

# THE FREETHINKER

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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### Rome and "Modernism"

A RECENT issue of our Humanist contemporary, *The Plain View*, expressed the opinion that Christianity had a much better chance of survival and demonstrated much more adaptability to modern conditions than does any other contemporary religion. This view seems to us both a probable view and a useful reminder, since it is always a mistake to underestimate one's opponents. When, however, the writer of the article went on to indicate that, in his opinion, Protestantism was more adaptable than Roman Catholicism, he seemed to us to be subscribing to an old fashioned view. The idea that the Church of Rome is a hide-bound, stick-in-the-mud organisation with an immovable outlook, "forever the same" ("*semper eadem*") represents, no doubt, what the Church of Rome wishes the world and, in particular, its own adherents to believe, but, actually, it is very far from the truth. It would, in our submission, be much more accurate to describe the nineteen centuries' evolution of the Roman Catholic Church as one long process of adaptation, one continuous manifestation of "The Will to Keep Alive."

As we have remarked before in this column, it was not, perhaps, an accident that Lamarck, the original promulgator of the theory of "creative evolution," was himself a pupil of the Jesuits. Indeed, Lamarck's hypothetical giraffe which deliberately "grew a long neck" in order to survive in the competitive battle for life, was only an effective symbol of the famous Order which educated the French naturalist!

In his masterly *Histoire des Dogmes (History of Dogma)*, probably the greatest critical work ever written on Catholic dogma and its evolution, Joseph Turmel has effectively demonstrated by an exclusive use of the Catholic sources themselves, that virtually every doctrine now taught by the "unchanging" Church of Rome was either unknown or was actually regarded as heretical at an earlier stage in the evolution of the Church as the learned author has effectively demonstrated, for example, the present Canon of the Mass itself was drawn up by theologians who knew nothing about the present dogma of Transubstantiation and, by implication, actually excludes it. Similarly, in the original theology of the Church, the damned did not go to Hell until after the Resurrection of the Body which was then subjected to fiery torments. Whereas, according to present teaching, it is the immortal and immaterial "soul" that goes straight to Hell. Though how a spirit which is, by definition, intangible and immaterial, can even be conscious of, much less tormented by, the exclusively material sensation of heat, is a mystery which does not appear capable of any rational solution. The acutest minds in the Church itself have been baffled by the grotesque contradiction involved. In which connection one cannot but agree with the famous Jesuit, Denis Petau, who summarised the situation admirably in his masterly observation that, "to torment an immaterial spirit with material fire is as in-

herently impossible as it would be to paint a smell"! An unanswerable deduction with which, we take it, all Rationalists will agree!

The evolution of Catholic dogma has, in fact, been so drastic that orthodoxy and heterodoxy have frequently changed places. For example, Origen, the most learned of the Fathers of the Church, was posthumously condemned for heresy and excluded from the number of the Saints for promulgating doctrines which were the commonplaces of orthodoxy in his own life-time. The famous Abelard, as Joseph McCabe has convincingly argued in his fine book on that French theologian, was condemned for heresy and forced to recant under pain of death for views which are now the commonplace of "Catholic Evidence." Even the great St. Thomas himself, now officially accepted by the Vatican as the high watermark of religious orthodoxy, was suspected of heresy in his life-time and his system was condemned as heretical by his own University, Paris, by the University of Oxford, and by the then Archbishop of Canterbury within a few years of his death. Ignatius Loyola, without whom the Church of Rome could hardly have survived the stormy era of the Reformation, was imprisoned by the Inquisition on account of the Mohammedan doctrines which he introduced into his *Spiritual Exercises*, now the text-book of militant Catholicism, and was lucky to escape the stake.

Nor has Rome stopped evolving in more modern times. Adam Möhler, one of the most famous of modern Catholic theologians, explicitly declared in his famous summary of Catholic doctrine entitled *Symbolism*, that Papal Infallibility, not yet then officially recognised, was a pernicious heresy, the very negation of Catholicism's corporate character which would certainly ruin the Church if it was ever adopted. That was in 1829; in 1870 the "heresy" of Möhler and of many earlier theologians, was infallibly proclaimed. When, in 1864, the Pope proclaimed the dogma of The Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, he thereby pronounced St. Thomas Aquinas a heretic, since the greatest of Catholic doctors had discussed and explicitly rejected this dogma. Were St. Thomas to return to this world to-day he would either have to submit on this point or face excommunication and prospective damnation. Yet we still find people who say that Rome never changes!

In actuality the evolution of Roman Catholicism conforms very closely with the principle enunciated by John Henry Newman in his greatest work, *The Development of Christian Doctrine*: "to live is to change; to be perfect is to have changed often." Yet Newman, as readers of the great Cardinal's biography will recall, narrowly escaped excommunication on account of the then novel but now universally accepted theory of historical and theological development which he advanced in his famous book.

We recently had occasion to read a very interesting account of the modernist movement which ran a brief

but sensational course in the Church of Rome in the early years of this century: *The Modernist Movement in the Church of Rome* by the Rev. Canon A. R. Vidler. Canon Vidler is an Anglican clergyman of a scholarly type which seems to be coming increasingly rare in the Anglican Church, and he gives a very well-informed account of a movement which attracted a good deal of attention in both religious and rationalistic circles during the first decade of the present century. The Modernist Movement, largely French in origin and drawn from the most intellectual circles amongst the Roman clergy, wished to "reconcile" the Church with modern scientific and historical teaching; in particular, it sought to secure the acceptance of modern Biblical criticism by the traditionalist theology; since the best-known modernist writer, the French Professor Alfred Loisy, was a New Testament scholar of the first rank.

