudden discovery by various influential papers that there must be something wrong with the treatment of this aberration by the judges of England and Scotland in their execution of the law on the matter. The startling statement by the stipendiary magistrate, Mr. Guest, that he was dealing with 600 cases a year of male importuning and allied offences also drew public attention to the question, though these figures do not seem to fit in with the annual Home Office returns which recorded only something between 5,000 and 6,000 convictions of all classes of sex offences in the year 1952 for the whole of England. However, the explanation may rest in the form in which the statistics are prepared.

This is not an evil which can be attributed to the decay of religion, for, by October in this year, there had been convicted three vicars of the Established Church, who are each serving very, very heavy sentences—up to fifteen years penal servitude. Some judges are really quite out of hand in their sentences. Though Lord Goddard, as judge of first instance, is more reasonable in his sentences for this class of offence than some of his colleagues, the Court of Criminal Appeal has shown no inclination to reduce sentences passed on these offenders. One can only hope that the Revision of Sentences Committee at the Home Office has taken a more reasonable view than some judges.

One of the peculiar difficulties about the strange moral approach in Britain to sex matters is that certain people become almost in a state of frenzy on the subject of moral offences of all types. Yet, there are some peculiarities about the law of England which suggest that the whole attitude is fundamentally wrong. In a country where the Church and State combine in the pretence that the sex relationship is something which is wicked and sinful in itself, naturally the reality of the position, when closely examined, is somewhat ugly to the timorous mind.

England is almost the only country in Europe where homosexuality is treated as a criminal offence meriting the severest of punishment. Generally speaking (as throughout the Arabian East, in China and in Japan), it is either ignored or regarded as a matter for the medical profession rather than the police. Even in England, sex aberrations between the female sex are not cognisable by the law. Nor are elder women punished for the seduction or sexual mis-handling of smallish boys and girls. It is a strange anomaly that what is regarded as a terrible offence when committed by men is ignored by the law when committed by women who are more than half the population.

A great stir was recently created in the United States by two books setting out the case histories on sexual life of a certain number of male and female citizens of that country. But the evidence given before the Birkett Committee which was set up to consider the law relating to abortion, if published, would certainly amaze the English public concerning the moral life of England even more than the books referred to shocked the United States public. It is rather odd that no one has noticed that somewhat similar disclosures to those made recently in the United States are to be found in Rowntree and Laver's book *English Life and Leisure*, a very revealing book in many respects on the true nature of "morality" in England.

One explanation of the different attitude on the Continent on this subject to that taken in England is that the offence is regarded partly as a by-product of military conscription in peace-time. When military conscription was introduced generally in Europe after the French Revolution, the ecclesiastical laws which had hitherto ruled on the subject

were withdrawn. It is a curious fact that this offence has greatly increased in England since the maintenance of conscription in peace-time. One of the elements which led to Mr. Lloyd George's insistence on the ending of military conscription in 1919 was a fear that the situation with which England is faced to-day might arise from the maintenance of conscription in peace-time.

It is very difficult to suggest a remedy for dealing with this social menace in face of the absurd attitude of the authorities and of public opinion. In my early Assize days, one of the most unpleasant types of cases were those described under the heading of bestiality, which were offences between men and animals. Prosecutions gradually disappeared as juries simply refused to convict in the teeth of the evidence. The judges trying these cases always took the somewhat nonchalant line of summing up to the jury in a few sentences. "Gentlemen of the jury. You have heard the evidence in this case. It is entirely for you to say whether the accused is guilty of the offence. Consider your verdict." Nor would the judges accept a plea of guilty in such cases. The offenders were farm labourers of a low order of intelligence. Up to the present juries have shown no sign of taking this attitude in cases involving homosexuality or allied offences. The general body of the judges are severe in their dealing with homosexual or allied cases, though one or two isolated protests are being made by a minority, who seem to doubt the wisdom of treating these matters so strictly as breaches of the criminal law.

The proposal for a Royal Commission is hardly a remedy for dealing with the existing situation. Parliament should undertake the task of reviewing the administration of justice on this question as an urgent matter of public importance. The Commission dealing with the costs of litigation *after sitting for six years* has produced a report which will do little to lessen the burden carried by the community in the cost of the legal profession. The Commission on Capital Punishment, which had been preceded by a House of Commons Select Committee on the same subject, *after sitting for four years*, has produced a nebulous and almost useless report. Therefore, the suggestion of a Royal Commission or a Departmental Committee (which the authorities would probably prefer) is hardly sufficient to deal with a situation in which numbers of persons are being heavily punished for conduct which many parts of the world regard not only as properly outside the province of the criminal law, but as a matter for mental or psychological treatment in proper institutions. Sending these people to long terms of imprisonment in to-day's crowded conditions of the prisons is only making matters worse, as the offence is already rampant in the prisons, though the prison authorities turn a blind eye on something which is beyond control in the abnormal circumstances of prison life.

