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• EDITED *by* CHAPMAN COHEN •

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*Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums,
Letters to the Editor, etc.*

Views and Opinions

Humanity and Religion

SEVERAL readers have called my attention to an article in *Reynolds* by Professor Macmurray, entitled "Is There a Future for Religion?" I have read some of Professor Macmurray's writings on other subjects with great appreciation; of the present article all that one can hope, with all charity, is that it was written by someone who has borrowed the Professor's name, or the Professor has written it in a state of temporary aberration. For the article is so nebulous in character that one cannot even get a clear notion of what the writer means by his principal terms. The only thing that does emerge is that by hook or by crook, at any cost of logic or historical accuracy, the Professor is determined to be counted on the side of religion. The article, indeed, reads like a "safety first" performance.

Here, for example, is a passage at the opening of the article:—

If there is no future for religion there is no future for humanity. One of the clearest lessons of history is that when a society begins to break up, it begins to disown religion.

And here is a complementary passage at the end:—

If religion fails us, then there is no future for humanity. We shall relapse into a primitive barbarism and the work of religion will have to begin all over again.

For one who is a Professor of the Philosophy of Mind and Logic, that is not a bad beginning. I admit that a religious person in a state of tense indecision, and ready to seize on anything that promises to re-establish his religious faith, may welcome such statements, but anyone else is likely to wonder what is the matter with Professor Macmurray.

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A Study in Logic

I am thinking of religion in its historic sense, and the first sentence, "If there is no future for religion

there is no future for humanity," I can only describe as nonsensical rhetoric. The Professor is very careful never to give us a definition of religion, but he does venture on a description, thus:—

The task of religion is to create and maintain attitudes of mind which make possible and sustain more complicated forms of interrelationship and interdependence between masses of individual human beings.

The task of religion, be it noted. But as to what religion is in itself, we are not given the slightest idea. Of course, if we accept this binding together of human beings as the task of that unknown and undefined thing, religion, then Professor Macmurray may be right; for all he is saying is that as society cannot exist unless it acts so as to continue in existence, then if it ceases to act so as to continue in existence it will cease to exist. I do not think that anyone will seriously contradict this, any more than one will challenge the statement that as sixteen ounces equal a pound in weight, therefore if we do not have sixteen ounces we have not a pound. The Professor has gone a long way to say nothing, or at most, to say something that was not worth the saying. It is a first-rate example of begging the question, so let us be charitable and suggest that the Professor of Logic put it this way for the benefit of teaching students how not to do it. A society cannot exist without religion, therefore if religion ceases to be, society cannot exist. That is all we are told, and saying it twice makes it neither more intelligible nor in greater accord with the facts.

But with a Professor of Logic we must be careful; so we commence by noting that a society begins to disown its religion *when it begins to break up*. So the break up is not due to loss of religion. That has already been set up and forms the condition for the disowning of religion. From this three things appear to follow. First, religion is not, alone, strong enough to prevent the break-up of society, second, the transmutations of social life go on without any special reference to religion, and, third, it is with a change of social life, not with a break-up of society, that there takes place a change in religious belief. Again, Professor Macmurray goes a long way round to say nothing, or alternatively, as lawyers would say, to say something in a very misleading manner. For what Professor Macmurray is driving at is that society cannot exist without religion. What he actually says is that with social changes there go on changes in religious belief. But this is also the case with dress and housing and methods of locomotion, and the relations of groups. Our Professor says one thing and means another, but he can hardly hope that the performance will pass without comment. One need only remind the Professor that ancient Roman society did not decay ("break up") is a very unscientific expression with regard to social

changes) because it had lost religion; it was actually more profoundly religious in its season of decay than it was in its season of health and growth. In its later period it suffered from too much religion. And with all its faults this age of unbelief may safely challenge comparison with the "Ages of Faith."

The confusion grows worse when we are told that if we lose religion we shall lapse into primitive barbarism. This, as Alice would have said, makes things curiouser and curiouser. Religion cannot, be it noted, keep us from relapsing into barbarism, but it will get us out of it again. And if there is one unmistakable, ever-present, dominant feature of barbarism it is religion. Barbarism, primitive barbarism, is saturated with religion, nor can one understand religion without getting to primitive barbarism for an explanation. As for religion lifting man out of barbarism into civilization, I would advise Professor Macmurray to apply that generalization to Abyssinia, and to see to what extent religion has civilized either the Italians or the Abyssinians in their intercourse with each other. Really, if Professor Macmurray had put his article into rhyme it would have made excellent nonsense verse. When man loses religion he lapses into barbarism. Then when he has arrived at barbarism, the religion that could not prevent the lapse, and which, *ex hypothesi*, is not present in barbarism or it would have prevented barbarism, will bring man back to civilization. Shades of Edward Lear!

* * *

Religion and Life

Here is a gleam of light. "Religion as we know it is the persistence of something that belongs essentially to more primitive conditions." That sounds like sense, but the religion that Professor Macmurray aims at is not known to us. It is, he says, a question "not what religion is now but what it will be." Well, what will it be? All we get is the information that "Religion" must become "dynamic." Oh, blessed words, "Religion," "Dynamic"! And how we long to know what religion is. Professor Macmurray sneers at the necromancers of the Middle Ages. But why? Surely their abracadabra was not more awesome or more spell-binding than he imagines "Religion" to be. What is to become what? What is it that is to become dynamic and save the world? We are told what this particular abracadabra of Professor Macmurray's will do, but we are not told enough about it to know it when we see it. The religion we know, we are told, belongs to primitive times. Good, but what is the religion we don't know, but must know if we are to be saved? Oh for ten minutes in public to cross examine Professor Macmurray as to what he has in his mind when he talks about religion!

Still on the track of this elusive "religion," we note that "man's natural instincts to share a common life will take him a certain distance towards the establishment of community and co-operation." This gives us a gleam of hope, but the gleam fades with the assurance that "without religion [still unindicated] they won't take him very far." This dims our hopes. Nor are we much encouraged or enlightened by the information previously cited that it is the task of religion to make possible and sustain a sense of relationship between human beings. Not only are we still without information as to *what* it is we may call religion, and how to use it, but it seems to go dead against what we know of life. For if there is one clear thing about the history of mankind it is that religion, as we know it, simply will not awaken in men a sense of community and co-operation, save over very restricted areas; and certainly

not to the extent that the sense of community and willingness to co-operations exists outside religion. Look at the long feud between Jews and Christians, at the ill-will between Christians and Mohammedans, at the struggles and animosities between Roman Catholics and Protestants, and at the thousand and one quarrels and hatreds of the world's thousand and one religious sects! Social life does present very many instances of men and women sinking their differences to unite on some common object of social reform. When has religion produced a similar effect? Even in prisons the compulsory inmates are grouped according to their different religious beliefs. And during the war, while men could fight shoulder to shoulder, live, eat, drink, work and die in terms of a common human interest and a common sense of duty, when religion came on the board each sect went its own way. What is the use in the face of the plainest of facts chanting such meaningless verbalisms as "a dynamic society requires a dynamic religion," or "a progressive society needs a progressive religion." I do not think that the medievalist, at whose incantations Professor Macmurray sneers, was ever guilty of emptier speech than this. Why not enlarge it and say that a watertight society needs a watertight religion, a living society needs a living religion, a sporting society needs a sporting religion. I could fill a dozen newspaper articles with empty phrases of that description, and all they would mean in the total is that foolish people will always have a foolish creed whether it be called religion or anything else.

* * *

Man and Society

Now I have got it into my head that Professor Macmurray, in addition to being the Grote Professor (I wonder what George Grote would have thought of Professor Macmurray's logic in religion and of his presentation of history) of the philosophy of Mind and of Logic, takes some interest in sociology. So I would venture gently to suggest that the sense of community and of co-operation has nothing whatever to do with religion—properly and scientifically defined—but has its beginnings in the gregarious instincts and impulses that meet us in the animal world. The sense of co-operation is first of all biologic, and then, in the course of its growth, psychologic. And it is an outcome of the psychologic growth of social life that man should seek and discover the significance of the sense of community that is developed, lay bare its meaning, and then aim at its improvement. To say that it is religion that *creates* and maintains those attitudes of mind which make complicated forms of interrelationship and interdependence possible, in the face of what we know of the influence of religion, is to say something far more fitting to the Bishop of London than to a Professor of Logic in a University that probably would never have come into existence but for the desire of its founders to provide an institution wherein the separative and anti-social influence of religion should be kept at bay. What men may call religion in times to come I do not know. But I do know what it has been, and also what it is, and I am quite certain that so long as we retain the *name* for the *thing* religion will be much the same in the future as it has been in the past—unless dishonesty of thought and evasiveness of speech become so common that men will use any kind of language to hide their own views or further the ends of others.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Remember that to change thy opinion and to follow him who corrects thy error is as consistent with freedom as it is to persist in thy error.—*Marcus Aurelius*.

Who are the "Reverends"?

"The services of the clergy are purely imaginary, and their payment should be of the same description."

G. W. Foote.

"The eagle never lost so much time as when he submitted to learn of the crow."—William Blake.

THERE are thousands of men walking around who are garbed differently from their fellows, and who are regarded as being a sacred caste apart. These men are styled "reverend," and their distinguishing mark is the wearing of the dog-collar neck-wear, and an expression of gravity. Keen critics can even classify these men by their expression. A slight droop of the lip will denote a High Churchman, whilst a resemblance to a tired funeral-horse will signify the pastor of a tin-tabernacle.