The modernist movement was confined to a narrow circle of intellectuals and never had any mass-following amongst the Catholic laity. Consequently, the ultra-reactionary Pope Pius X—1903-14—had no difficulty in suppressing the movement, which he did in a very drastic manner; the modernist leaders were thrown out of the Church neck and crop, and an "anti-modernist" oath was imposed upon all Catholic clergy which is, we believe, still in force to-day. For his services in eradicating the weed of heresy from the theological Garden of Eden, Pope Pius has recently been beatified and will, no doubt, end up in the ranks of the officially canonised saints. How much the pious Pope himself knew about the Biblical criticism which he condemned is indicated by his memorable declaration that the Hebrew patriarchs were comforted in their afflictions by their foreknowledge of The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin!

Modernism has now been driven underground; a Roman equivalent of Bishop Barnes would be impossible. However, it is unlikely that we have heard the last of modernism. Indeed, as we have pointed out in this column, recent pronouncements from the Vatican on Evolution and the Age of the Earth indicate that Rome is cautiously assimilating such parts of the modernist programme as are not too violently opposed to her traditional teaching. No doubt she will continue to do so since "to live is to change."

Were M. Loisy and his modernist colleagues to re-visit the Vatican in, say, A.D. 3000, they would probably find that the Church of Rome had assimilated most of their suggested reforms; that is, of course, if there is still a Church of Rome left by the year A.D. 3000, which is, perhaps, doubtful?

F. A. RIDLEY.

### FREETHOUGHT IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY FRANCE

THE heretical Jansenists and political Gallicans in pre-revolutionary France denounced Papal pretensions and royal despotism. They thus prepared men's minds for the opinions expressed by Voltaire and Montesquieu, who had sojourned in England to study our island's customs and beliefs before composing the writings they afterwards issued in France. But the century was well advanced before their philosophic evangel made any deep impression in their country.

Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* appeared in 1721, thus heralding the publications of the Encyclopædists. These brilliant epistles satirised the follies of the time, and to circumvent the French censorship were pretended as

Oriental productions. As Dr. Nielsen avers in his *History of the Papacy in the XIXth Century* (Murray, 1906): "In those famous letters the author allows his wit to play at the expense of 'the ancient idol before which people are accustomed to strew incense;' of 'the magician who makes the King believe that Three are only One and that bread which is eaten is not bread, and wine which is drunk is not wine.' They contain attacks on the celibacy of the clergy, and the life of the convent, upon the Confessional and the Inquisition, and biting mockery over the account of the Fall and Christ's miraculous birth." The book was issued anonymously and although printed at Rouen the title page bore the imprint of Amsterdam. The *Letters* passed the censorship and were extensively read, but the *Philosophical Letters* of Voltaire were less fortunate although this work also appeared with a Dutch imprint. The Parliament of Paris ordered its destruction, and Voltaire in order to escape arrest sought refuge with a friend. Yet later, despite *La Pucelle*, Cardinal Henry, who aspired to succeed Clement XII as Pope, requested the witty Voltaire to exercise his pungent pen against the Jansenists as a step towards that ambition. Voltaire undertook the task, but before he had completed many pages consigned the manuscript to the flames. Needless to state, the Cardinal was extremely exasperated.

After Henry's death, D'Argenson persuaded the Government to tolerate the expression of sceptical opinions, and for a brief period the Freethinkers were fairly free from restraint so long as they did not antagonise the Jesuits, who were still very influential at Court. Voltaire, who was educated in a Jesuit College, was an accomplished diplomatist and he knew how to flatter his preceptors, with whose sinister methods he was familiar. He also pleased the Pope Benedict XIV by dedicating his drama, *Mahomet*, to him. Indeed, the Holy Father sent him "a mirthful and most gracious letter of thanks for the dedication." And although the performance of Voltaire's play was still prohibited in Paris he was greatly gratified when two of his dramas were staged at Versailles at the Dauphin's wedding in 1745. He was also appointed royal historiographer, and Louis XV granted him permission to apply for membership of the French Academy.

To gain this honour, however, Voltaire had to court the good graces of the all-powerful Jesuits, and in a letter he actually pretended a heartfelt admiration for Loyola's disciples which he certainly never experienced. But their power was so great, largely owing to their machinations as Confessors to exalted personages, that Voltaire, one of mankind's greatest intellectual liberators, was constrained to conceal his real convictions for safety's sake. Still his admission to the Academy, otherwise unobtainable, enabled him to render priceless services to humanism, while the works of La Mettrie, Holbach, Diderot and other philosophers were being consigned to the flames by order of the Parliament of Paris.

Despite the obscurantism of the authorities, Free-thought gained ground and Montesquieu followed his *Persian Letters* with his *Spirit of the Laws* in 1748. This work aroused intense excitement in clerical circles and Jesuits and Jansenists alike strove to suppress it. But Montesquieu had influential supporters. As Sorel testifies, twenty-one editions were published in less than two years and it was translated into many languages, and when at last in 1752 it was placed on the Roman index of prohibited books, its fame was so far-reaching that the Papal prohibition was ignored by the reading public.

As the century advanced, successive volumes of the *Encyclopedia* appeared. But articles concerning

theological themes were apparently so mild and conciliatory that Voltaire complained that they might have been composed for an ecclesiastical publication. So D. Alembert consoled the Sage of Ferney by referring him to less conspicuous essays in which seeming concessions were withdrawn. Diderot, the chief editor of the *Encyclopedia*, reminded Voltaire that discriminating readers would distinguish the difference between the real convictions of compromising writers and the opinions they appeared to favour. This artifice, however, did not deceive the clericals, and the Archbishop of Paris asserted that daring expositors were distilling infidel poison with deplorable success. Jansenists and Jesuits angrily urged the authorities to suppress the pestilent *Encyclopedia* and their efforts were rewarded when the second volume was published, for both parts were confiscated by the Crown.