Notes for Listeners

- Look out on Third Programme for:—
1. Two talks on Sir James Frazer and his influence (centenary of his birth).
 2. Early Man in Africa, by Dr. K. P. Oakley.
 3. A series on Immanuel Kant (150 anniversary of his death).
 4. A discussion on The Question of Freedom between J. W. Watkins and Maurice Cranston.
 5. Two talks by Isaiah Berlin: "Why Large Revolutions Fail" and "Individual Liberty."
 6. The series on the Heritage of Spain.

C. B. B.

This Believing World

What a boon the B.B.C. has been for the mass hysteria let loose at Christmas time! Before broadcasting came into its own, there was the more or less mild publicity in the daily Press, and that given by the Churches; nowadays, the whole weight of radio and TV is put to the service of "the Babe of Bethlehem," and Freethinkers are almost swamped out of existence. Our small protesting voice is nearly still.

A typical example of what is happening these days is the way in which the Rev. F. Martin is allowed to say in the *Sunday Graphic*—"Christmas is plain authentic fact . . . solid and fully documented history. On a specific day a child was born in the stable of a poor inn at Bethlehem in Palestine. And through the way he lived, he convinced his closest friends and those who heard about him afterwards that he was the Son of God." This is "fully documented history."

Faced with this kind of hopeless nonsense what can we do? It is broadcast everywhere, it is thundered from thousands of pulpits—and the heartbreaking thing is that it is almost believed in by our reverent Rationalists. They do not go so far as "the Son of God," but they do mouth the story of "the Babe of Bethlehem" as if that at least was true. And it is all the plainest myth, and no more true than the story of Aladdin.

But while we progress in educating people even a little to see what religion really is, we must hand it to the B.B.C. for the way they are debunking all sorts of other myths. On Sunday mornings, an interesting series of talks are being given exploding the myths of St. George, King Arthur, the Druids and Stonehenge, and other well-known stories, which have done duty for centuries and were considered as true as Gospel. Well, that is exactly how true they are, and though we hate to prophesy, one day some erudite professor will, in precisely the same way, explode the myth of Jesus. It is just as well or just as badly authenticated as is the story of St. George.

In the meantime, however, many of our weekly periodicals feel it their duty to keep "God" more than "the Babe" to the fore—as in a recent issue of *Picture Post* which tries to deal with the people who "cannot be bothered with God." Why should they be bothered with a completely mythical Deity? Where was he—if he is not a myth—during the war? What did he do to stop it? And look at the way he bungles things. It required a mere earthly surgeon to put God's bungling right in the case of the latest Siamese twins, and this is going on all over the world.

Of course, "Picture Post," like so many pious journals, tries its best to blame the rise in juvenile delinquency on our "neglect" of God. But why, in heaven's name, will it not answer the point we have raised dozens of times in these columns? It is a matter of sober fact that gaol chaplains of various denominations are required to "minister" to the inhabitants of our prisons—that is, it is recognised that the criminals are religious. Yet so few Freethinkers can be found in them, that the Home Office refuses to allow any regular Secularist visitor to function; there is no need for him. Will *Picture Post* explain why?

Most of the people who were asked by *Picture Post* about God were most insistent that they "had nothing against the Church." And if one agrees that parsons and priests often do useful social work in country districts, work which, in the nature of things, is purely secular, this does not surely mean that they know anything whatever about

God or his Precious Son or Miracles or Hell or Angels or Devils or even diamond-studded pavements up in Heaven. In other words, when they are drivelling about God, they are wasting time and are—we have to say it—"a pain in the neck." And we defy *Picture Post* to prove otherwise.

A correspondent who claims that he is an Atheist implores us to stop making fun of spooks. He knows that they exist under the more respectable name of ghosts, and he is quite certain that one day he will join their ranks. We hope he will not, however, be condemned to wear clanking chains, or carry his bloody head under his arm or even appear suddenly to maiden ladies living in out-of-the-way houses. We implore him not to frighten the life out of us, but to behave like a good kind ghost—and we promise that we shall never, never call him a spook.

Theatre

A London Actress at the Arts Theatre is a revival of a good old melodrama by Emma Litchfield.

It may be because the playwright was a woman that she—knowing her own sex—decided to make her villain a woman. We are left in no doubt that this adventuress ploughed her way through life leaving a furrow of ruined men, and Joan Haythorne plays the part in true style. The play is out for laughs, and the actors do everything they can to extract them. The result is a humorous entertainment in which we enjoy looking into the past and marvel at what the Victorians took so seriously.