Many varieties exist in this particular caste. Years ago, *Whittaker's Almanac* used to give a full-page list of the various species, thus giving point to Voltaire's epigram that England possessed a hundred religions, but only one sauce. They include the Church of England, Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, and Methodists, and the lengthy list tails off with Four-Square Gospellers, Christadelphians, and the little-known Muggletonians.

Is it worth while to find out what this sacred caste is in reality, for there are about forty thousand of these men in this country. Who are they? What do they do to entitle them to be reverend? In what way are they different from other average citizens? These are perfectly plain questions which require a plain answer.

It is contended that this reverence is paid to these men because they have chosen as their business the supervision and direction of the religious habits of their fellow countrymen. In reality they are modern medicine-men engaged in similar work to their coloured prototypes in uncivilized nations. They tell men of "gods" who get angry with us, of a very dreadful "devil" who must be specially guarded against, of beautiful "angels" who fly from heaven to earth; and of "saints" who can assist if supplicated. Many thousands of men are engaged in this business, to say nothing of their assistants and satellites. This occurs, be it remembered, in Great Britain, a country which is regarded as being civilized. And this clerical profession is as honest as fortune-telling, but not more so. Many a poor old woman has actually been sent to prison for taking money from a factory-girl, after promising her a handsome husband and three children, but these reverend gentlemen are allowed to take all they can get their eager hands on for promises in "the beautiful land above."

Seeing that little merit attaches to this clerical profession, are we, therefore, to assume that reverence is due to the exemplary lives led by those belonging to this most favoured class of the community? Divorce Court proceedings and Police Court records show that this clerical character in no way differs from any other class. They may retort that there are black sheep in every fold. True; but people who are other than professional religionists do not pretend to be reverend, and a caste apart from their fellows. They do not wear a special dress, nor do they ask to be known by any title implying special respect. It is precisely because clergymen expect the average citizen to look up to them that we are comparing their behaviour with their boastings. When they decide to come down from their pedestals, and discard their haloes, we will make the same allowance for them as we make for ordinary people.

It appears also that many of these clergymen are perjurers. Many thousands of them subscribe to the "Thirty-nine Articles of Religion." These articles are old, and make the most curious reading in the twentieth century. They include the belief that a spirit can be at the same time a father and a son, and also proceed from itself as a ghost; that "Adam" was the father of the entire human race, and that the first woman was made from a man's rib; that "Adam" and "Eve" ate fruit, in consequence of which the human race is damned eternally; that Roman Catholic doctrine is a vain invention; that the Christian Bible is "God's Word"; and that the monarch is the head of the only true Church of Christ. To these Articles of Christian Faith, among many others, every Church of England priest subscribes in the most solemn manner. And we know that numbers of them do not believe them, or observe them, and that their reason for remaining in the Church is "purple, palaces, patronage, profit, and power," as a former dean of St. Paul's Cathedral has expressed it.

Apart from the perpetuance of old-word Oriental ignorance, some of these priests have exerted a really mischievous influence. The Church of England, for example, has a score of representatives in the House of Lords, where they sit as aristocrats. The votes of these Bishops, recorded in Hansard's "Parliamentary Debates," should make all right-thinking persons "think furiously," for they show, beyond all cavil and dispute, how far removed these prelates are from Democracy and its ideals and aspirations. Bishops voted against admitting Nonconformists to University degrees, and against the removal of civil disabilities of Roman Catholics, Jews, and Free-thinkers. They opposed bitterly the introduction of free education, and voted against admitting women as members of London Borough Councils. They even opposed a modest measure for providing seats for tired shop assistants, at a time when the assistants worked far longer hours than at present. None voted for the abolition of flogging women in public, beating women in prison, and the use of the lash in the British Army and Navy. The pages of "Hansard" show that scores of measures for the bettering of the conditions of the working-class have been opposed by these bishops, and their own record carries its own worst condemnation. Indeed, the votes and speeches of the bishops in the House of Lords should convince plain people of all opinions that the separation of this Anglican Church from the State would be good for the country at large. The bishops as legislators have always been behind and against the best spirit of the age, blindly suspicious of aspirations and desires of Democracy.

The Nonconformist clergy are not much freer from criticism than their Anglican rivals. They have tried their utmost to make life "a vale of tears" for the average citizen. They have done their worst to limit the few pleasures of life. In opposing Sunday excursions and Sunday opening of Cinemas and museums, restricting the hours of opening public houses, they have done all they could to make Sunday anything but a holiday. From Moscow to Madrid people really enjoy themselves on Sundays, but the poor Briton is so handicapped and restricted on that day that foreigners are astounded, and consider that we are governed by a compendium of all the cranks. This demoralizing state of affairs is largely due to the machinations of professional Nonconformity, which has always regarded all forms of amusement as rival trading concerns to their churches, and acted accordingly.

Few worse misfortunes can befall a people than that of possessing a reactionary priestly caste in its

midst that hinders the wheels of progress, and continuously interferes with the innocent pleasures of the Democracy. The word "reverend," applied to such mischievous busy-bodies, is simply nonsensical. To apply it to the ordinary clergyman, or to a purse-proud prelate, is as absurd as to apply the term "Imperial Majesty" or "Royal Highness" to the Kings and Princes in exile, who throng the casinos and pleasure-resorts of the Continent. They have had their day; and are far more ornamental than useful, being nothing but parasites upon the body politic.

MIMNERMUS.

Things Worth Knowing *

XXXVII.

ATHEISM IN ANTIQUITY

ATHEISM and Atheist are words formed from Greek roots and with Greek derivative endings. Nevertheless they are not Greek; their formation is not consonant with Greek usage. In Greek they said *atheos* and *atheotes*; to these the English words ungodly and ungodliness correspond rather closely. In exactly the same way as ungodly, *atheos* was used as an expression of severe censure and moral condemnation; this use is an old one, and the oldest that can be traced. . . . Not till later do we find it employed to denote a certain philosophical creed; we even meet with philosophers bearing *atheos* as a regular surname. We know very little of the men in question, but it can hardly be doubted that *atheos*, as applied to them implied not only a denial of the gods of popular belief, but a denial of gods in the widest sense of the word, or Atheism as it is now understood.

. . . Atheism, in the theoretical as well as the practical sense of the word, was, according to the ancient conception of law, always a crime; but in practice it was treated in different ways, which varied both according to the period in question and according to the more or less dangerous nature of the threat it offered to established religion. It is only so far as Athens and Imperial Rome are concerned, that we have any definite knowledge of the law and the judicial procedure on this point.

In the criminal law of Athens we meet with the term *asebeia*—literally, impiety or disrespect towards the gods. As an established formula of accusation *asebeia* existed, legislation must have dealt with the subject, but how it was defined we do not know. . . . When, in the next place, towards the close of the fifth century, B.C., Freethinking began to assume forms which seemed dangerous to the religion of the State, theoretical denial of the gods was also included under *asebeia*. From about the beginning of the Peloponnesian War to the close of the fourth century, B.C., there are on record a number of prosecutions of philosophers who were tried and condemned for denial of the gods. . . . In the course of the fourth century B.C., several philosophers were accused of denial of the gods or blasphemy; but after the close of the century we hear no more of such trials. . . . It is evident that Athens had arrived at the point of view that the theoretical denial of the gods might be tolerated, whereas the law, of course, continued to protect public worship.

* Under this heading we purpose printing, weekly, a series of definite statements, taken from authoritative works, on specific subjects. They will supply instructive comments on aspects of special subjects, and will be useful, not merely in themselves, but also as a guide to works that are worth closer study.

In Rome they did not possess, as in Athens, a general statute against religious offences; there were only special provisions, and they were few and insufficient. This defect, however, was remedied by the vigorous police authority with which the Roman magistrates were invested. In Rome several measures were often taken against movements which threatened the Roman official worship, but it was done at the discretion of administration, and not according to hard and fast rules; hence the practice was somewhere varying, and a certain arbitrariness inevitable.

No example is known from Rome of action taken against theoretical denial of the gods corresponding to the trials of the philosophers in Athens. . . . The more practical outlook of the Romans may perhaps have had something to say in the matter; they were rather indifferent to theoretical speculations, whereas they were not to be trifled with when their national institutions were concerned.

In consequence of this point of view the Roman Government first came to deal with denial of the gods as a breach of law when confronted with the two monotheistic religions which invaded the Empire from the East. That which distinguished Jews and Christians from Pagans was not that they denied the existence of the Pagan gods—the Christians, at any rate, did not do this as a rule—but that they denied they were gods, and therefore refused to worship them. . . . The tolerance which the Roman Government showed towards all foreign creeds, and the result of which in imperial times was, practically speaking, freedom of religion over the whole Empire, could not be extended to the Jews and the Christians; for it was in the last resort based on reciprocity, on the fact that the worship of the Egyptian or Persian gods did not exclude worship of the Roman ones. . . . The Christians were generally designated as *atheoi*, as deniers of the gods, and the objection against them was precisely their denial of the Pagan gods, not their religion as such. When the Christian summoned before the Roman magistrates, agreed to sacrifice to Pagan gods (among them the Emperor) he was acquitted; he was not punished for previously having attended Christian services, and it seems that he was not even required to undertake not to do so in future. Only if he refused to sacrifice was he punished. We cannot ask for a clearer proof that it is apostasy as such, denial of the gods, against which action is taken. It is in keeping with this that, at any rate under the earlier Empire, no attempt was made to seek out the Christians at their assemblies, to hinder their services or the like; it was considered sufficient to take steps when information was laid.

