

HOW THINGS BEGAN

Sir,—Whatever be the conventions in the matter, I think that in the circumstances it will be more satisfactory if I comment on Mr. Prior's review of *Evolution and Philosophy* (*Listener*, December 9, 1949). The reviewer, quoting part of a sentence from the jacket, declares that "this work aims at revealing what modern science has to tell us about 'how things began.'" Actually, it is quite clear from the context that this sentence refers to the second part of the book, and a glance at the table of contents reveals that the book has a much wider aim, being a critical examination of various evolutionary theories, philosophical as well as scientific.

Mr. Prior attributes to me the statement that philosophers who do not believe in God have either held that change does not occur or that change is the only reality, and he adds that "the cause of theism is ill-served by the making of such rash accusations against its opponents." If Mr. Prior had read more carefully, he might have spared us this rash accusation. I did not say that every atheist philosopher holds one or other of these views. What I wrote was: "Every philosopher who attempts to construct a metaphysical system from which God is excluded will, if he is completely logical, be led to one or other of these extremes." Mr. Prior has over-looked the qualifying clause which I have italicized. Besides, I made it clear that some of the atheist philosophers whose views I criticised, e.g., Hegel and Haeckel, did not go to either of these extremes.

Mr. Prior declares that "although the idea of an uncaused change is a bizarre one to most of us, it is an abuse of logical terminology to call it, as Father Duggan does, 'self-contradictory.'" Mr. Prior may hold, with Hume, that a change which has no cause implies no contradiction, but I hold, with St. Thomas and common sense, that it does. That is why the idea strikes us as bizarre. That a change must have some cause is a self-evident proposition (and one of the postulates which the scientist accepts without question), and so the concept of an uncaused change is literally self-contradictory. To say, for example, that an unhewn block of marble became a statue of Apollo without the intervention of any cause is nonsense. Would Mr. Prior agree?

Mr. Prior also speaks of my "indiscriminate" use of the term "self-contradictory." Will he please substantiate this charge by quoting specific cases where my use of the term cannot be justified?

Finally, Mr. Prior asserts that biologists are sometimes undecided about which major group an organism belongs to, and implies that this fact invalidates my conclusions about the state of the fossil record. The indecision he refers to is commonly due to the desire of some biologists to have the transitional forms so necessary for the Darwinian theory of evolution from one stock; usually there is no real doubt about the place these organisms occupy in the system of nature. Furthermore, even such forms are too few for the requirements of the theory. If Mr. Prior will mention some specific instances we shall see whether the principles of biological classification are not sufficiently cut-and-dried to dispose of the claim that these forms are transitional.

G. H. DUGGAN, S.M.
(Greenmeadows).

Sir,—Referring to Mr. Prior's review of Father Duggan's book: if the Bible myth of creation is accepted it seems to

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me to involve facing its implications. For instance, how comes it that creatures living by instinct make a good job of their lives by adaptation to environment, whilst man, theoretically endowed with the god-like qualities of mind and soul, makes a mess of both his life and his environment? Further, Dean Inge, in his *God and the Astronomers*, says: "If there is such a God and if it is His nature to create a world, must He not create always?"

The world is said to be 3,000 million years old and during that time myriads of living beings (created or evolved) have appeared and disappeared. If this is the work of a Creator continuously active, man is totally ignorant of plans and purposes behind it. Inge says that, if we are asked, "it is best to say simply that we do not know." From which it follows that organised religion, no matter what the creed, is totally unjustified in adopting an authoritarian attitude and pretending to know what nobody knows concerning the ultimate power behind the universe and man's relation to that power.

Man, recognisable as man, is said to have existed on earth for a million years, but as far as we know he has not so far discovered any new creations on the Biblical model. For all he knows, man may be no more than an experiment—like the diplotocus—due to vanish completely when the cosmic experimenter so wills, if there is such an experimenter. On the other hand, he looks a bit like forestalling his destiny by making an end of himself.

J. MALTON MURRAY (Oamaru).

ECCLESIASTICAL MODES

Sir,—In your issue of November 18, "Student" of Christchurch takes me to task for grave errors on the subject of ecclesiastical modes, and goes on to mention various aspects of microtonal music that I omitted. I am aware of the sixth tone music he mentions, but may I remind "Student," and others who do not find in the Radio Review columns every scrap of information about the subjects mentioned, that these are 500-600 word articles. Some of the topics touched on are only incidental to the main one, and a due sense of proportion has to be observed. I did not, for example, mention at all the pentatonic scale, which is quite important in music, the Scriabin and Arabian scales, etc.

As regards the modes, it is unfortunate that "Student" made such positive statements. He could rightly have complained that I did not state which nomenclature I was using, but again lack of space forced me to take it for granted that those interested would know the position. I deliberately refrained from using the word "ecclesiastical" because, of course, there are two ways of naming the modes, the Greek way and the Ecclesiastical way. Since modes were developed from the Olympian tetrachord, the earliest nomination was the Greek one, which I preferred to use. The Church later shuffled these names around in several ways, but the statements made in my article were correct according to the clear and definite Greek usage. I would simply refer "Student" to the chapter on Scales and Temperament in *The Physics of Music*, by Alexander Wood, pages 173-176, or any other stand-

ard text book which treats of the whole development of modes, and not merely their ecclesiastical names.