The Ballets De Paris of Roland Petit have continued their season at the Stoll Theatre with *La Belle au Bois Dormant*, which is a kind of allegory on the traditional tale of The Sleeping Beauty, but has less to recommend it as a story. The scene is a circus where the atmosphere is gay, but for the purpose Henri Dutilleux's music is in far too serious a vein.

The ballet is outstanding for Leslie Caron's beautiful performance. Her poise, suppleness and grace are such as to place all other dancers in the company at an unfair disadvantage. We are not concerned with the theme of the ballet if we can see her dance, for that is all that matters.

RAYMOND DOUGLAS.

1953 — 1954

As "Nineteen-fifty-three" departs,

To trouble us no more,
Hope on for better times to come
In "Nineteen-fifty-four."

In "Fifty-three" we worried much,
Expecting woes galore,

Which never happened. Let's be wise
In "Nineteen-fifty-four."

There'll be a lot to grouse about,

But probably far more
To give us many happy days
In "Nineteen-fifty-four."

For what was good in "Fifty-three,"
We gladly cry, "Encore,"

And hope for cause for more applause
In "Nineteen-fifty-four."

So while we trust that "Providence"
Will blessings still outpour,

Let's count them all. T'will cheer us on
In "Nineteen-fifty-four."

And may it be a better year

Than any gone before,
And all of us come "Smilin' thru'"

In "Nineteen-fifty-four."

C. E. RATCLIFFE.

THE FREETHINKER

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To Correspondents

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Lecture Notices should reach the Secretary of the N.S.S. at this Office by Friday morning.

Correspondents are requested to write on one side of the paper only and to make their letters as brief as possible.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Every Sunday, 7 p.m.: FRANK ROTHWELL.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Bomb Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK and BARNES. Every Sunday, 3 p.m., at Platf Fields, a Lecture.

North London Branch (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, noon: F. A. RIDLEY.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Every Thursday, 1-15 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, January 10, 6-45 p.m.: J. BENTLEY, "Drink and Civilisation."

Bristol Rationalist Group (Crown and Dove Hotel, Bridewell Street).—Wednesday, January 13, 7-30 p.m.: "Rationalism and Logic." Discussion invited. All welcome.

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., W.C.1).—Tuesday, January 12, 7 p.m.: W. KENT, F.S.A., "George Gissing: the Hardy of the Town."

Junior Discussion Group (Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., W.C.1).—Friday, January 15, 7-15 p.m.: Speaker from the Citizens' League.

Manchester Humanist Fellowship (Cross Street Chapel).—Saturday, January 9, 3 p.m.: ROY S. JOHNSON, B.Sc., "Politics in Literature."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, January 10, 2.30 p.m.: Lt.-Col. J. K. CORDEAUX, C.B.E., "Policy for the Cold War."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., W.C.1).—Sunday, January 10, 11 a.m.: Dr. W. E. SWINTON, F.R.S.E., "Evolution and Morality."

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road).—Sunday, January 10, 7-15 p.m.: STUART MORRIS, "My Experiences in America."

Book Review

ROBERT TAYLOR, by H. Cutner. *The Pioneer Press*. 1s. 6d.

Every advanced movement tends to forget its original pioneers: the men who bore the burden and heat of the day, who speculated boldly with new ideas, and who experienced the frequently harsh treatment which society so often metes out to those daring spirits who are above, in front of their times. The modern movement of critical inquiry into the prevailing dogmas of the current religion which is described generically as "Freethought" has had its full share of such persecuted and martyred pioneers, few of whom are, to-day, remembered by those who now enjoy legal and social liberties purchased at the cost, ultimately, of the hardships of their forgotten predecessors.

In his newly published booklet on Robert Taylor (1784-1844), already published serially in the pages of

The Freethinker, Mr. H. Cutner performs, in my opinion, a valuable service both to historical scholarship and to the Freethought movement, by recalling the fundamental facts about one of the most brilliant and, also, persecuted of the pioneers of Freethought. In the case of Robert Taylor, it was not only his remarkable eloquence and learning that drew upon him both the rigours of the law and the venom of Christian controversialists. As Mr. Cutner effectively demonstrates, in an age when the great majority of Freethinkers themselves, following Thomas Paine, professed Deism rather than Atheism, and fervently believed in the human existence of the "Carpenter of Nazareth" Taylor flatly denied the historicity of the alleged Founder of Christianity. He was, indeed, and it is his principal claim to fame, the first great English exponent of the "mythicist" theory and, at a time when such an attitude was universally regarded as both novel and blasphemous, he drew down upon his head the rigours of the law and the impartial hatred of believing Christians and "reverent" Rationalists alike.