. . . To resume what has been here set forth concerning the attitude of ancient society to Atheism. It is, in the first place, evident that the frequently mentioned tolerance of polytheism was not extended to those who denied its gods; in fact, it was applied only to those who acknowledged them even if they worshipped others besides. But the assertion of this principle of intolerance varied greatly in practice according to whether it was a question of theoretical denial of the gods—Atheism in our sense—or practical refusal to worship the Pagan Gods. Against Atheism the community took action only during a comparatively short period, and as far as we know, only in a single place. The latter limitation is probably explained not only by the defectiveness of tradition, but also by the fact that in Athens Freethinking made its appearance about the year 400 as a general phenomenon, and therefore attracted the attention of the community. Apart from this case, the philosophical denial of God was left in peace throughout an-

tiquity, in the same way as the individual citizen was not interfered with as a rule, when he, for one reason or another, refrained from taking part in the worship of the deities.

Atheism in Pagan Antiquity,
by A. B. DRACHMANN, pp. 5-12.

Making Freethinkers

LOOKING back on the thirty odd years during which I have been a Freethinker, I could not help asking myself the question how many people have I converted during the whole of this time? How many genuine believers, as distinct from "indifferentists" have I led to the path of active Freethought? After some rather uncomfortable reflection on the matter, I had to confess to myself that my influence has been of a far more general than of an individual character. In fact, I doubt whether, during the whole of the thirty years, I have personally converted half-a-dozen people—and by "converted," I really mean converted. I do not mean saying or writing things which merely confirm previous unbelief or add to its stock of knowledge.

This conversion business seems to be far more difficult than at first appears. One takes up a Bible story, say, Elijah and the heavenly chariot, or Jesus stopping a storm, and asks a pious believer, does he or she really believe these things? They are—to us—such obvious nonsense that it seems incredible that anybody with a sense of humour, or even moderately intelligent, can be found to defend them. But as we who take part in controversy know quite well, they are defended, and valiantly defended, to the last ditch. The blessed word "faith" covers a multitude of absurdities. That other blessed word "God" is invoked, not merely to account for everything that faith misses, but everything else. Dare we limit the power and omniscience of the Almighty?

Even though, in argument, one manages to convince people that the Old Testament is not the Word of God, they invoke the New Testament as the Final Revelation. And even then, if one shows that the New must go the way of the Old as a man-made volume, there always remains the question of Theism and all its implications to deal with. The Universe simply could not have made itself, we refuse to believe that an eye started to manufacture itself through evolution, there *must* be a Mind behind everything—a Mind that knows everything. We don't believe that when we die, we're done for—and so on, as every Freethinker knows who has had to meet pious people.

The curious thing is that even in Freethought—and by this word here I mean its relation to religions—there are degrees very strongly marked. And some of these compartments, as it were, of Freethought are as watertight as any genuine Christianity.

There are people who consider themselves on *our* side, that is, on the side of Freethought, merely because they are anti-religious. They do not believe in God or Christianity, it is true, but this surely does not make them Freethinkers? It simply makes them anti-God or anti-Christianity. A genuine Freethought must indicate freedom and toleration all round. I do not see how we can demand freedom to propagate our views, and deny it to others from whom we disagree. Our fight is surely an intellectual one. We must be ready to battle for our cause, but the right to express his views equally belongs to the enemy. Forcible repression is not Freethought.

But in our ranks will be found many shades of opinion difficult for those who differ to understand. And it seems to me we spend a lot of time in discuss-

ing these various opinions. John M. Robertson once publicly said that he doubted whether forty per cent of his "Rationalist" readers were convinced of his theory of a non-historical Jesus. He could have gone much further, as there are numbers of Rationalists who deprecate any attack on Jesus at all. To some of them, indeed, he is even a Freethinker, the greatest that ever lived; while his teaching is the greatest moral teaching the world has known. Everybody has the right, of course, to his opinions; and the Rationalist or Agnostic, reverent or otherwise, must not be barred from expressing his. But it is often a sheer waste of time trying to convince some people that milk and water are not quite the same thing as pure milk. Our energies can be better directed towards making Freethinkers. How is this to be done?

I know of few questions more difficult to answer. But there are some things which surely ought not to be overlooked.

First and foremost, there is this journal. It is not written merely for Freethinkers. It really is a propagandist paper, dealing with aspects of Freethought not found—or very rarely found—elsewhere. It is outspoken and fearless. It has never been afraid of admitting violently hostile views. It is ready to discuss these and give them every chance of being aired. And it is, and has been for 55 years, the mouthpiece of the fighting Freethought Party. To make Freethinkers one must increase its circulation. It is not altogether enough just to read it. Wherever possible an extra copy should be bought for pious or "indifferentist" friends. No one knows better than I that numbers of Freethinkers, whose heart and soul are with the movement, have a hard struggle to exist, and that often it is difficult to buy one copy of this paper, let alone two. But those who can should buy two copies and should, at the same time, try and interest their "wavering" friends to become regular subscribers.

I have certainly heard of regular readers, people who have not missed a number for many years, still quite unconvinced that Christianity is a delusion. But we can put this small number aside. A man or woman must be impervious to all reason who, after a long course of reading this journal, has even a shadow of genuine belief. The way then to make Freethinkers is to make them regular readers of our paper. It will cause them to *think*. It will make them question religious "facts." It will show them the mentality of many priests and parsons, and what little part reason plays in their make-up.

The question of the best books for budding Freethinkers is another difficult one to answer. A Freethinker's library must necessarily be a personal one. All one can do is to indicate some of the best as they appear—though the Freethought masterpieces of the past seem to be an indispensable part of one's equipment. For the Christian who has been brought up on the Bible, who has been led to believe in its infallibility, I know of no better corrective than Foote's *Bible Handbook*. Its analysis of the Word is the most ruthless and destructive that has ever been compiled, apart from elaborate commentaries. A similar but smaller and cheaper work is Robert Cooper's *Holy Bible Analysed*, but it is, I believe, quite out of print. Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* is a classic, still useful, but it is written from a Deistic standpoint. Foote's *Bible Romances* contains an astonishing amount of information destructive of the Bible as a holy book, combined with a wealth of satire and wit which are so characteristic of his masterly pen. If a Christian still believes after reading that inimitable work, he would believe in the *Arabian Nights* if only the Church told him to do so. He will *not* make a Freethinker.

On the more general lines approached from the philosophical and psychological point of view, but illumined by a thorough knowledge of scientific method, are the works of Chapman Cohen. Bible "banging" is always necessary, but mere Bible banging and nothing else is by no means enough. The advance in instruction—if not altogether in education—has familiarized many people with the results of scientific discovery; and its implications in the realm of Freethought have been pressed with astonishing power of analysis in many of Mr. Cohen's books. No would-be Freethinker can afford to neglect them.

And this is merely a bare outline of the way to make Freethinkers. Yet, it is a job worth while. It carries with it very little recompense, possibly none at all, from the money point of view. It offers no prizes in the way of honours. There are no big titles or medals. But there surely can be little better work for man to do than take part in fighting for the great ideal of liberty in the fullest sense of the word. That is the task of Freethought. We may do only a little as individuals. But, collectively, it may mean that progress, however slow, is definitely there. And we can all do our best to help in what Meredith, I think, claimed was the best of all Causes.

H. CUTNER.

Annihilation—or Sterilization?

FUTURE world wars will be caused by children. Wars for religion or revenge are things of the past; reason and bitter experience tell us of their futility. Too many children and too little room or food will FORCE nations to war, slowly but inevitably, although perhaps they would cavil at bloodshed for "honour" or a "scrap of paper." Expansion is the new cause of conflict.

Population—too much or too little—has always been a corner-stone in Economics. The Iron Law is out of date, but the difficulties of population live on. The ancients (in 1790) said that people multiply geometrically, and the power of the earth to sustain them, arithmetically, so that soon the land could not give enough food to keep life above mere starvation level. Modern Science has proved the fallacy of the argument. Populations are increasing, standard of living is rising and there is a superfluity of Nature's bounty.

Higher levels of civilization bring a tendency to fewer births (another of the old dogmas disproved) and better sanitation and medicine reduce the death rate. In fifty years in England, this has fallen from 27 to 12 per thousand; birth-control, depression and modern ideas have, in the same time reduced the birth rate from 35 to 18 per thousand.

With increasing industrialization, more people and vast cities, less land is available for food production than formerly; eventually, if this process continues, there must be reached a point when no more land can be allowed to go out of cultivation without endangering essential food supply. This, despite the marvels of intensive cultivation, is sure to happen—but hardly in our lifetime.

Famine, flood, pestilence and disease were the allies of War, constant and recurring, in keeping population down to reasonable limits. Again, modern science is combating the former. Their toll on life is now but a fraction of what it was; it would be considerably less if even one per cent of the money now spent on armaments was devoted to research and prevention. War still plays its horrible part and looks like playing a larger rôle in the near future.

Three nations are busy fostering child-birth, and at the same time shouting their need for "expansion."

Italy's teeming millions need an outlet; they are overcrowded on the peninsular; breeding like rabbits in a Catholic country where birth-control is rigorously suppressed; the colonists (assuming that Italy is successful in Abyssinia) will carry their habits with them and rapidly people the conquered territory with their progeny.

Hitler proudly boasts of 500,000 births per annum. Germany subsidizes child production, paying a bonus on marriage of £30, to be wiped off in instalments of four children. If the purpose is what we imagine it to be, this is a crime against humanity of the first dimensions. Curiously enough, Germany is the first country in the world to adopt sterilization; not however, to reduce the population but to seed it and to guarantee, as far as possible, an A1 nation in say, 20 years.