But the Freethought contained in the condemned volumes although originally restricted to cultured and fashionable circles became, despite all interference, diffused throughout all sections of the community. Not only was the Catholic Church assailed as a mischievous burden, for the throne itself became discredited. Severe taxation, a harsh winter, an appalling famine and the ostentatious extravagance of Louis XV's Court, all contributed to the spread of republican sentiments. The altar and the throne lost caste together. The foundations of the coming French Revolution were thus firmly laid as both Church and King became the targets of popular ridicule and contempt.

T. F. PALMER.

### FRANK PRICE

THE many friends of Frank Price in all parts of the country will be sorry to learn of his sudden death at his home in Slough.

Frank Price was one of the most enthusiastic and informed Freethinkers and N.S.S. member in the country. It was he who got the few of us together in Chester-le-Street to form the first branch of the National Secular Society in the town. From the branch "missions" to all the surrounding towns and villages soon made quite a lot of progress, and the North-Eastern Federation of N.S.S. Branches came into existence. When, in the great miners' and general strike in 1926, the only reading room in the town closed, it was Frank Price who secured, and furnished, the Secular Society Club and reading room. Here there was a library, daily and weekly papers, and lectures, debates and discussions. It very soon became the object of attack from every pulpit in the town. Countless sermons were preached against us, and special missions and prayer meetings arranged to counteract the activities of the newly-formed Society. The local press too took a hand, and the whole of the area discussed the Chester-le-Street Secularists and Frank Price. However, I still have one record of those stirring times in the shape of a letter from the Rector of the parish, in which he states that he wished there were several hundreds more like the handful of Secularists in the town. That would be far better than the "lazy slack-minded indifference" so prevalent in religious bodies.

The services of the late Tom Dufty, the printer, were enlisted, and stacks of leaflets, mostly written by Price and myself were printed, and Frank went round the country distributing them, and arranging for me to lecture in the villages. I was then lecturing four and five times every week, and always Frank Price was there discussing until the last bus left for home.

During the fight for the right to speak in Durham City, as mentioned by Chapman Cohen in his *Almost an Autobiography*, Frank Price was the sole companion of myself in the rough times we experienced. The Press referred to him extensively as the "one-armed Atheist." He had lost an arm in the first World War. He worked hard and long for the cause, but when his health was endangered by his work below ground in the mine, he left for Slough, where he still kept up his fight for freedom of thought and Secularism, but with his impaired health his efforts were not so strenuous as before. Few men have rendered so much useful service to any movement in the way that Frank Price did, and few men expected less, or got less in return for it. His name will live so long as Freethought lives in N.E. England.

JOHN T. BRIGHTON.

[Mr. J. T. Brighton sends us this tribute to his late colleague.—EDITOR.]

### THEATRE

"Red Letter Day." By Andrew Rosenthal. Garrick Theatre. ANOTHER play by the author of *Third Person* should lead us to anticipate great ideas, but this deals with nothing more exciting than a woman who celebrates her fiftieth birthday making a vain attempt to take off the years and to close her eyes to the inevitable future of gradually increasing age.

She has already alienated her elder son by cold-shouldering her daughter-in-law, although she knows that she is to receive the title of grandmother within a few months. Her husband has left her, although he returns on such festive occasions as her first half-century, and she cannot bear to see her daughter growing up and putting up her hair. In fact she is irritated by any reminder of her birthday and the entering into her second half-century.

Perhaps no one less than Fay Compton could have depicted this woman successfully, and her mental distress of having to face her age. She is well supported by Hugh Williams in a subtle and fine performance, and Nora Swinburne who can move about the stage as lithely as a cat though more graciously. But for these leading players I fear Mr. Rosenthal's play would fall somewhat flat, for though it has less technical imperfections than *Third Person*, his writing has not the power to put over this idea for a full length play. Great assistance is also given by the rest of the cast, which includes Dorothy Dickson, June Thorburn, Elizabeth Henson and juvenile Jimmy Verner. Donald Sinden, in a small part as a Brazilian lover, gives a remarkable cameo performance.

Murray MacDonald's production runs smoothly.

RAYMOND DOUGLAS.

### MUSSADEQ NEXT?

The best that can be said of the fanatical religious organisation, Fadiyan Islam, which recently issued a threat against the life of the Iranian Premier, Dr. Mussadeq, is that it is comparatively impartial in its selection of possible victims.

On its own admission it was responsible for the assassination of General Ali Razmara, one of the best intentioned and enlightened Ministers in Iran for many years. Earlier in November, 1949, Abdul Hussain Hazhir, former Premier, was assassinated during a religious ceremony at a mosque. The Fadiyan Islam is a fanatical body of Muslims which is, among other things, dedicated to the cause of exterminating Western influence from Iran. Although Dr. Mussadeq has more than anyone else the right to pose as a fanatical exponent of anti-Western sentiment, he has apparently failed to live up to the exacting standards of the Fadiyan Islam.

### ACID DROPS

It is well known that intending climbers of Mt. Everest, allegedly the highest mountain in the world, have had their difficulties greatly increased by local superstitions. It is believed that the Hindu god, Shiva, resides on the top of Everest and will take drastic action against any sacrilegious intruders on his hide out. Quite like old times in Europe, where Jupiter inhabited Mt. Olympus in Greece—until some bold fellow climbed it! Similarly, when Everest is, at last, climbed, Shiva will have been found to have moved on—off the earth, presumably, since he cannot go any higher and still remain on it. As knowledge advances, the gods retreat!

**Our contemporary, the *News Chronicle***—March 10, 1952—reports that “The Vatican has discovered that two photographs of the sun spinning,” published by its newspaper, *Osservatore Romano*, were fakes. The photographs purported to show how the sun appeared over Fatima (Portugal) in October, 1917, when the Virgin is said to have appeared there. A Vatican official said last night: “We regretfully admit that we were duped.” We think so, too!