In his brief "outline" of Robert Taylor's life Mr. Cutner divides his subject matter into two parts. In the first, he presents with adequate scholarship and with the literary lucidity which he has taught us to expect from him, the main biographical facts in Robert Taylor's stormy career, during his sixty years' life between his birth in Enfield, Middlesex, and his death in Tours, France. We are shown glimpses both of Taylor, "The Devil's Chaplain," preaching in full canonicals in the Rotunda, Blackfriars, which was later to become a famous pugilistic arena! Taylor's brief experience as an Anglican clergyman at the start of his career, and his subsequent ejection from the Church, and clashes with the ecclesiastical authorities in England, Ireland, and the Isle of Man, are vividly described, as, also, are his clashes with the law, and his subsequent spells of incarceration in the foul goals of the period in Oakham and London. Incidentally, Mr. Cutner, in the company of Mr. G. H. Taylor and of the present writer, was able to identify the remains of Oakham gaol last summer, during the motor-coach outing which followed the 1953 Annual Conference of the N.S.S. at Leicester. It was in the unpropitious surroundings of Oakham Gaol that Taylor wrote two of his principal works, *The Syntagma* and *The Diegeses*.

In the second part of his booklet, Mr. Cutner examines in some detail the literary work of Robert Taylor and reviews his main theories. As our author remarks, much water has flowed under the arches of critical scholarship since Taylor wrote, and not all his arguments can claim to have stood the test of time. Notwithstanding, writing as an unrepentant "mythicist" himself, Mr. Cutner claims that his main critical positions remain unshaken and are as fundamentally accurate in 1954 as they were when first penned by their author.

In any case, the learned author, himself a recognised authority on the early history of Freethought in England, has enriched biographical literature by this rediscovery of a great but neglected figure in the annals both of English Freethought and of critical scholarship. We are sure that everyone who read Mr. Cutner's stimulating articles in *The Freethinker* will wish to have them now in a more permanent form between covers.

There are, unfortunately, a few "printers' errors," which might be corrected in the second edition, and one error in fact: Caxton's first book was printed in 1474, and not in 1444, as stated in the text. F. A. R.

AGE OF REASON. By Thomas Paine. With 40 page introduction by Chapman Cohen. Price, cloth 3s. 9d., paper 2s. 6d.; postage 3d.

Against Dialectical Materialism

By H. CUTNER

MR. J. GRAHAM'S reply to my criticism of his article on Dialectical Materialism took the well known line of personally abusing me. I am "ignorant," I am a "hypocrite," I "scoff" and "jeer," and I ought to join the "flat earthers" and the "crystal gazers." In fact, I am so ignorant that I do not even know what "mechanical materialism" is.

Incidentally, if other readers wish to butt in, they might take the trouble to find out what my criticism of Mr. Graham was meant to be. I never "long promised" an article on Dialectical Materialism, as Mr. E. Crouch says. I was asked to reply to Mr. Graham ("try and find something wrong"), and if my reply consisted of "silly jibes" he ought to go for Mr. Graham for writing a particularly silly article.

First, as to Mr. Graham's "comrades"—Prof. Macmurray and the Dean of Canterbury. The Dean, he says, is an "Idealist"—and so, because he is an Idealist, Stalin sent him the Stalin "peace" prize of £9,000. Stalin was sure to do this to an Idealist. As for Prof. Macmurray, he has an article as a Dialectical Materialist in *Some Aspects of Dialectical Materialism*, edited by that high priest of the sect, Prof. H. Levy. If he is not one, what is he doing in that bunch? Besides, I heard the professor give a lecture on Christianity and Communism, and he was then a fervent advocate of both. No, any Christian who declares that he is a Marxist is a welcome—a very welcome—"comrade" for Mr. Graham.

And there is a very good reason why he is welcome as a Dialectical Materialist. One of the contributors to the above work is Mr. E. F. Carritt (University College, Oxford), and he is responsible for a statement in the *Labour Monthly*, June, 1933. Please note that Mr. Carritt takes the greatest possible pains to prove in *Some Aspects* that he is a thorough Dialectical Materialist by giving 15 "doctrines" which he holds in common with Prof. J. D. Bernal, who is even *plus royalist que le roi*. (Of course, the eminent professor completely disowns Mr. Carritt.) The statement is: "Dialectical Materialism looks like vitalism applied to physics and to society as well as life. . . . It applies a vitalist method outside biology."

Will the reader notice the word "vitalist"? It is just this "vitalism" which we mechanistic Materialists so strongly oppose. Vitalism is another word for "soul" or "purpose" or "intelligence"; it can even be equated with the ghost of a God. In fact, a good "vitalist" can pop over to Christianity as easily as kiss my hand. Thorndike gives Vitalism this definition: "Doctrine that the behaviour of a living organism is, at least in part, due to a vital principle that cannot possibly be explained by physics and chemistry." So here we have a good Dialectical Materialist like Mr. E. F. Carritt admitting the entry of Vitalism into this nonsense of Dialectical Materialism. And however much mechanistic Materialism can be criticised, no one can say it has any "vitalistic" principle.