Japan, with the habits and characteristics of the East, has more than doubled her population in fifty years. Restriction, either for hygienic or for economic reasons, is unknown. Those islands cannot support this burden economically, indeed the very physical presence of so many is becoming uncomfortable. Expansion, that is the acquisition of territory, usually by conquest, is but a temporary remedy. In a few decades the vicious circle is complete; again the cry is raised for more land, the national sentiment is fomented and trouble is immanent.

There is plenty of room in the world—now. In two or three hundred years at the most all the habitable parts, capable of housing populations, will be filled.

Sterilization must come. Its only alternative is modern war and the destruction of civilization as we know it. As soon as a slight fall in the birth-rate is announced, the "die-hards" cry out: "Racial decay has set in. We are rushing to national suicide."

It does not appear to these gentlemen that it is far better to restrict excessive child-birth than to slaughter millions in War every few years. The former process is harmless, individually or nationally; we still suffer from the effects of the last great bloody reduction in population. Over-production in commodities is met to-day with various complicated restriction of supply schemes.

We should learn to provide security and a decent life for our progeny before we rush to produce them. A great many young people of to-day have no work, no hope, no future and a miserable existence; it was a crime to bring them into such a world.

Sterilization must come. Voluntary in economic stress or compulsory in disease-ridden or insane partners, it will be the accepted dogma of the next decade. Birth-control, once the greatest heresy and "evil" is here, and here to stay. There will be sufficient children born whatever restriction schemes come into being, for people WILL have them. Quality and not quantity will perfect the race; restriction (obviously of the possibly unfit and unemployable at first), and not fostering, of child-birth is what is wanted.

Nations can well afford to limit their birth production. In some part of the world excessive child-birth will cause not merely War but annihilation. Dare we face that prospect with equanimity? Apparently we do.

Birth-control or interference with nature, of course, calls down the wrath of all religious fanatics. That need deter no-one. Religions are not overmuch concerned with the future of this world or the havoc that will arise from unbridled "Nature." They have, all through History, opposed progressive thought, indeed

one of the greatest tags of Church teaching is that "the heresies of to-day are the dogmas of to-morrow."

What hope have we in the Church when Bishops still rise up in the House of Lords to mouth imprecations against the heinous sin of birth-control?

All England accepted it ten years ago.

A. F. WILLIAMS.

Acid Drops

The Rev. "Dick" Sheppard, speaking of the present war crisis, says, "I truly believe that God in His patience is giving us a last chance to turn our faces resolutely towards righteousness." "God in His patience!" Poor God—he really ought to be asked to be saved from his defenders. Does the Rev. "Dick" mean God is sitting in heaven waiting patiently for the nations to come to some amicable agreement, and that it is a good thing for us poor miserable worms that he is so patient? And, anyhow, what would have happened if he were not patient? An earthquake? Or will his patience have come to an end if, for some reason or other, a war between the powers takes place? What drivel these parsons can say sometimes.

There is a sarcastic note in an American newspaper which notes the Thirtieth anniversary of Wilbur Glenn Voliva's accession to the leadership of that monstrous Fundamentalist sect known as the Dowieites. Their own label the "Christian Catholic Church" has never "caught on," but everybody knows about their queer insistence upon the "Flat Earth" theory. The *Milwaukee Journal* aptly remarks that these simple Simons who are capable of the most incredible self-delusion in matters of Faith, prove to be hard-headed enough in worldly finance to amass big sums of money. True Dowie and Voliva collect the money "for the Cause," but it is the "Leader" in Zion City, as elsewhere, who decides for whose benefit the funds are distributed, and how, and by whom.

A correspondent of the *Christian World* is sad but frank. He is a "Young Layman" who finds fault with the ignorance of the Free Church clergy. He writes because "Every time I attempt personal evangelism, I find it essential to apologize for the Church, and especially for the Ministry." "Young Layman" should either leave the ignorant body he condemns or else take a Salesman's Course at one of the many religious seminaries where they teach your clerics, even amateur ones, to overcome the customers' resistance.

Our Christians never get far away from their ancestral heritage of ignorance. The Archbishop of Canterbury accounts for the successes of the recent meetings of the League of Nations to the fact that "in all our Churches," i.e., those situated in England, the League could rely upon "the prayers of multitudes of people." Even the local "home" churches reach Heaven quicker, and are much more effective than when the League meets miles away in Geneva. It is the old story of the child who prayed loudly that God would send him a model engine. "Don't shout," said his mother, "God isn't deaf." "No," the boy answered, "God isn't. But Uncle Joe is."

"Curiouser and curiouser," as Alice said, are the "calculations" of the devout. Professor Findlay assures us that "as far as the Gospels are concerned, the visit of the Magi (to the Cradle at Bethlehem) might have taken place at any time within two years of the birth of Christ." Or, of course, twenty years after! But two years seems a long time for the "Joseph" Party to be waiting out in the stables because "there was no room in the inn." It reads as if the desk clerk was failing in the courtesy—there MUST have been a bedroom vacant within a few years! Besides what about that star? All the as-

tronomers of the world must have discovered the Hovering Star if it persisted in remaining a few yards above the Taxpayers' Arms all the year round.

We are indebted to the Rev. George Shillito, M.A., for the following "Lenten experience" of a famous author, Mr. Karel Capek:—

I wake on Sundays with a catastrophic foreboding. . . . And if a storm were to cast me up on a desert island with no Man Friday, I am sure that I should wake one morning with a dreadful feeling that something is wrong and that I am fed up with everything. "Ah!" I should say to myself at last, "It must be Sunday."

Mr. Shillito's comment is that Mr. Capek must have found in his church "a dreary mechanism-making ecclesiasticism—not an experience of full and vibrant life." We imagine Mr. Capek was referring to all churches at all times. It is what they teach, not how they teach it, that makes pietist preaching funereally dull.

The "Three Hours Agony" Service beloved of the more emotional types of Christian is very properly condemned by Dr. Percy Dearmer, one of the most Modernist of our Modernists. Canon Dearmer goes so far as to refer to "the spirit which is created by the hymns habitually used at this service, and the way in which some preachers have overlaid the service with thoughts and pictures derived ultimately from the Sadism of the Counter-Reformation." He says the Service is no older than 1732, when it was "invented" by the Jesuit Alfonso Messia in South America. It "was never a man's service," he adds referring to the large attendance of women as a rule. Incidentally Dr. Dearmer girds against "deplorable and demoralizing hymns" set down for Good Friday. "There is a green hill," he says, "holds a doctrine of the atonement which few people think true at the present day, besides being quite unhistorical. . . . Golgotha was not green and there is no evidence that it was a hill."

Professor Piccard, we learn, is offering one passenger ticket for his next ascent to the stratosphere, the price being £20,000. The price appears not to be attracting takers. Much larger sums are often paid with enthusiasm to those who offer a safe conduct to the celestial sphere, and the buyers, curiously, don't even stipulate for proof of delivery.

The Rev. H. Colvin Lewis deserves our heartiest congratulations. He "prefers the wilds of Africa to Brighton because the people are more religious." Now is not that exactly what we have said times out of number in these columns? Of course the natives of an African bush are far more religious than most people here. The more primitive people are, the more they believe in genuine religion—for ignorance, superstition and fear all have contributed to its making. We hope that Mr. Lewis will see, in addition, that his distinctive costume is only a variation of that of the native witch-doctor or medicine-man; and the fact that only 2 per cent of his parishioners go to his church proves pretty conclusively that even they are beginning to suspect it.

A pious critic, dealing with Dom Bernard Clement's book *When Ye Pray*, tells us that the reverend author "knows how to knock a point home with rough humour, and he is severely practical"—and this about a priest who actually advises that "each piece of work we undertake should begin with an act of worship." To pray at all is stupid enough in all conscience; but fancy everybody grovelling on their knees to an unknown something above the clouds whenever they were going to do a spot of work! The real reason for books like *When Ye Pray* is that priests and parsons are beginning to feel the pinch; so long as they can get people to pray so long they will be wanted. Once the people see the utter uselessness of prayer and the reign of these "holy" men will almost be over.

Another religious critic is rather severe on Canon Pass's work, *The Divine Commonwealth*. After telling the author that he "is less at home in the synoptic Gospels than in the Fourth," the critic proceeds by pointing out that "there is a widespread tendency to dethrone Our Lord from his position as an ideal character, and put St. Francis of Assisi in his place." This is really terrible blasphemy, and we certainly are surprised to find it a "widespread tendency." For if there is one thing which has always confounded "blatant" Atheists—and it is an argument used by "reverent" Rationalists—it is the absolute uniqueness of "Our Lord's" moral character, his marvellous sympathy with everything and everybody, his equally outpouring love, his thorough knowledge of suffering humanity, his utter sinlessness—and so on. And here comes Canon Pass, and, to the disgust of the reviewer, somehow or other manages to indicate his preference for St. Francis as a more "ideal character" than Jesus! Really, what are we coming to?

The Annual Report of the Christian Evidence Society is out again and we learn, with undisguised admiration, that the Society arranged for nearly 1400 meetings last year. We are not informed, however, how many conversions were made or how much Christian "evidence" was produced in this welter of words to show that Christianity was really divine. One of the speakers says in the Report that "there is a real respect for a simple telling of personal religious experience," and that the men in the parks "do not want to hear mere blind credulity or superstition." But what is Christianity but mere blind credulity or superstition?

Naturally there is a note in the Report on the "anti-Christian propaganda" very similar to the notes in previous Reports. "It is," we are told, "adopting more and more disreputable tactics in its efforts to undermine faith in the rising generation. The scientific and philosophic arguments advanced by unbelievers a few years ago have given place to cheap banter and paltry jest." We like that tribute to our efforts "a few years ago," but, oh dear, how these "evidence" Christians hate a jest! And yet what else can one do with such a sorry joke as Christianity?