**The “Daily Telegraph”**—February 2, 1952—comes out with the categorical statement: “No communist could, without perjury, become or remain a clergyman.” We are anxiously awaiting confirmation of the rumour that the “Red Dean” intends to institute proceedings for libel.

**At a revivalist meeting** in “The Middle West” (U.S.A.), Billy Sunday, noted American evangelist and soul saver, concluded a fervid sermon by urging his flock to keep silence and await “the still small voice of the Lord.” A tense silence followed, which was finally broken by a drawling voice which intoned: “We all know what a Colorado beetle is when we see one.” The local Natural History Society was in session next door.

**Bendigo**, a famous prize fighter who flourished about a century ago, and gave his name to a town in Australia, was noted for his dirty tactics in the ring. After quitting the pugilistic profession, Bendigo went in for religious revivalism. In which capacity, one of his former aristocratic patrons came across Bendigo holding forth to an open-air meeting. “Hullo, Bendy, what are you doing here?” inquired his lordship. “My lord,” replied the ex-champion, “I am now fighting Satan, and scripture assures me that victory will be mine.” “I hope so, Bendy,” answered his lordship, “but I hope that you fight Satan more fairly than you did Ben Caunt. Otherwise, all my sympathies are with Old Nick.”

**A newly-arrived traveller** at Paddington hailed a taxi. “Please drive me to the courts of justice,” he told the driver. “Never heard of them, sir,” replied the driver. “What, you’ve never heard of the courts of justice?” “No, sir, never heard of any courts of justice.” “You are a Londoner?” “Yes, sir.” “Then, surely you know your way to the Law Courts?” “Oh, it’s the Law Courts you want, is it? I know where *they* are; why didn’t you say so before? The Law Courts are in the Strand, but courts of justice—never heard of them!”

**The Sabbatarians** we always have with us, and we are forced—alas—to endure them, but to our surprise we still have the temperance crank in all his glory scotching anything he disagrees with. The other day, an ice cream vendor thought he could give ice cream a little more kick by adding a touch of alcohol to it—a little cherry brandy,

to be precise, or benedictine, or some other liqueur. When he applied for a licence, he found (as he should have expected) a number of parsons as well as a grocer with an off-licence and a temperance society chief, literally horrified at this contamination of good ice cream.

**The parson, who is a Methodist**, probably having in mind not only the liqueur, but also the crime that an alcoholic ice might be eaten on the Lord’s Day, a monstrous thing to contemplate, said that the ultimate object “is to make an innocent sweetmeat potentially dangerous,” and that the clergy looks upon “this application as an insidious attack on the social and moral habits of young people”—thus making it also impossible for “old” people to have their morals corrupted by a drop of cherry brandy. And England is still called the “land of the free.” The ice cream vendor thought it was all “dispiriting”!

**The “gloom, gloom” charge** brought by the *Daily Express* against the dreadful programme the B.B.C. thought it right to inflict listeners with after the death of George VI, appears to have compelled the Corporation to issue a “quiz” to a number of people who are supposed to know all the listeners’ answers. The *Daily Express* followed suit with a number of similar questions and the answers should prove highly stimulating. So far one thing has emerged—the B.B.C. will not again be in such a hurry to do what it likes utterly regardless of listeners who, after all, pay the piper, a point so often completely disregarded by the powers that be.

**A little discussion** is now engaging some of our well-known Spiritualists as to whether the more modern brand of spook believers are, or are not, trying to prove that Spiritualism and Christianity are synonymous. Mr. Shaw Desmond who is nothing if not a Christian, has come to the conclusion that mediums actually do *not* see spirits, but only “thought forms,” which makes us wonder what Mrs. Roberts saw when, at the meeting convened after the death of Conan Doyle, she said that there he was sitting in a dress suit on the empty chair on the platform. Mr. H. Boddington, an ardent Spiritualist, appears to dislike all this disagreement, and wants his fellow believers to read J. M. Robertson’s *Pagan Christs* and Frazer’s *Golden Bough*.

**If they don’t do something about it**, Mr. Boddington declares, Spiritualism may go the way of Christianity. “The same paralysis,” he adds, “that has emptied Christian churches everywhere must inevitably overwhelm sectarian (Spiritualist) evangelists also.” But surely there is some difference? After all, any Spiritualist platform can produce a “spirit” almost at will, to say nothing of apports, materialisations, trumpet voices, ectoplasm, levitations, hundreds of languages, as well as miracles of healing, especially incurable cases. No Christian Church can do any of these things. But perhaps Mr. Boddington is beginning just a weeny bit to waver?

**Just one precious example in proof.** We have books detailing what the spirits of Thomas Paine, Charles Dickens, Bernard Shaw, William Shakespeare, Francis Bacon, Oscar Wilde, and other famous men have said—well, *Two Worlds* has just published an article describing an interview with the spirit of Sir Walter Scott. Now no Christian Church could equal this remarkable “call up,” and therefore no one need wonder why Spiritualism is making such headway. To be able to speak to Scott, Dickens, and Shakespeare—gosh! What an event! Why, this actually beats the B.B.C. Third Programme—or does it?

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

Lecture Notices should reach the Office by Friday morning.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, giving as long notice as possible.