I pointed out that Mr. Graham did not give us a definition of his creed, whereupon Mr. E. Crouch courteously says this is "untrue." In plainer words, he means that I am a liar. And what does Mr. Graham himself say? Does he give us a definition? Why, he says that "definitions have their limitations" and adds that the "whole of the article could be taken as defining what is meant." He simply could not define (as I knew perfectly well) the egregious rubbish he calls Dialectical Materialism. And he complains that I am "hostile." Of course I am. In the clearest possible way, Dialectical Materialists have shown that they oppose mechanistic Materialism; and the

nonsense they write about both certainly makes me hostile.

As Prof. T. H. Morgan says in his *Scientific Basis of Evolution*: "Modern biology rests its case on the assumption, sometimes amounting to a conviction as the result of wide experience, that the properties of living things are the outcome of their chemical and physical composition and configuration." And he deals with those "spirit-believers" who say that Mechanists pretend "to explain the universe." Prof. Morgan says, "Mechanists make no such claims. They do claim, however, that science has greatly profited by the use of the mechanistic approach in the widest sense, and they resent the boundaries set to their progress by metaphysicians. . . ." And as Dialectical Materialists exultingly attack Mechanists, is there any wonder why I am hostile to Dialectical Materialism?

Let us now have a look at Hegel, who was triumphantly said to be standing on his head with Marx putting him (or himself—I am not clear which) on his feet. I asked Mr. Graham to give us the relevant passages from their works, and was not surprised that he took the first excuse (you "hypocrite"!) for not doing so. Indeed, I should have been greatly astonished had he produced them. However, as most readers of this journal are very unlikely to sample "the outstanding" philosopher of his time (as Mr. Graham calls him) I will here give a sample of his "philosophy"—which, by the way, I owe to my friend, Woolsey Teller's, highly entertaining and devastating *Essays of an Atheist*. Here it is:—

"Philosophy shows that the Idea advances to an infinite antithesis; that, viz., between the Idea in its free, universal form—in which it exists for itself—and the contrasted form of abstract introversion, which is formal existence for self-personality, formal freedom, such as belongs to Spirit only. The universal Idea exists thus as the substantial totality of things on the one side, and as the abstract essence of free volition on the other side. This reflection of the mind on itself is individual self-consciousness—the polar opposite of the Idea in its general form, and therefore existing in absolute Limitation. This polar opposite is consequently Limitation-particularisation, for the universal absolute being; it is the side of its definite existence; the sphere of its formal reality—the sphere of its reverence paid to God. To comprehend the absolute connection of this antithesis, is the profound task of metaphysics." (*Philosophy of History*, Willey edition, p. 26.)

It would be most interesting to find this beautiful passage of the "outstanding" philosopher of his day put on its feet; or, was this not the passage? And I am called a "hypocrite" and "hostile" because such unmitigated twaddle leaves me more determined than ever to call myself a (real) Materialist and not a follower of the vitalistic nonsense propagated by Messrs. Graham and Crouch.

Then we have the usual reference to the "Hegelian Triad" which—I am risking another attack as a liar—Mr. Graham does not define. Possibly he thinks that all students of his "Introduction" will know what this is. Well, what is it? And what is it worth? The reader can take my word for it—nothing at all. The Hegelian Triad is a huge joke which even Dialectical Materialists would prefer to bury. But it is dragged in just as the standing on the head or standing on the feet is dragged in; and to ask for any meaning brings in a charge of "hypocrisy," or one is roundly told that he is a "bourgeois Philistine." It is a terrible charge, and ought to make me follow the example of the illustrious Hitler.

Let me repeat what I said in my previous criticism. There is nothing in the incoherent "doctrines" of Dialectical Materialism worth while spending a tinker's hoot upon. It is neither a guide nor a philosophy. Nobody is a bit wiser through it. It is an aberration exactly like

(Concluded on page 16)