The Rev. "Dick" Sheppard has an article in one of the weekly papers on "Why I Criticize the Church." He says that "the Church is timid, fearful, not of offending one of these little ones, but of offending one of those big ones." And "we are fierce where Our Lord was gentle, and gentle, where he was fierce." It is a pity Mr. Sheppard does not go more fully into detail. For example, "Our Lord" was so terribly fierce against a fig tree that he cursed it and it withered; and he was so angry against a storm for frightening his disciples that he told it to stop blowing and it stopped. He also was so fierce against everybody who came before him that he called them thieves and robbers. Now what earthly use was all this fierceness? Frankly this eternal contrast between what some parsons call "Churchianity" and "true Christianity" is nonsense. We think it would not be difficult to prove that actually Churchianity has *civilized* genuine Christianity.

We see that in Los Angeles it costs £3 to become a Doctor of Divinity and £6 to become a Bishop. Cheap, as this world goes, but poor value all the same.

Mgr. Jarosseau is a Catholic missionary who stuck to his post in Harrar while it was bombed recently by the Italians in their "civilizing" war against the "savage" Abyssinians. Mgr. Jarosseau "believes that all the hostility shown by the Ethiopians towards the Catholic Church is due to the civil manner in which they were deluded and beguiled in the ages past." We like the last words, "in ages past." What will the Ethiopians think now of the Catholic Church and its great ally, Italy? Is it not a fact that the Pope has not yet raised his voice expressly against Italy and Mussolini with regard to the war? What has the Catholic Church—

even in this country—said about the wholesale slaughter of men, women and children in Abyssinia by the latest diabolical inventions, aerial bombs, gas, flame-throwers, machine guns, etc? Mouthing generalizations against war in general anybody can do—and so far that represents the Pope's contribution to peace. What a religion!

No one can be more independent than the Roman Catholic when he likes. He ridicules "Unity," and scoffs at the divided and rent English Church and its hundreds of Protestant sects. Yet the tone changes in the face of a common enemy. For example, Archbishop Williams at Manchester, the other day, said:—

If we are to take our share in the life of the Church we must be united . . . and I think one of our first principles should be to work with non-Catholic undenominational societies as closely as we can. We Catholics are in a small minority, and our newspapers, etc., are not read much by non-Catholics. Consequently if we wish to influence our fellow countrymen we must join their societies and unions and organizations.

The truth is, no matter how the various spokesmen in the Churches like to hide it, that the menace of Secularism, as it is called, has never been more formidable than at present. Unity, even of discordant sects, is better than dissension in one's ranks. But we can tell the Archbishop that united or not, Secularism will win. It will win because it is *true*.

The Hon. Sec. of the "Britain for Christ" Crusade writes that "not only is Communism the enemy of Christianity, but it is essential that the Church should realize the militantly atheistical character of the Marxist Communism. . . ." These militantly Christian agitators are of course attacking Communism—and we see no reason why they shouldn't any more than we see why Communism should not equally be at liberty to attack ideas it disagrees with. But there can be no sort of doubt that "Britain for Christ" crusades will never succeed without some kind of political bogey to frighten wealthy believers into paying out large sums to insure their earthly interests now that the heavenly treasures are so insecure. It must represent an ideal "Crusade" where both can be insured by the same outlay.

We have often wondered where to find the "spirit" of liberty. The Rev. C. J. Wiseman—headmaster of Queen's College—informs us that "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Mr. Wiseman says some very good things about education, but he is not happy in his attack on "the Huxleyan or behaviourist." He seems to imply that followers of Mr. Aldous Huxley "will cheerfully send anyone to the stake for eating cake before a piece of bread and butter." He gives no evidence for his assertion. May we remind Mr. Wiseman that myriads of people have been burnt alive by the liberty-loving Christians for disagreeing with the Christian Sect in power as to the "eating of a piece of bread." It is true that one of the persecuting parties thought it was *MORE* than a piece of bread, and the other persecuting body of Christians thought it was *ONLY* a piece of bread. But we advise Christian critics to steer clear of Bread when telling us that in the spirit of their religion "there is liberty."

Some people have peculiar ideas about the meaning of words. The Rev. Ingli James, B.A., writes on "A New Picture of the Unchanging Faith." We ourselves believe without sarcasm or irony that Christianity changes little. Its creed is "the same, yesterday, to-day and for ever," except in so far as its more persecuting practices are held in check where it cannot count upon State forces supporting it. Mr. Ingli James says (about the fundamentalist teaching of Spurgeon and Parker) "We have to create a new picture that will convey the Eternal Word to . . . the world . . ." "We need a theology . . . related to the conditions under which the men of our generation must think and live." Is this what Mr. James means by "Unchanging" and "Eternal"? It sounds more like a man who has failed at one trade turning to a different way of making a living.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTER

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

W. COLLINS.—Report arrived too late for this issue. Next week.

J. G. DENISON.—Thanks for names and addresses. Papers are being sent. We do not know when Mr. Cohen will be in Leeds. Certainly not till the autumn.

J. T. BRIGHTON.—We trust the forthcoming lecture season will be a successful one. *Humanity and War* has been selling very well, and we are pleased to find it has been so effective in your district.

M. MURRAY.—Your story of the dog in St. Anne's Church, Blackburn, that remained quiet during the whole of the service, gives rise to speculation. Perhaps it was wondering why some of the moving things on two legs are called the higher animals.

D. DAWSON.—We will look the matter up and let you know. GODFREY C. COETZEE (South Africa).—Sorry we cannot trace Stevenson's poem in our pages.

F. C. HOLDEN.—Thanks for address of a likely reader, paper being sent for four weeks.

The "Freethinker" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to this office.

The offices of the National Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited, are now at 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Telephone: Central 1367.

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Lecture notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4 by the first post on Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

Sugar Plums

We are now within five weeks of the National Secular Society's Annual Conference—this year to be held in London. Judging from reports the Conference looks like being very well attended. We trust that every Branch of the Society will be represented, and that there will be a good attendance of individual members. It is always advisable that individual members should be present at these annual gatherings, particularly as it often leads to increased interest in the Society and its work. We again impress upon visitors from the Provinces who require hotel or other accommodation, to make their wishes known to the General Secretary as early as possible.

A fortnight ago we wrote on the danger of broadcasting being in the hands of either the Government or any other monopoly under the control of the Government. And a little before that we published a powerful indictment of the censor of plays, written by the late Joseph Conrad. We had not long to wait for a confirmation of what was said in both instances. A film dealing with peace was submitted to the Censor. The film gave an account of the expenses of the Great Powers on armaments, and then depicted air-raids and the usual things

that are shown in films dealing with actual war, but minus the appeal for peace. The Censor refused to give permission for the film to be shown until he had consulted the War Office, and only when the War Office raised no objection—after there had been some little publicity—was permission given to exhibit the film. Unfortunately the Cinema people are in the business solely for cash, and are afraid to offend the authorities, from the police upward, for fear it should be made awkward for them to conduct their business. But if they had the courage of men and any sense of dignity they would tell this Censor of films—a fairly well paid job by the way—to go to the devil, show the film, fight the matter in the courts, and if beaten there (we do not believe they would be) fight it out with the general public to back them up.

But what we wish to note is the fact that if the War Office had seen fit to bar the film it would never have been shown. Which also means that whenever a Government office wishes to pass the word the Censor will obey orders. In that case we are under a censorship, although it is not quite so bad as Germany or Italy. On the other hand it is not so straightforward as in these countries. But it is worth remembering that while, apparently, every facility is given for films that depict the soldier in war as a happy-go-lucky fellow having a good time on the whole, and also to encourage lavish displays of military and naval life showing what a fine time soldiers and sailors have, a film that advocates peace is only permitted after very careful consideration and with considerable hesitation.

One reason given for refusing a certificate for the film was that the subject was "controversial." The meanness of a censorship is only equalled by its stupidity. What subject is there of any value that is not controversial? Politics, religion, art, literature, everything worth talking about is controversial. The apology makes one wonder whether the qualification of a censor is not that of being in one's dotage.

And how these people dislike controversy. The public they wish for, the public they try to create, is one that does as it is told, shouts when it is told to shout, stays at home when it is told to stay at home, believes every Government statement, and cries out England is the home of freedom, while remaining blind to how much of that freedom is being stolen from them. There is really one thing that should not permit of controversy, and that is the danger of permitting at any time the control of news, or the expression of opinion, whether it be pictorial or written, or verbal, to rest with any official whatsoever. The people that submit to this have taken the first great step towards slavery.

The Centenary of Godwin, author of the famous *Political Justice*, one of the great books of the day and a powerful influence for social reform, has brought forth a number of commemorative articles, and among them one in the *Daily Herald* for April 7. The article is from the very able pen of Mr. H. N. Brailsford, and gives a good outline of Godwin's political and social opinions and influence. But from another point of view the article leaves certain things very much unsaid. For Godwin was not merely a heretic in sociology, he was equally a heretic in religion, and a heretic of a very pronounced kind. But of Godwin the heretic, all we get is this:—

Trained as a hard-shell Calvinist for the ministry, he filled several dissenting pulpits with but moderate success, while he drifted slowly towards Unitarianism.

That is all; he was not a Freethinker, not even a non-committal, colourless "Rationalist," nor even an early incarnation of a "reverent Agnostic," he was just on the road to becoming a Unitarian. He had not even got there.