## SUGAR PLUMS

Mr. C. G. L. Du Cann needs no introduction to readers of *The Freethinker*. His highly individual style and witty paradoxes have long marked him out as one of the most eloquent and original of our contributors. Mr. Du Cann's all too rare appearances in our columns are always looked forward to and welcomed by both the Editor and, we are sure, by our readers in general. This eloquent and urbane writer has just issued a new volume: *Maxims and Paradoxes being Confessions of a Dead Self* (Anchor Press, 119, Ewell Road, Surbiton, Surrey; 2s. 6d.). In this slender volume packed with wit and wisdom our author gives us in sparkling epigrams the essence of his philosophy. A review of Mr. Du Cann's new book will appear in an early issue of *The Freethinker*. Meanwhile, we urge our readers to "go to it."

The Streatham Debating Society, one of the best-known debating societies in the metropolis, has requested the National Secular Society to nominate a speaker to put the Secularist point of view in a debate to be held at its headquarters, the White Lion Hotel, Streatham, S.W., on Friday, March 28, at 7-45 p.m. The E.C. of the N.S.S. has accepted the challenge, and has nominated Mr. F. A. Ridley to represent it. Accordingly, the protagonists on March 28 will be the Rev. Dr. J. Crowley, Roman Catholic Rector of the Church of *The English Martyrs*, who will affirm: "That Christian teaching logically applied can solve the world's problems," and Mr. F. A. Ridley, Editor of *The Freethinker*, who will oppose. We understand that time will be found for questions and discussion, and we hope that the Secularist point of view will be strongly represented in and by the audience.

## FELINE FELICITY

The cat has lived among mankind

Time out of mind;

She knows not what mankind will do—

No more than you.

Does pussy care?

She only seems to sleep and purr.

Should we not imitate the cat,

And leave Man's Destiny at that?

B. S.

## FALLACY OF HINDU THOUGHT—A CRITIQUE OF INDIAN RELIGION

THERE is absolutely no reason to think that human life is given supreme value when man is placed on a religious foundation and not on the surer foundation of human

## "THE FREETHINKER" FUND

Donations for week ended Saturday, March 15, 1952:—

A. Hancock, 1s.; Birmingham Branch N.S.S., £3; F. Wright, 5s.; Mr. Askew, 10s.

Total for week: £3 16s. 0d.

Total received to date: £477 15s. 5d.

nature. In fact, man will come to his own and find his proper place in harmonious and co-operative social life only when he will think and behave consciously and realistically, and not as religion enjoins him to do. Religious morality is a treacherous foundation of social life. Society went to pieces when such religions ceased to be the accepted creed of the court.

Yet arguments are not wanting in favour of religion. Modern prophets claim that religion has raised man to the divine level. But is man to be respected as the son of the "Immortal One" and not as a human being? Is it not futile to think that we give men the highest value in this way? Man's distinctive mark is his individuality, the uniqueness of each human personality; which is not conditional upon anything else. Man is free.

Coming out of the orthodox rigidity of Brahminism one breathes relative freedom in the heretical preachings of Buddha. But one should have no illusions about what essentially is Buddhism's message which is Nirvana, or, in other words, freedom from the "Cycle of birth." To a contemporary mind, free from religious predispositions, the ideal has certainly no appeal; for "if the best thing in the world is not to be born at all," as one Cynic Philosopher remarked, the purpose can best be served with the help of modern methods of birth control. Secondly, Buddhism declined because it failed to recognise the natural dispositions of man. Asceticism is an ideal hardly worth achieving in life. Thirdly, Buddhism's view of society must be rejected from sheer practical considerations. Undoubtedly, Buddhism merits some consideration in view of its regard for the spirit of man; but the *spirit* of man is after all the sum total of all human faculties—a fact which no religion in the world has been able to grasp adequately. It is sheer fighting the ghost to try to get rid of the Cycle of life. The Buddhist way of life is not realistic. There is nothing contemptible in the desire to satisfy the needs of one's physical existence and social life. But the attempt to do away with all desires or the very desire of self-effacement—making too much of a fear which is unnecessary—is something which runs counter to the purpose of human life. What we need is a harmony in life—not escape from it.

Our conscious mind yields to the laws of reasoning and scientific thinking; while religion comes from the subconscious mind which is the deposit of our age-long traditions and social tabus. That is why a religious mind is intolerant of opposite views. The true measure of spiritual progress is cultural development and not divine inspiration. Such Hindus are not rare, I know, who, in the light of modern enlightenment would try to prove, from sufficient scriptural evidence, no doubt, that the Hindu view of "soul" is not altogether archaic. Nevertheless, to my mind such a soul is only a part of the Universal soul and not the unique essence of the individual; and has, therefore, nothing to do with his mental and spiritual development. A comparatively modern student of philosophy, somehow inclined towards the ancient wisdom of his forefathers, would, with a sufficient rehash of this archaic doctrine of soul explain it as an attitude of one's own self to his self. Such an explanation is however, obviously dismissible because of its inadequacy

and can seldom find its place in a humanistic philosophy of life.

So mind is not indestructible and soul is nothing but the uniqueness of each human personality. How does a body come back when it is obviously burnt to ashes?—asked an Indian philosopher. Nothing survives of the individual after death, and the idea of a cycle of life is meaningless.

Culture, then, is something material and has nothing to do with spiritualism; Humanism and Spiritualism are not identical. Spiritualism begins where man transcends himself; it is a transcendental philosophy; Humanism places man above all things, even as the Vaishnava poet would do. The one comes from a conception of life hereafter—an eschatological view altogether—a view, moreover, which comes from a mental perversion; the other is a positive attitude towards life, meant to bring about a social, cultural, economic and political reorientation of our life in this world; the one leaves man in the fog of mysticism, the other helps him to create his own world with a healthy mind and systematic thinking: the one denies human faculties, the other seeks to fulfil them. In short, one is metaphysical, the other is a scientific philosophy of life. The former naturally looks doubtfully upon the creative faculty of individual thinking—free and unrestrained by traditions. The latter, on the other hand, rests upon it. Individual freedom, not of the reckless anarchic variety, is the corner-stone of the latter. Such a freedom has social and individual character. It is social, because it is shared by all and respects others' freedom as well; while, at the same time, it does not subordinate the individual to the collective.