James George Frazer

Born January 1st, 1854

By C. BRADLAUGH BONNER

IN the remote days before the First World War, when "to be young was very Heaven," it was my good fortune not only to attend Frazer's lectures but, as secretary of the Cambridge Anthropological Club, to meet him not infrequently. The discussions which terminated the Club's meetings were at that time a field of battle between the field anthropologists Dr. W. H. R. Rivers, Dr. A. C. Haddon, Rev. J. Roscoe and their henchmen armed with direct experience of primitive peoples on the one hand and the arm-chair pundits, of whom Frazer was naturally the leader. The former accused the latter of trying to make primitive man a rational animal, whereas, just like other and civilised men, a very irrational beast capable of holding tenaciously and simultaneously conflicting beliefs. Rivers would describe vividly the ceremonies on a certain South Sea Island for the dead, in which the long past dead would come in boats to fetch away the newly deceased and ferry them to a distant Island of the Undying, nevertheless the same people would assure you that a certain cave was taboo for it was therein that the dead dwelt. To which Frazer would reply, drawing on his remarkable memory, with a whole series of similar beliefs on which he would build an elaborate theory. The discussion would go on as long as the chairman would permit, much to the delight of the crowd. So when I received an urgent message from Lady Frazer to see that every possible draught was banished from the lecture room where we met (then new and of the latest design, now no more, demolished as out of date), it was speedily and joyfully obeyed for it meant that there would be no stagnation of debate, no matter the state of the atmosphere.

Few social anthropologists to-day pay even lip-service to the Churches—Prof. Evans Pritchard is an outstanding exception more than counter-balanced by Professors A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, Raymond Firth, Meyer Fortes and C. D. Forde. Why that should be is apparent to the student of the Golden Bough, and even more so if Frazer's later works, such as "The Folklore of the Old Testament" and "The Belief in Immortality" are studied. Christianity takes its place among the irrational beliefs that "civilised" man inherits from "primitive" man. The anthropologists and archæologists remind us how short is the time that man has been "civilised." The folklorist excavates beliefs as the archæologist excavates a ruin and traces with immense pains the accretions and modifications that have been made age by age. That to-day traditional creeds are no longer hedged round by divinity but are laid bare in their plain humanity, is due more to Sir James Frazer than to any other. In the hundred years since Frazer's birth the change in outlook has been vast and profound. Every now and then our Bishops wake up to the fact and hurriedly modify the unchangeable doctrines of their Church for fear of being left behind in the swift intellectual evolution which is taking place. To-day the ancient dogmas wear thinner and thinner propped up by a helter-skelter of "explaining away" and "turning a blind eye." The Churches retain vast wealth, a highly organised vested (and gaitered) interest and a modicum of true believers, and exert all their power to oppose the spread of scientific thinking, fearful of the day when they and all their teaching will be just another chapter in a future edition of "The Golden Bough."

Correspondence

RELIGION IN THE AMERICAN PRESS

SIR.—It is well-nigh proverbial that the intelligent American newspaper reader, versed in the art of judging and clearly defining the merits of a daily publication, from the stand-point of newsworthy items, editorial comments, and characterised by refinement and good taste, has been keenly aware and highly critical of the discrepancy evinced in the American press, as shown in the disproportion existing between the huge bulk of the average American newspaper, and the meagre amount of worthwhile reading matter contained therein. And what, if anything should be deemed or rated worthwhile, it will, at best, be recognised by the analytical and intelligent critics as being slanted in such a way as to hardly warrant being called a fair presentation of the news. However, amidst the dross and drivel contained in an American newspaper, rays of meaningful light are beginning to shine, at times in the columns of various American newspapers; but it is questionable if the average reader will detect the rays of light cast, unintentionally, upon controversial issues and which, if anything is putting Secularism in a not unfavourable light.

The daily, and particularly Sunday, issues of American newspapers have given ample space and coverage to religious activities and organisational work, which cannot escape the notice of the most casual reader. And, admittedly, as acknowledged by various of the American clergy, the Church is an invaluable ally to the political state in combating "Godlessness" at home and abroad. However, after wading through all the nonsensical drivel published, it is apparent to the well-informed reader that, in order to keep abreast of the onward march of human events, the Churches are dropping, one by one, many of their cardinal dogmas and posing as champions of secular and temporal issues which they, during their heyday, denounced and fought with vehemence.

To reveal the inroads and seven-league strides which Secularism is making, and which should be evident to an intelligent observer, *The Evening Bulletin*, Philadelphia, Pa., September 9, 1952, reporting a session of the general convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church, carries the following caption: "Equal rights urged for women in the Episcopal Church." The joint commission of the convention proposed that the constitution of the Church be changed so that women can serve as deputies to the general convention, and Mrs. Geoffrey Fisher, wife of the Archbishop of Canterbury, speaking at a meeting of the women's auxiliary, said: "To treat the women as inferior to men has for centuries impoverished the life and witness of the Church. The Church should be the body above all others to set its face against this unnatural segregation," and if the dear lady and her sisters in Christ will read from St. Paul and the Fathers, on marriage, they will readily understand the source of this "unnatural segregation" which had its origin in the "divinely inspired contempt" of women by the Pillars of the Early Church, not to speak of the scorn and disdain toward womanhood by the luminaries of the Old Testament. The ladies should examine the writings of Ingersoll, Bradlaugh, Paine and Voltaire, all virulently denounced by the pastors of the legions of Christ. And in the writings of those eminent sceptics they will not find a derogatory reference to womanhood, but an allusion to the rights of woman, as humans, which is not to be found in the writings of Jesus Christ, St. Paul, or any of the early Fathers.