Now Mr. Brailsford is not actually wrong in what he says, but what he *does not* say is almost certain to mis-

lead his readers. The truth is that Godwin did more than drift "towards" Unitarianism, he was left at the end with a very vague form of theism, and a very strong hatred of Christianity and all its works. If Mr. Brailsford, assuming he has not come across the book, or others wish to find out what Godwin's position was, they need only turn to a small volume of *Essays*, published for the first time in 1873. In a letter to his daughter, Mrs. Shelley, Godwin said, "I leave behind me a manuscript in a considerable state of forwardness for the press, entitled *The Genius of Christianity Unveiled*. . . . I am most unwilling that this, the concluding work of a long life, and written, as I believe, in the full maturity of my understanding, should be consigned to oblivion." It was these essays that were published many years after the author's death. We have not the space to quote from them here, but, in the volume, there is no mistake of Godwin's complete rejection of Christianity and his attack upon the social and moral influence of that creed. The book is really a complete rejection of the supernatural in all its forms. "Drifting towards Unitarianism!" We wonder when present-day writers will bring themselves to the point of dealing honestly and fairly with dead Freethinkers.

Another example of what we have just noted is to be found in the leading article in the *Times Literary Supplement* for April 11. Referring to Butler's *Analogy*, the writer says, "This was the book which stayed James Mill for a while in his passage from Presbyterianism to Agnosticism." Agnosticism had never been heard of by James Mill, and in any case he was far too logical in his thinking to have adopted such an amorphous name, or to have disguised his Atheism under so flimsy a disguise. But to have labelled James Mill as an Atheist is to follow a policy that simply is not in existence amongst English writers. It reminds one of those who during the Bradlaugh Centenary proceedings described C.B. as a "Rationalist," and of the newspaper which described J. M. Robertson, a very militant Atheist, as being "interested in the development of Religion." True enough, but a thumping lie for all that.

The Union of South Africa has a very Christian Government. And Christianity teaches the brotherhood of man and the equality of all men before the Lord. But on earth there is some little difference. So the Union of South Africa has disfranchised the native vote. All men are equal, but not in the Christian State of South Africa. And when Cape Colony joined the Union one of the stipulations was that the natives should retain their political rights. But things are different, and the one thing certain is that the British Empire always keeps its treaties—with certain exceptions.

The Divinity that doth Hedge a King

EVERYWHERE, where rulership has been evolved, the Chief or King is associated with the divinities. Indeed, many priestly Kings not only partake of the divine essence but were, and sometimes still are, venerated by the community as gods themselves.

The deep devotion to monarchy now prevalent even in advanced European lands is to some extent a survival of the long-cherished belief in royal sacredness. This idea is almost universal in lowly cultures. The success or failure of the harvest in Polynesia is on all sides supposed to depend on the influence the reigning chief exercises over sunshine and rainfall. In his informative volume, *Kingship*, Oxford University Press, 1927, Mr. A. M. Hocart writing from information furnished by a resident, Father de Larne, notes that the natives of Futuna, an island situated between Fiji and Samoa, still depose their chiefs if "the food does not grow and the land is

hungry." One chief was deposed about 1913 when a storm ruined the crops. Succeeding rulers were also unfortunate and were quickly superseded. Then the people complained of the scarcity of fish although in the times of Toviko they were greatly abundant. So they decided to restore Toviko, and then fish food became as plentiful as ever. Speaking of the early days of Savage Island, Turner recalls the priestly rulers who were thought "to cause the food to grow but the people got angry with them in times of scarcity and killed them; and as one after another was killed, the end of it was no one wished to be King."

The Polynesian term for the mystical endowments of royal personages is *mana*. All ghosts and gods are pervaded with this potency. In ancient India, Chaldaea, Egypt and elsewhere this sacred effluence of princes was ever regarded as vital to the interests of the community.

The Hebrews of old attributed the triumphs of their Kings or heroes to the mana imparted to them by Jahveh. In Homeric Greece the rulers were semi-divine and a blameless monarch who served the gods was rewarded with rich stores of grain and fruit, abundance of sheep and kine, a bounteous supply of fish and the prosperity of the people.

Divine Kings are dimly discernible in archaic Rome, but their sacred character vanished during the later Republic, but with the subsequent rise of the Empire godlike rulership returned. During Pagan Rome's prolonged existence a crowded pantheon of deities was adored, and it became a comparatively easy task to transfer the agricultural attributes of Ceres the Corn Mother with those of Fortuna the deity of prosperity to the head of the State. When Augustus assumed the purple popular belief in the Emperor's powers to confer blessings on his subjects became firmly established. Later rulers encouraged this fancy and some were seriously stated to perform miracles. Vespasian was supposed to have effected a miraculous cure in Egypt and the great Hadrian was credited with the restoration of a blind man's sight.

With the Teutonic tribes the ruler was semi-divine. The Burgundian King, as a famous Roman historian noted, was compelled to abdicate when war proved unsuccessful, or if the soil proved unproductive. But, with the growing ascendancy of the Church, monarchs tended to lose their mana. This is not surprising when we remember that the influence of the clergy became so powerful in medieval times that they almost monopolized the healing art. Miracles were now confined to saints, incantations and relics, save in one instance. For sovereigns still retained their power to cure the King's Evil. Nevertheless, a shadow of the ancient regal influences lingered. As Hocart points out: "It is true that some of the influence of Kings over crops seems to be commemorated in the Archbishop's blessing after the second oblation at our coronation ceremony. 'Almighty God give Thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine.' The phraseology is obviously Biblical, and therefore goes back to a time when Kings did have some control over vegetation."

In Christian Europe the arts of the primitive medicine-man descended to the priesthood. But the Kings of France and England for centuries continued to touch patients afflicted with scrofula. In Britain the earliest reference to this custom is that of William of Malmesbury, and dates back to late Saxon times. Shakespeare's celebrated lines in *Macbeth* immortalize the alleged healing powers of Edward the Confessor:—

"How he solicits heaven,
Himself best knows; but strangely-visited people,
All swollen and ulcerous, pitiful to the eye,
The mere despair of surgery, he cures."

Goutran is the first recorded French ruler who exercised this power. Still it was not conceded as a hereditary possession of royalty until the reign of Philip I. (1060-1108), but even he in some measure lost it, according to the clergy, owing to an adulterous union. In England the royal touch became permanently efficacious under Henry II., while both in France and our own island the healing capacities of the King were intensified in popular estimation as the monarchs gradually elevated themselves in power and affluence above the truculent barons. Henceforth, the virtues or vices of the Kings made little difference to their healing influences. The Tudor sovereign, Henry VII., was the first English ruler to institute a special service of ceremony when scrofulous subjects were touched.

It was under the Stuarts, however, that the wildest manifestations of royal healing power occurred. With the restoration of 1660 the people revelled in a perfect orgy of credulity, and John Browne, the King's surgeon, assures us that his master, Charles II.—perhaps the most dissolute monarch that ever wore the crown of England—touched 92,107 persons for the cure of the King's evil between the years 1660 and 1682.

Macaulay has given the world a vivid account of the ceremony in use in Stuart times. The days appointed for the miraculous cures were solemnly selected by the Privy Council, and were proclaimed in the churches by the clergy. "When the appointed time came," wrote Macaulay, "several divines in full canonicals stood round the canopy of state. The surgeon of the royal household introduced the sick. A passage from the sixteenth chapter of the Gospel of St. Mark was read. When the words, 'They shall lay their hands on the sick and they shall recover' had been pronounced, there was a pause and one of the sick was brought up to the King. His Majesty stroked the ulcers and swellings, and hung round the patient's neck a white riband to which he fastened a gold coin. The other sufferers were then led up in succession, and, as each was touched, the chaplain repeated the incantation, 'They shall lay their hands on the sick and they shall recover.' Then came the epistle, prayers, antiphonies and benediction."

The curious may still read the service in the prayer books employed in the reign of Queen Anne, who herself touched Dr. Johnson for scrofula without effecting a cure. William III. had scorned the superstition and declined to countenance it in any way, yet George I. had for some years occupied the throne before the University of Oxford "ceased to reprint the Office of Healing together with the Liturgy."

In the Stuart period the higher ecclesiastics fully subscribed to the belief in the healing powers of the royal touch, and apparently quite sincerely. But what is more startling is the fact that medical practitioners of the highest standing openly avowed their firm belief in the curative influences of the monarch's hand. Indeed, several of the surgeons of the time committed to writing a seemingly genuine confession of complete faith in this marvel. "One of them is not ashamed to tell us," declares the matter of fact Macaulay, "that the gift was communicated by the unction administered at the coronation; that the cures were so numerous and sometimes so rapid that they could not be attributed to any natural cause; that the failures were to be ascribed to want of faith on the part of the patients; that Charles once handled a scrofulous Quaker, and made him a healthy man and a sound Churchman in a moment."

With the increase of common sense during the eighteenth century the remedial efficacy of the royal touch was at a discount. It was more and more realized that alleviations of scrofula that truly

occurred were traceable to emotional influences alone. Still, although the Hanoverian monarchs disregarded the mummery, the exiled Stuarts continued to touch, it was said, successfully, in Rome, and rustics in rural retreats long cherished the delusion. Even after the French Revolution had flung the deception aside, so late as 1825 Charles X. of France was reluctantly persuaded by pious believers to revive the ceremony. Many patients appeared, but the cultured classes frowned on the folly which has now been relegated to the realms of exploded superstition.

T. F. PALMER.

Rationalism contra Mundum

IV.