Self-realisation or consciousness of one's own self is the core of philosophic thinking—and this realisation is life's highest fulfilment. But self-realisation, in Hindu thought, means realisation of oneself in God, for God is Universal soul—the first principle and final cause of the individual self. This heavenward flight of philosophical thought is unrealistic and runs counter to all purposes of life. Nevertheless, this is the apparent way of thinking of an average Hindu. It is said in the "Mundaka Upanishad" that self is in the Brahman who encloses within himself all space—this Universe and beyond, to whom is given over soul and life; know this self alone leaving everything else, for this knowledge of self alone is the road to immortality. Knowledge of self in the Brahman is thus complete in itself, it is absolute. This self-realisation in Brahman is the realisation of God, to which not only Mundaka but also Sankaracharya\* bears testimony when he says: "Jallavannaparo lavo jat sukhannaparam sukham Jajjannaparam jnam tad brahmetyavadarayet." Knowledge of Brahma is that knowledge which, when attained, leaves no other desire for anything else in mind; when any other happiness pales into insignificance and renders all other knowledge unnecessary. It is clear from this therefore that such ideas about self-realisation can not be included into any Humanist philosophy of life.

GOBINDA DAS GHOSH.

(To be concluded)

\* The Founder of modern Hinduism—9th century—Editor.

### REVIEW

Thrift Books, **From Magic to Modern Medicine.** By S. G. Blaxland Stubbs. Price 1s. net. (Watts.)

*From Magic to Modern Medicine* crams into less than one hundred pages a history of the development of medicine from the earliest times to the present day. The book is divided into thirteen sections, each section dealing with a vast province of medical history. Mr. Stubbs refers

to the evidence of archaeology which indicates the existence of some sort of surgery even amongst the earliest of man's ancestors.

Apparently, the skulls with holes and incisions in them that have been dug up tend to give weight to the view that early man believed that surgery on his skull would enable the evil spirits which afflicted him to depart! It is not accidental that medicine improved its methods as superstition receded before the advance of science and philosophy. In fact, as the codification of laws, the evolution of the rudiments of science proceeded in ancient times, so, too, did the advancement of medical knowledge.

Mr. Stubbs deals briefly with the hygiene as taught in the Bible, and points out that the Jews developed a very advanced system of ritual hygiene and cleanliness in their religion. The most striking example of this is, of course, the references to quarantine for "infected persons" which are to be found in the Book of Leviticus.

Mr. Stubbs very rightly draws our attention to the decline of medical knowledge during the time that followed the dissolution of the Greek and Roman world. It was only with the fall of Constantinople in 1453 that modern medicine began to take shape. For the great intellectual treasures of Greek thought which had been preserved first in the Byzantine and then the Turk Empires came into contact with the Christian West for the first time. The "dead hand of Galen" did, however, weigh upon popular medicine until the beginning of the 17th century.

In the section dealing with the "Beginnings of Modern Medicine," Mr. Stubbs traces the development of the Royal College of Physicians, founded in 1518, the work of Francis Bacon and Paracelsus and the strange companies which coped with surgery and barbering.

It was only in the 19th century that medicine as we know it came into being. Through the patient work of research it was possible to discover the germs that were responsible for the plagues and diseases that hitherto were inexplicable. Great names like Pasteur and Koch make the history of medicine during the last century both illuminating and fascinating. For, on the foundations of the work of these pioneers in the fields of medicine, hygiene, bacteriology and preventive medicine, the 20th century has been able to make advances comparable with those in physics. One has but to refer to penicillin, vitamins and X-rays to realise the force of these remarks.

AKIBA.

### MANKIND ABHORS A VACUUM

It's a heap of old, mouldering muck, in decay,  
Encumb'ring my nice garden space;  
But the neighbours, who saw me shift it away,  
Said: "What will you put in its place?"

In a corner, a heap of old scrap-book waste,  
Like fag-ends from some large loom;  
But the family said: "Please do not shunt it in haste—  
"What will you put in its room?"

On the wall hangs a gaggle of grim wedding-guests,  
In an "Artistic" frame, o'er the bed;  
But Mum says: "Don't move it, although they're all pests,  
What could you put there instead?"

There's a Structure that's builded on false hopes and fears,  
Of "Sacrifice," "Faith," "Fear" and "Grace";  
Has stood in the pathway of progress for years,  
And now asks Mankind with sarcastic sneers—  
"What can you put in its place?"

ARTHUR E. CARPENTER.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

**CHURCH MARRIAGES**

SIR,—Young friends still come to me complaining about elderly parents who believe that a marriage in a Registry Office is not really quite legal, and yet a dog licence similarly obtained satisfies them perfectly, although this procedure involves no supernatural hocus-pocus.

Apparently, the true facts of the case cannot be too frequently published if the unpleasant friction which these mistaken ideas generate between young couples and their parents is ever to be got rid of.

To reiterate. A Church marriage *per se* has no legal validity whatever, unless the priest has bought a licence from the secular authorities authorising him to perform marriages.

Had the priest omitted to obtain this licence, even if he were an archbishop, the marriage in his cathedral, choir boys, press photographers, top hats and all, would be absolutely null and void.

"Those whom God has joined together" means just nothing in the eyes of the Law.

If marriages are only made in the Christian heaven this god must be the most accomplished bungler, and all wedded non-Christians since the first Mrs. Ape-man must have lived in sin. All these ancient superstitions would be funny if it were not for the troubles they produce.—Yours, etc.,

M. C. BROTHERTON, Comdr. R.N.

**VICTIMS OR PERSECUTORS?**

SIR,—In Mr. Hornibrook's very interesting and informative article re "The Pilgrim Fathers Debunked," he refers to intolerance and persecution, saying, "Especially the Quakers."