In that pillar of conservatism, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Philadelphia, Pa., September 8, 1952, a quotation from the Rt. Rev. Henry Knox Sherrill reads as follows: "The Church is inevitably involved in the problems and perplexities of the time in which we live." Undoubtedly it is, and will be, if it wishes to survive and adapt itself to the vicissitudes of highly industrial civilisations and societies, which, in the course of their developments, undermined, with the aid of scientific research and development, the theological credentials of the entrenched religions.

Another quotation by the Rt. Rev. Sherrill, from the same context, reads: "We cannot attempt to live in some ivory tower remote from life. War and rumours of war, international misunderstanding at home, shocking revelations of lowered moral standards in public and private life, massive attacks upon the Christian faith and practice, with serious limitations upon freedom and worship—these are stern realities which place in jeopardy the very existence of the Church except in some catacomb. Here is a world in which millions do not know God as revealed in Jesus Christ, which to us is central." A well-informed Secularist, thoroughly familiar and conversant with the social record of Christianity, past and present, could point out to the reverend gentleman the sterile social record, and the pernicious influences upon forward-moving social legislation, of the Church. A record that is dark and checkered from the aspects of favourable industrial legislation, which sought to mitigate the lot of the factory population during the early and middle stages of the industrial revolution; female suffrage, education, slavery, and a host of evils which Freethinkers rightfully pointed out as social cancers. The Rt. Rev. Sherrill is, indeed, correct, but he has been a long time

in reaching the sound conclusion that "we cannot attempt to live in some ivory tower remote from life." That is precisely what all the religions, organised and unorganised, have been—"remote from life." Since the theologian's concern has ever been, and ever will be, eternal salvation and everlasting life in unknowable celestial spheres. Also the Rev. Sherrill could be reminded that after the edicts of Tolerance, during the reign of Emperor Constantine, Christianity closed the pagan temples and instituted a reign of terror towards other religions which lasted for more than a thousand years, during which time they made the practice and profession of other faiths difficult indeed. In substance, the inferences which the Rev. Sherrill has made could be brought against Christianity with equal force.

Also in the same issue of that formidable organ of obscurantism, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, of the same date, is the following comment of Rev. Dr. Eugene Corson Blake, who was a delegate at the Third World Conference on Faith and Order, which was recently held in Sweden: "A new emphasis on non-theological factors, social, political and cultural, has appeared as one of the most striking developments in the discussions." Such considerations, as described by Dr. Blake, seem to be comparatively late arrivals at Church conventions. In all probability it has finally dawned upon the clergy that the time has at long last arrived, and since they have definitely charted and outlined the course for safe celestial navigation, time can now be set aside for mundane affairs. Or perhaps, in the light of world events, the churches have been compelled to recast their outlook with an eye to the world around them. At any rate, it is more than imperative that the clerical dignitaries and the laity read Joseph McCabe's valuable booklet, *How Freethinkers Made Notable Contributions to Civilisation*, for them to truly understand that Secularism and Humanism, with the aid of the natural sciences, did more than the Gospels, for human progress.

The award for the sheerest assininity belongs to the Rev. Jackson, who "Offered Prayers for Pupil Guidance," which is the caption of a news item appearing also in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, of September 8, 1952. This clergyman offered special prayers at his church that pupils should be guided into "the paths of righteousness and wisdom," and that "every teacher should seek the wisdom of God in order to impart the true facts to the rising generation." In which case it is quite pertinent to inquire just why it is necessary to beseech the Almighty to be guided by him in "paths of righteousness and wisdom." Why should he withhold those benefits from his innocent young and old, and are instructors to be considered incompetent who do not seek the "wisdom of God?" During his sermon he also stated that "the great universities, colleges, and research laboratories are due to the Church and her representatives." This assertion is questionable and it can be, if anything, demonstrated that the Church, during the height of its power, was a bar to scientific progress, and impeded scientific development at every turn. Perhaps, consciously or unconsciously, the clergyman is obscuring the fates of Roger Bacon, Giordano Bruno, Galileo, Spinoza; the obstacles which Copernicus experienced in stating and publishing the heliocentric theory; and the venom heaped upon Darwinism after the publication of *The Origin of Species*, for the implications that inhered in that work that man is not a being made in the image of an almighty or infinite being, but a product of organic evolution. "Many of the world's greatest scientists have been and are men of God," the clergyman said. Perhaps so, but has the poorly-informed clergyman heard of sceptical scientists as Clifford, Huxley, Darwin, Tyndall, Burbank, Edison, Einstein, Burroughs, Metchnikoff, etc., men who never postulated, at any time, the possibility of supernatural interference in any of their scientific calculations. Seemingly, from the above comments, the clergyman is hardly better informed that any member of his congregation, who deem unquestioning reverence as a great virtue than disinterested research and inquiry.