—H.J.F. (Wellington).

JAMES GLENNY WILSON

Sir,—I am collecting information about the life of James Glenly Wilson. I shall be grateful for any information about him, and especially for letters written by him, which readers can supply.

L. J. WILD, Tanglewood, Tasman Beach, Otaki.

MUSIC FOR ROYAL ODE

Sir,—I have made an entry in the Royal Ode, musical setting competition. The date of closing was advertised as December 6. I worked early and late—burning the candle at both ends—and finished the ode by this date. On December 7, I read in *The Listener* that the date of closing had been extended to January 6. Had this change of date been announced a month ago, it would have been a help to me. As it is, competitors who did not regard the closing date, December 6, sufficiently seriously to finish by that date are going to have a month longer than those who did. This does not seem fair to those who made the effort to finish by December 6. I hold a responsible position, and am as busy as any student sitting music examinations, which is the reason you have advanced for postponing the date of entries. The original closing date was August 6. This was soon altered to December 6, allowing intending competitors an extra four clear months to complete the ode in. This should have sufficed.

QUERY (Christchurch).

BREAKFAST VOICES

Sir,—As a land girl, I rise each morning at 4.30 and have at least half a day's work done by the time the breakfast voices come on the air. Their jokes and wisecracks are very much appreciated, for they help us on our way. Perhaps "Cut the Cackle" sleeps too long and is too tired to enjoy these cheerful voices. We Aucklanders are known as a solemn lot who never wear a smile. Why try to stop these boys from having their fun?

LAND GIRL (Waiuku).

THE WAIRAU MASSACRE

Sir,—There are those who would whitewash the Maori War Chiefs Te Rauparaha, Te Rangihaeata, Te Kooti, and Tetokowaru, who were bloodthirsty men who killed members of their own tribes to eat at their diabolical feasts. A letter in your issue of December 9 by one of our most esteemed writers on the Wairau Massacre, needs elaboration, and another side should be told of the awful facts of that incident. When 1,200 refugees went to Nelson from Taranaki in 1860 the Wairau Massacre was still being discussed and I heard long ago from my father's lips at our pioneer's home in the bush at Taranaki what he said he believed to be the true story of it as the settlers knew it, apart from high officials who shielded the culprits for their own purposes. "After destroying Cottrell's and Parkinson's houses the Maoris fired the first shot as the Europeans were retreating over a stream. The pakehas, finding the position very bad,

decided to surrender. They shook hands with Te Rauparaha and delivered up their arms, a token of peace. Then the Maoris killed 23 of the helpless party in cold blood and 26 escaped. The local residents were terrified. The two chiefs hoodwinked Governor Fitzroy and showed a penitent mood when he interviewed them, and that was the incorrect report he sent to England."

W. K. HOWITT (Devonport).

CHOPIN CENTENARY

Sir,—I cannot agree with Mr. Austin that the NZBS "adequately commemorated" the Chopin centenary. For instance, its Auckland stations completely ignored the centenary; on Monday, October 17, the 100th anniversary of Chopin's death, the listed programmes for 1YA, 1YC and 1YD did not carry one solitary Chopin item. And Auckland is New Zealand's largest city.

ARTHUR O'HALLORAN
(Auckland).

"FEMININE VIEWPOINT"

Sir,—This letter is a protest. On November 24 in the *Feminine Viewpoint* session, the question being discussed was how to overcome leanness or underweight, and the speaker had the nerve to recommend that two pints of stout daily would be a help. Since when has the NZBS lent itself to boosting the liquor habit? The advice is not medically sound. Stout may or may not increase weight, but it is a dangerous method. There is a big danger that that amount daily would rapidly develop craving for more alcohol.

J. THOMPSON (Auckland).

ARMENIAN MUSIC

Sir,—I wish to express my deep appreciation and to congratulate the artists for their wonderful rendering of Khachaturian's Trio broadcast from 2YA. This intricate eastern music was delightfully played and gave great pleasure to at least one listener. Maybe there are others from home who would appreciate our long forgotten folk songs by hearing Khachaturian's compositions more often?

AN ARMENIAN LISTENER
(Taupo).

"KABARA GOYA"

Sir,—Is it permissible to protest against the inclusion of the story "Kabara Goya" in your issue of November 21? This tale may have literary ability; and if that term implies horrors and manifold and morbid stress on frightfulness, I grant it that. That, however, is all that commends it. Is it necessary, kind or wise to dwell on the crimes done or imagined by a few degenerates, when it increases nervousness and dread in all those who must go home to unlit houses in the dark and the rain, in those who must live alone, must hire taxis whatever their fears may be?

Surely we are over-doing the importance of realistic writing of this sort when there are still comedy, humour, tragedy and pathos to be found among the great majority of our wholesome minded population, waiting to be immortalized by our clever writers.

SANITY (Palmerston North).