Does he mean that Quakers were victims or persecutors? Will he kindly specify incidents?—Yours, etc.,

C. E. RATCLIFFE.

**THE MAPAM AND GERMANY**

SIR,—Fundamentally, no difference exists at all between what Mr. Gaffin calls "the virtually Fascist Cherut Party" and the Mapam on the question of negotiations with German authorities.

Like the Cherut Party and the majority of Zionist organisations the Mapam believes that the Germans, *as a race*, are guilty of the enormities committed against the Jewish people during the last war. The view that nations or races are guilty of the crimes of superstitious minorities is shared by all the important Zionist tendencies in Israel, the Mapam included.

I note that Mr. Gaffin is opposed to "a political rapprochement between Germany and the Jews and recognition by Israel of the Bonn regime." He is, however, in favour, I presume, of a rapprochement between Eastern Germany and Israel. In this he is quite inconsistent, for if the Germans as a nation or race are to be held guilty of the massacre of five million Jews, why are the East Germans exempt from this sweeping condemnation? Is it, perhaps, because Mr. Gaffin's views approximate to those of the Eastern German Government? If this is the case, why does he not make this clear?—Yours, etc.,

"AKIBA."

**GOD SAVE THE KING CORRESPONDENCE**

SIR,—Re your article in last week's *Freethinker*, I think you will be interested to read the enclosed cutting of our local newspaper, *The Bolton Evening News*, about the origin of the "God Save the King."

"The ABC of our National Anthem: (a) The words, declared Viscount Snowden in Parliament in 1931, are no part of the National Anthem. The anthem is the tune itself. The origin of the words is based upon the phrase 'God Save the King' in the Old Testament. It was the Navy's watch-word in 1545, and the countersign was 'long reign over us.' How the familiar lines were put together is not known.

(b) The music has ancient origins, but its present form has been ascribed to John Bull (1562-1628), a celebrated musician of his day.

(c) The *Oxford Companion to Music* says the first known association of the words, or something like them, was in 1744, and great use was made of the song in 1745, the year of the landing of the Young Pretender; its popularity dates from this period. The *Oxford Companion* says the anthem has no one composer, and the music is likely the recasting of a folk tune."—Yours, etc.,

JEAN TONDIC.

**BEVERLEY DEBUNKED**

[The following letter was sent to the Editor, "Sunday Chronicle," by our contributor, "Luke Straight," needless to say, it did not appear.—Ed.]

SIR,—All religions are born of ignorance, founded on fear, buttressed by superstition and sustained by self-interest. Whatever may be agreed upon and accepted as basic Christianity is no more

authentic or authoritative than any other of the world's religious theories, mostly of far greater antiquity. Gods and devils, angels and spirits, heaven and hell, are as much creations of the human mind and figments of the human imagination, as are fairies, etc.

Your series of "blurbs" by Beverley Nichols will have achieved little result one imagines and that probably not of the kind intended. What B.N. has most effectively demonstrated is the multitudinous variety of religious ideas and concepts and the wide disagreement upon interpretations of these. It should be obvious to even the most hidebound believers that whilst *all* these ideas cannot be *right* and *true*, they could *all* be *wrong* and *false*.

It is noted that B.N. diatribes are to be dealt with by a leading Anglican and a leading Roman Catholic. As the Anglicans and Roman Catholics possibly comprise some 20 per cent. of this community and of your readers one is moved to ask who is going to respond on behalf of the remaining 80 per cent.? Agnostics, atheists, rationalists, freethinkers, unbelievers, sceptics, materialists and determinists, as well as indifferentists, are usually of the type who have seriously challenged and examined religious ideas and concepts. Should not these, in all fairness, have their reactions represented and expressed? The writer could nominate many responsible and intelligent individuals who would tear to shreds every argument which B.N. has advanced.

I do not anticipate that you will dare to publish this letter in anything like full text, even if you use it at all, but I choose to use a *nom-de-plume* because of the unwelcome, unmannerly and insulting attentions which I have suffered on occasion from irate believers whose faith is so small that they cannot bear their ideas to be challenged. I find Roman Catholics so anxious to ram their ideology down people's throats that they will send bundles of most ridiculous literature accompanied by vituperative and abusive scrawls. For this reason I subscribe myself—Yours, etc.

"LUKE STRAIGHT."

**LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.**

**OUTDOOR**

Kingston-on-Thames Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: J. W. BARKER.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (St. Mary's Gate, Blitzed Site).—Lunch-hour Lectures every weekday, 1 p.m. Speaker: G. WOODCOCK.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, 12 noon, J. M. ALEXANDER and W. G. FRASER.

Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barker's Pool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. A. SAMMS.

**INDOOR**

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-45 p.m.: Rev. J. ISRAELSTAM: A Lecture.

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, March 25, 7 p.m.: JAMES L. HENDERSON. "The Problem of Peace."

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: HECTOR HAWTON, "The New Irrationalism."

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Chorlton Town Hall, All Saints, Manchester).—Sunday, March 23, 7 p.m.: JOHN T. BRIGHTON, "A Modern Pilgrim's Progress."

Manchester Humanist Fellowship (Onward Hall, 207, Deansgate, Manchester, 3).—Saturday, March 22, 3 p.m.: Dr. B. A. WORTLEY, O.B.E., "The Rights of Man."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: Rev. F. H. POOLE, "The Valley of Life."

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: H. L. BEALES, M.A., "The Victorian Revival."

West London Branch N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, Marylebone, W.1).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: Debate: "Has Christianity Failed?" Aff., J. ROBINS: Neg., L. EBURY.