CONSIDERATION of the Cosmic problem in order to detach truth thereon from the mass of confused ideation which envelops it, is an original study; one independent of ordinary mundane troubles and concerns. This would be obvious; only, we are met to-day by propositions linking some specious doctrine of the kind with a political or economic dogma as necessarily connected, and advanced as final philosophy.¹ Astronomical investigation, say, of the great nebula in Andromeda, is remote from questions as to whether, or not, we shall obtain our hats from a State emporium, or our bacon from a Communal store. On the other hand traditional views which new knowledge displaces are associated with directive codes of conduct containing elements open to similar challenge. And beset as we are by the daily business of living, there is the further matter of values with regard to the kind and quality of existence that make it worth while to carry on—also related to first principles.

Here we touch, at once fundamental views of human nature. The general teaching of the Church (or Churches) stresses innate depravity and "sin" as from "the fall." "The condition of man, after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God: Wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the Grace of God by Christ preceding us, that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will."² Eighteenth century humanists in reaction to this theory posited the natural goodness of man under favourable conditions. This position was not altogether accepted in sceptical quarters as in the story told of the Prussian, Frederick the Great. Interviewing his Minister of Education, and asking how things were going, he replies: "Excellently your Majesty; especially since we worked on the principle that human nature is good. . . ." "Eh! What's that," said the King, "humanity good! Ah, I see my dear S—, you don't know that damn'd race. . . ." Certainly the race in its general manifestation exhibits testimony to either extreme. It ranges in its moral quality (or want of it) from the state that incites Hamlet's encomium, to the very Malebolge of turpitude and cruel stupidity.

The consociation in the modern world of many diverse peoples previously dwelling apart, through its facile means of intercommunication; peoples of different origin, antipathetic in their beliefs, modes, usages and stage of culture; the antinomies so set up

¹ Illustrated by the singular compound termed "dialectical materialism."

² Articles of Church of England.

where the "evil" of one is the "good" of another create the tragi-comedy of human affairs. In the Western sphere, since the War, we have seen reversion to barbaric standards, practices, sentiments, which some of us had hoped were become superseded in our day. Correlatively with a change of intellectual outlook, on what grounds can they who fall in the more "civilized" company of mankind formulate a criterion of rational action for a world thus incongruously assorted; divided between influences that extend from "Satan" to "Punchinello"?

European culture, so far as it went, in the formative period of Christendom developed under theocracy. It presents in an elaborated system a *motif* that goes back to settled society; and the early Islamic system is similar in spirit. A divine faith consecrates the ruler in an ordained order; the regulative and legal sanctions are holy, to question which is heresy; and the devotee is paternally shepherded by its priesthood to the Hereafter. Emotions generated by such beliefs are a potent factor in their preservation, maugre all criticism.

The converging forces that disintegrated medievalism brought in new notions of sovereignty, and fresh political combinations. One effect was to subordinate ecclesiastical interest to the secular policy of the rising national states. The battle for freedom of belief and inquiry over religion reacted in the field of politics. The idea emerged of a civil polity, and public weal, to which rulers and magistrates were accountable—the germ of civil liberty. Its progress in the modern world (which may be dated from the seventeenth century) has been by devious and indirect ways; and it has fallen to England to make a signal contribution towards its establishment. The English Common Law, derived from old usage and good sense interpreted by Judges in the Courts, long challenged Ecclesiastical Canon Law, more widely operative abroad. The early advent of a representative council or Parliament to advise the King led to its becoming the paramount institution in Government, though by tentative steps and provisional adaptations. The conflicts of the seventeenth century introduced into the melée the subtler weapons of public controversy; potent enough later to abolish Press Censorship, and defy Blasphemy enactments. It is of import in this connexion that the factor determining the success of free political institutions—open canvass of all opinion and policy—was in being prior to the era of popular enfranchisement. From the eighteenth century instruments and agencies took shape; journals, newspapers, reviews, discussion circles—"coffee-house talk," public assemblies, and associations of all kinds for cultural or material purposes; satire and caricature make their appearance as a mode of controversy.³

Of such is the genius of the wide Libertarian principle of being—the correlate of intellectual enlightenment. The two are interdependent, and their interpretation has come from both sides of the modernist movement. It is expressed both through poetry and song, and formal treatise like *Liberty*, and *Representative Government*, which J. S. Mill expounded during the last century. It possesses no finality, and must be re-stated as circumstance and exigency dictate. It is the vivifying spirit—the *elan vital* which inspires all action towards a higher type of civilization and culture, and dominates the form of material agency subserving this purpose. It embraces citizenship, responsible administration, and regard for

human personality and its all-round development as the key-note of social direction.

Under what concrete forms a public Will of the kind can be best embodied is a separate concern. Also the question—To what extent mankind at large is equal to its practical achievement. There remains however one supreme related interest.

It follows from the constitution in this wise of a free secular state, that the "spiritual power" must be detached from any official connexion with its jurisdiction. Under this head are included all Churches and religious societies, all cultural, artistic, scientific, and intellectual associations, the universities, the press. All to adopt the faith they prefer; no religious privilege or penalty on expression and belief. Whatever influence such bodies exert must come purely from their resources to attract, persuade or convince in the open play of opinion and teaching.

So is this polity absolutely hostile to every totalitarian dictatorial State cult, no matter what the "philosophic," anti-religious, or political dogma on which it founds; and its use of mass hypnosis (or brutality) to produce a community of human termites—reviving in another guise the old exclusive theocracy. And as this polity is one with the essence of English culture and illumination, its lieges are out resolutely to uphold and extend its dynamic power to meet the exigencies of our time.

"All before us lies the way:
Give the past unto the wind."

AUSTEN VERNEY.

³ It is dealt with by the writer in his study: *Rationalist Evaluations and the True Direction of Civilization*. Heath Cranton, Ltd.

Freethought Anniversaries

GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE—APRIL 13, 1817

G. J. HOLYOAKE was born at Birmingham on April 13, 1817.

Attracted by the teaching of Robert Owen, he, in 1840, became an Owenite Missionary. From this movement sprang the modern co-operative societies. His connexion with the Co-operative movement was never completely severed; he wrote numerous articles for the co-operative papers, besides pamphlets and a *History of Co-operation*. To advanced movements of every kind he rendered generous assistance. It is well to remember that all through the history of this country it is the Freethinker who does the real hard work for reform; the Christian starts "nobbling" when success is assured. Christian pioneering is done at the back of the front.

In 1860 he was Secretary to the British Legion sent to Italy to assist Garibaldi. For these and other activities readers should see his *Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life*; here we are concerned with his work for Freethought and Secularism.

In 1842, Charles Southwell was editing the *Oracle of Reason*, and was, for an article, sentenced to a fine of one hundred pounds and twelve months in gaol. Holyoake took over the job, and in a few weeks also got sent to gaol (his term being six months), for a remark made in a lecture at Cheltenham about putting God on half-pay. From 1846 to 1861, he edited the *Reasoner*, which had, for a paper of the kind, a long life.

While acting as a Social Missionary, as Owen called his staff, he noticed how important a part the environment played in forming character and influencing conduct. It was on this Materialistic basis that the Secularist movement was conducted by Holyoake. Secularism meant human improvement by material means, the justification of morality by considerations pertaining to this life alone; Materialism being the only sound basis of rational thought and practice. After stressing "this

³ The oldest debating Society in London, *Ye Antient Society of Cogers*, dates from the mid-eighteenth century, and still flourishes. Wilkes was an early chairman or Grand.

life alone" in his definition, and leaving God not only unemployed, but unemployable, he insisted that Secularism did not mean Atheism. No one, he wrote, would confuse the Secular with the Atheistic.

While in Gloucester jail, which he humorously described as the only Theological Seminary he ever attended, he was given a book, *The Trial of the Witnesses*, and then and there "it came" into his mind that some day he would write *The Trial of Theism*, and fifteen years later he published it. It contained an elaboration of his opinions on Theological and cognate subjects. For the word Atheism, Holyoake, like so many others, had an inveterate dislike and, in this book, he sought to substitute *Cosmism* the Greek definition of which he gives as "Beautiful Order." One of the chapters, *The Logic of Death*, was published in pamphlet form and sold over one hundred thousand copies.

In 1896 he published *The Origin and Nature of Secularism*, which is partly explanatory and partly historical. In it he tells of the bringing into use of the word Secularism, of the formation of Secular Societies, and of the first Conference of Secular Societies, held in Manchester, on October 3, 1852, with Holyoake in the chair. There were delegates from numerous cities and towns from London to Glasgow. Paisley sent one of the outstanding local poets of that day, Mr. Jas. Motherwell.

In 1890, Holyoake and a few others formed the Rationalist Press Committee, and nine years later, following Mr. Foote's example with the Secular Society, Limited, this Committee formed itself into the Rationalist Press Association, Ltd. Holyoake was President until his death on January 22, 1906. AUTOLYCUS.

Dickens' Exposure of Missions Through Mrs. Jellyby

THE world—or a very considerable portion of it—has long been acquainted with Mrs. Jellyby in *Bleak House*. Through her, Dickens has satirized mission-workers in a manner that must be, for ever, unrivalled by any other writer. For this reason, I should here like to recall—by way of a few sketchy Dickensian sentences—the Mrs. Jellyby story.

In this, I am prompted by a cleric we have here—Dr. Mowll, Anglican Archbishop of Sydney.

Dr. Mowll came to Australia from China. He appears to have got his appointment—not because he was considered the most desirable man for the position—but because of the dislikes and rivalries among all the local aspirants for the office. So many wanted the well-paid job, that the utmost they could succeed in doing was to give it to the individual they did not want.

At any rate, they have Dr. Mowll; and in him there has been foisted on Australia a man who—every time he is heard over the air, or reported through the papers—gives the impression of a fanatical missionary still speaking from the very depths of China.