By and large, the above-mentioned cullings, screened from various American newspapers, reveal that Secularism and its ethical expression, Humanism, is making gigantic strides, but that the churches are trying to usurp the credit for causes which they, in the past, bitterly resisted and fought untiringly.—Yours, etc.,

LEON SPAIN.

EXISTENTIALISM—AND MR. BLACKHAM

Sir,—I am sorry that I misunderstood Mr. Blackham's sentence: "The importance of existentialism is in expressing the crying need for humanism," but I think he must agree that I can be excused for doing so. To "express" means to represent, make known in words or by gestures, conduct, etc. (*Pocket Oxford Dictionary*) and, as it stands, the statement implies that existentialism represents or makes known the crying need for humanism. There is no suggestion that it does so by default. Nor does the context indicate so. Earlier in the same essay Mr. Blackham has

said: "The motive of Sartre's philosophical work is to find a ground of ultimate reliable knowledge on which to found a constructive humanism." He warns us to be careful before calling existentialism irrational or anti-humanist and, whilst agreeing (with Mr. Hector Hawton) that its general influence "has probably been to spread despair and discourage rationalism," he "cannot agree that this is a quite rational conclusion from a serious examination of what in fact they are saying. . . ."

True, Mr. Blackham does not think "that we have to quarry our materials from this source for the basic constructive work which has now to be done if humanism is to build a position in the world," but he constantly reminds us that the existentialists have been misrepresented and his attitude to them is sympathetic. From the last page of his book (*Six Existential Thinkers*) I take these quotations:—

"One may not be convinced by the total philosophy of any one of them, but, odd as they are, they are representative, because they are trying not merely to think but personally to live the situation of man embedded in the situation of their time."

"They are profoundly in touch; whatever one makes of them, to have no use for them at all is to be profoundly out of touch."

"The time has not yet come to attempt a sober historical assessment; for it is still as a contribution to our own thought and action that we have to consider their work, in facing the decisions of our personal lives and the problem of our civilisation."

On looking at it again, I feel that I am not only to be excused, but justified, for taking Mr. Blackham's sentence literally. That is what I did, and it seemed to fit in with his general approach to the subject.—Yours, etc.,

C. McCall.

ESPERANTO

Sir,—With some surprise and much pleasure I read the article by H. T. Derrett on "Tower of Babel and a Universal Language." It is not often, and certainly not often enough, that facts about Esperanto are given such a presentation.—Yours, etc.,

J. BROWNLEE, A.M.I.G.E., D.B.E.A.

EVOLUTION

Sir,—Mr. Holliday seems to have missed the point of my question to Mr. Yates which was: "Why, if evolution is just a blind, unorganised process, as Materialists claim, do species always evolve towards a higher level of intelligence?" Mr. Holliday's profound assertion that the trend of evolution is upward because it started at the bottom does not in any way explain why development is always towards a higher mental standard and not towards a higher physical standard. Surely, if physical matter deserves the importance attached to it by Materialists evolutionary progression would have been towards the latter and not the former. I contend that as the mammoth has become extinct while under-sized Man has survived the ultimate superiority of Mind and not Matter must be the purposeful design in evolution. Physical matter, the sole concern of Materialists, becomes ever less important—if indeed such a thing as wholly physical matter exists at all?

The overwhelming evidence in support of a mental cosmos is rationally and lucidly stated in a book every Materialist and Rationalist should read—Dr. Paul Brunton's *The Hidden Teaching of Yoga*, published by Rider and Co., 1950 edition. Our present conception of a three-dimensional material universe is completely false and untenable and has been scientifically disproved by the physicist's microscope, infra-red rays and psychological research. Matter is now known to be composed of nothing more solid than radiations of energy and Mind cannot under any circumstances be proved to be physical. Materialism today is as dead as the proverbial Dodo and not even Mr. Yates will succeed in reviving it.—Yours, etc.,

W. H. Wood.

(Concluded from page 14)

Christianity—you must have reverent faith, and approach it with reverent spirit, not a hostile one. Then you will believe.

As for me, I can only say, after reading a dozen works on Dialectical Materialism, that it is a relief to come out and imbibe a little Freethought. A little Ingersoll and Bradlaugh and Foote; now more than ever.

ROME OR REASON? A Question for To-day. By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 1s.; postage 2d.