YUGOSLAV HOLIDAYS (Apr. to Oct.).—Dormitory accom. in hostels, camps of Yugoslav Trade Unions, Youth Movements, etc. Reductions for youth; family exchange. Write: Sec., 16, Doneraile House, Ebury Bridge, London, S.W.1. Send stamp; state holiday month.

## MULTATULI

MULTATULI—meaning “I have suffered much”—was the pen name of Eduard Douwes Dekker, a senior officer in the Dutch Colonial Service, but a rebel by temperament. Born in 1820 in Amsterdam into shabby-genteel surroundings, he was in the Dutch East Indies Colonial Service from 1838 to 1857, and died in 1887 in Germany, a broken-hearted exile but still a formidable opponent of his Government.

In the crucial year of 1848, he became Secretary of Menado, North Celebes, and three years later was made Assistant Resident of Amboina, an isle of the Moluccas. When in 1856 he was appointed Assistant Resident of Lebak (West Java), he imagined he could protect the natives both against their native princes and the crude exploitation by the Dutch Administration in Java. Needless to say that this champion of justice was quickly silenced and victimised by his superiors. He returned to Europe, but preferred, like H. Heine, whom he greatly admired, to fight reaction at home from a safer haven abroad. In a small room in a Brussels inn he wrote his autobiographical novel *Max Havelaar* (1860), exposing the scandals of the Dutch Government in Java, which caused quite a stir. The novel bore the queer sub-title *De Koffie-veilingen van de Nederlandsche Handelsmaatschappij* (the coffee auctions of the Dutch Trading Company), being a biting satire on the self-satisfied bourgeoisie of Holland who, whilst noisily protesting their Christianity, fattened on the labour of their colonial slaves.

Multatuli's style struck home through its directness, vividness and simple beauty. “Although I attended school, I try to write living Dutch,” he remarked.

In 1861 *Minnebrieven* (Love Letters) appeared, containing real and imaginary letters besides satirical tales and parables. A multifarious collection of aphorisms, parables, fairy tales and political essays was published between 1862-77 under the title *Ideën*. All his writings underline his passion for truth, his contempt for hypocrites and profiteers, narrow-mindedness, stereotyped conceptions, cliché, sham and tradition. They had immense influence with the rising generation through—what *Chamber's* calls—“their religiously, sociologically and politically subversive wit.”

An English translation is said to exist, but I have been unable to trace one in this country. Since Multatuli ought to be dear and near to every Secularist, I have translated from the Dutch a few short items.

A STORY OF POWER.—Said Voltaire: *Si Dieu n'existait pas, il faudrait l'inventer!*—Certainly. All power is derived from God. He who wants power, needs God; he who needs power, influence, invents some god—as Moses, Confucius, Zoroastre, Numa, Columbus, Cortez did. As all popular leaders, all augurers, magicians, clergymen, have done. Even nowadays this is done by anyone who wants to rule. The number of gods corresponds to the number of desires: each new greed calls forth another god. . . .

A servant girl was told by her lady to take the children for a walk, and to take great care of them. The children, however, enjoyed their freedom and ran away, and the poor girl was afraid lest all her care and watchfulness had been in vain.

Thereupon, from “nothing” she created a Black Hound that would bite such children as failed to stay near her. And the children, being scared of the Black Hound, became completely docile and stayed by her. And with

her mind's eye she beheld the god she had produced and she saw that he was good.

Yet the children grew mad with fear. And they have remained so to this day.

\* \* \*

The faithful make a god, ridiculously rigged-out, and if I laugh at it they call it blasphemy.

They are welcome to try and do the same to my god . . . please make fun of good old Nature, silly, smart, naive, almighty, ignorant, incalculable Nature.

You can't, you unlicensed God-Makers!

\* \* \*

Worship is necessary for the people.

If it is, why not vest parsons with the pay, rank and uniform of police constables?

\* \* \*

Jesus gave us many beautiful sayings. The beautiful things there are you can write on one side of a dollar note.

\* \* \*

He who does not work shall not eat, said the apostle and he ate. However, this was all the work he did.

He who does not work shall not eat, said an economist. And the hungry people replied: he who doesn't eat can't work.

He who does not work shall not eat, said a statescraft-man. And he wrote his memoirs as a politician.

He who does not work shall not eat, said a minister. And the unemployed retorted: nor shall he who deprives us of work.

\* \* \*

I know very few people who are able to read.

\* \* \*

There's no writer clever enough to fathom the stupidity of his readers.

\* \* \*

Any individual who allowed himself to do what the State does would be held criminal.

\* \* \*

TO MY CHILDREN (abridged).—Should I ever refer to my being your father—do laugh me to scorn! Should I demand filial obedience—jeer at me!

Should I expect love from you for . . . well, because—how shall I put it?—because something happened once when I did not consider you in the least; love for doing something prior to your existence . . .! If I ever demand your love for THAT . . . then you were entitled to be foul me.

Laugh me to scorn, deride me, hurl mud at me should I ever demand you love and obedience for THAT!

With or without biblical commands—your mother and I shall try to gain your love through love. Whoever is unable to do so has no right to be loved.

Children, you have nothing to be grateful for to me, save perhaps for what I've done for you since you were born; and even not for that. Love finds its reward in itself.

I long to see the day when you'll say: Daddy, we're so fond of you; it is quite unimportant that you happened to be our father!

\* \* \*

“You can see, sonny, how well everything is arranged by Providence. The bird lays her egg in her nest and the young will hatch out about the time when there are little worms and little flies to feed on. Then the little birds will sing praise to their Creator, our Lord, who bestows so many blessings on His creatures. . . .”

—Do worms sing praise too, daddy?

(Translated and introduced by P. G. ROY.)