The fish that thronged to the shore to hear St. Antony are a mild sort of miracle compared with what Dr. Mowll has had to tell us of the providential happenings in which he figured in China. Worst of all, however, is the infliction he represents with his never-ending appeals, first for money to help the heathen, and in addition the urgency of backing this up by praying for them.

Of course, Dr. Mowll—like all similarly mission-obsessed people—entirely fails to hear the repeated calls at his own immediate door.

For example, the day following one of his Chinese outbursts in the *Sydney Morning Herald* there appeared, in the same paper, a report of the remarks by the Dean of Newcastle—a hundred miles from Sydney—respecting the deplorable state of many of the people in that locality. Some of them, he declared, were living in drain-pipes, adding: "There are to-day in our land, living conditions which, for thousands of our fellow-citizens, make the word 'home' a mere mockery, and family life a sheer impossibility."

With this, we have something in the way of a background to Dr. Mowll; and all the better, therefore, will

be appreciated the extent to which he deserves to be hung in the gallery with Mrs. Jellyby.

Esther Summerson introduces us to the latter celebrity, in this way:—

"There was a confused little crowd of people, principally children, gathered about the house at which we stopped, which had a tarnished brass plate on the door, with the inscription—Jellyby.

"We expressed our acknowledgments, and sat down behind the door where there was a lame invalid of a sofa. Mrs. Jellyby had very good hair, but was too much occupied with her African duties to brush it. The shawl in which she had been loosely muffled dropped on her chair when she advanced to us; and as she turned to resume her seat, we could not help noticing that her dress didn't nearly meet up the back, and that the open space was railed across with a lattice-work of stay-laces—like a summer-house.

"But what principally struck us was a jaded and unhealthy-looking, though by no means plain girl, at the writing table, who sat biting the feather of her pen, and staring at us. I suppose nobody ever was in such a state of ink. And, from her tumbled hair to her pretty feet, which were disfigured with frayed and broken satin slippers trodden down at heel, she really seemed to have no article of dress upon her, from a pin upwards, that was in its proper condition, or its right place.

"'You find me, my dears,' said Mrs. Jellyby, snuffing the two great office candles in tin candlesticks which made the room taste strongly of hot tallow (the fire had gone out, and, there was nothing in the grate but ashes, a bundle of wood, and a poker), 'you find me, my dears, as usual, very busy; but that you will excuse. The African project at present occupies my whole time. It involves me in correspondence with public bodies, and with private individuals anxious for the welfare of their species all over the country. I am happy to say it is advancing. We hope by this time next year to have from a hundred and fifty to two hundred healthy families cultivating coffee and educating the natives of Borrioboola-Gha, on the left bank of the Niger.'

"I said it must be very gratifying.

"'It is gratifying,' said Mrs. Jellyby. 'It involves the devotion of all my energies, such as they are; but that is nothing, so that it succeeds; and I am more confident of success every day. Do you know, Miss Summerson, I almost wonder that you never turned your thoughts to Africa.'

"I was a little curious to know who a mild, bald gentleman in spectacles was, who dropped into a vacant chair (there was no top or bottom in particular) after the fish was taken away, and seemed passively to submit himself to Borrioboola-Gha, but not to be actively interested in that settlement. As he never spoke a word, he might have been a native, but for his complexion. It was not until we left the table that the possibility of his being Mr. Jellyby ever entered my head."

The girl with the pen was Caddy, the eldest of the Jellyby brood of children. Caddy contrives a private conversation with Esther. Thus, in these words by Caddy, we learn something more of the Jellyby household:—

"I can't do anything hardly, except write. I'm always writing for Ma. It's disgraceful. You know it is. The whole house is disgraceful. The children are disgraceful. I'm disgraceful. Pa's miserable, and no wonder! Priscilla—the servant—drinks. She's always drinking. It's a great shame, and a great story of you, if you say you didn't smell her to-day. It was as bad as a public-house, writing at dinner. You know it was!"

"My dear," remonstrated Esther, "your duty as a child—"

"Oh, don't talk of duty as a child, Miss Summerson. Where's Ma's duty as a parent? All made over to the public and Africa, I suppose. Then let the public and Africa show duty as a child. It's much more their affair than mine. You are shocked, I dare say. Very well! So am I shocked too; so we are both shocked; and there's an end of it."

Later, Caddy becomes engaged to Mr. Turveydrop. The breaking of the news to Mrs. Jellyby elicits this cheerful, sympathetic utterance:—

"You are a nonsensical child to have done anything of this kind, and a degenerate child, when you might have devoted yourself to the great public measure. But the step is taken, and I have engaged a boy, and there is no more to be said. Now, pray, Caddy," said Mrs. Jellyby—for Caddy was kissing her, "don't delay me in my work, but let me clear off this heavy batch of letters before the afternoon post comes in."

Let us now have Esther's description of the move to get the Jellyby house in order for the approaching marriage:—

"Poor Mr. Jellyby, who very seldom spoke, and almost always sat when he was at home with his head against the wall, became interested when he saw that Caddy and I were attempting to establish order among all this waste and ruin, and took off his coat to help. But such wonderful things came tumbling out of the closets when they were opened—bits of mouldy pie, sour bottles, Mrs. Jellyby's caps, letters, tea, forks, odd boots and shoes of children, firewood, wafers, saucepan-lids, damp sugar in odds and ends of paper bags, footstools, blacklead brushes, bread, Mrs. Jellyby's bonnets, books with butter sticking to the bindings, guttered candle-ends, put out by being turned down in broken candlesticks, nutshells, heads and tails of shrimps, dinner-mats, gloves, coffee-grounds, umbrellas—that he looked frightened, and left off again. But he came regularly every evening, with his head against the wall, as though he would have helped us, if he had known how. 'Poor Pa,' said Caddy to me on the night before the great day, when we really had got things a little to rights. 'It seems unkind to leave him, Esther. But what could I do, if I stayed! Since I first knew you, I have tidied and tidied, over and over again; but it's useless. Ma and Africa, together, upset the whole house directly. We never have a servant who doesn't drink. Ma's ruinous to everything.'"

What of Caddy's marriage? It was by no means unmarred by sorrow. Disaster—complete and overwhelming—was the lot of Mrs. Jellyby's African project. Esther reveals all this in what must be the closing Esther extract:—

"Caddy works very hard, her husband (an excellent one) being lame, and able to do very little. Still, she is more than contented, and does all she has to do with all her heart. Mr. Jellyby spends his evenings at her new house, with his head against the wall, as he used to do in her old one. I have heard that Mrs. Jellyby was understood to suffer great mortification, from her daughter's ignoble marriage and pursuits; but I hope she got over it in time. She has been disappointed in Borrioboola-Gha, which turned out a failure in consequence of the King of Borrioboola wanting to sell everybody—for Rum."

I would like to supplement the foregoing comments by Dickens—so revealing in their humour—with two brief references to the recently-published book, *The Light of the Mind*. The author is W. J. Voss, an Australian officer blinded in the war, and who since his affliction has spent years in travel in practically every part of the world. His verdict regarding missionaries is as follows:—

"On the principle that one sinner saved is worth ninety-nine just persons, these men and women no doubt feel that they are justifying their existence, and are being rewarded for their labours; but the unbiased observer is left wondering if their efforts would not be better directed, and the money more profitably spent, in the slums of London and Glasgow. Of the moral and spiritual results achieved by foreign missions, I know nothing, except perhaps that I exercise more care in seeing that my valuables are locked up when staying in a house where any Christian native boys are employed."

The other respect in which I wish to quote Mr. Voss is in regard to "the blind man's best friend"—Braille.

"For this marvellous invention," he says, "we have to thank a young Frenchman. Blind from the age of three, Louis Braille worked for years to invent a method by which the blind might read and write in relief. In 1829, when only twenty years old, he perfected the wonderful system which has since borne his name."

How strikingly have we here, I would say, a concrete,

humanitarian service which, besides dwarfing anything and everything that has ever been accomplished by the mission-mongers of the world, exposes to derision and contempt all their fatuities and futilities!

FRANK HILL.

Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

Correspondence

AS OTHERS SEE US

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—I see that Athoso Zenoo has pounced in a good humoured way upon a recent article of mine in the *Freethinker*, entitled "As Others See Us." What he says is interesting enough in itself, but it is difficult to see its precise bearing upon my article; and I fear that casual reading does not explain the discrepancy, because he appears to have read the article three times. I am represented as an "apologist for the British Medical Profession." But I was not apologizing for anything, nor defending anything. The particular charges that prompted me to write did not seem to call for defence, but merely for comment.

When Athoso Zenoo says, "There is much in the Medical Profession that is very similar in nature to some of the evil features of Religion," we must agree with him. But that contention was never questioned. What excited comment was a wild development of it. And when all is said and done, how difficult it is for us to keep the balanced outlook and the sober word! Even Athoso Zenoo himself goes off the rails with "If to be 'broad, tolerant, urbane, cosmopolitan' means that we must refrain from criticizing the Medical Profession . . . etc." Dear me! It reminds me of the man who is pulled up for some excess of language and replies with, "Then must I not talk at all?"

The object of my article was to remind ourselves not to let our feelings run away with our judgment and the sobriety of our language. That was all. If I had been concerned to defend the honour of the Medical Profession I would surely have discussed that. If it is any consolation to Athoso Zenoo, I am perhaps more painfully aware than he is of the quasi-religious taint in the Profession. A sober exposition of it would make an interesting article. But we get nowhere with a passionate explosion.

MEDICUS.

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RATIONALIST EVALUATIONS AND THE TRUE DIRECTION OF CIVILIZATION

By AUSTEN VERNEY.

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