

CORRESPONDENCE.

MAZDAISM OR ZOROASTRIANISM.

To the Editor of the Open Court :

I am very much pleased to read the very interesting article on "Mazdaism" in *The Open Court* (March, 1897), and hope that you will kindly permit me to make some friendly remarks thereon.

"Ahura Mazda, the Lord Omniscient," has no form or representation in Zoroastrianism, except, perhaps, the sun, which is the visible symbol of the Invisible One. The representation given at the beginning of the article, which is often without the body, and is sometimes called *Scarahæus*, represented since antiquity, and it still represents, *Fravashi* or *Ferouer*. De Mirville, author of *Mémoires à l'Académie*, says: "Here we have the two heroes of the Old Testament, the Verbum (?) or the *second* Jehovah, and his *face* ('Presence,' as the Protestants translate) forming both but one, and yet being two, a mystery which seemed to us unsolvable before we have studied the doctrine of the Mazdean Ferouers, and learned that the Ferouer was the spiritual potency at once *image, face*, and the *guardian* of the soul, which finally assimilates the Ferouer." (Vol. V., p. 516.) It is the inner immortal man or true Ego which existed before its physical body, and survives all such bodies it happens to be clothed in. It is the impersonal and true essence of Deity. On account of its oneness with Ahura Mazda, there is a probability of taking its representation as that of Ahura Mazda.

Now about Ahriman. It is generally understood by strangers that Ahriman is the adversary of Ahura Mazda, which is not true. There is no duality in Ahura and the charge often laid against Zoroastrianism as dualism is the result of a lack of understanding about the true essence of that religion. Ahriman is the corrupted or modified form of Angremainyus, the adversary of Spentamainyus, the former evil and the latter good powers in nature, on the plane of relativity, where duality begins in nature. The idea of Ahriman is not peculiar to Zoroastrianism only. Compare the struggle of Zoroaster with Ahriman in his efforts for union with Ahura Mazda (*Vendidad*, Farg. 19); with Gautama's struggle with Mara (*Light of Asia*, Book the Sixth); also the struggle of Jesus with the Tempter (St. Matthew, 4; St. Luke, 4); and again of Nachiketu's with Yama (*Upanishad*), and there one will find perhaps some clue to the problem of this misapprehension. Ahura Mazda has no adversary. This hint will be sufficient for your grasping the correct idea on this head.

The sacred but mystic tree referred to in the article is not a botanical plant as it is often supposed to be, although certain drinks are consecrated and drunk in the

Hindu and Zoroastrian ceremonies bearing the same name. The mystic tree is the *man* himself,—it is the tree of life. One who drinks the juice of that tree—the knowledge divine—can become immortal; it is by practically knowing the divine nature of man that man becomes immortal, and not by drinking potions of any botanical plant, however marvellous that plant may be. The Avesta literature of the Parsis is allegorical and mystic, and before it could be deciphered in its true light one must become pure like its authors. An article on this mystic tree, which is also found in almost all great religious and mystic schools, will be found (contributed by me) in *Lucifer*, Vol. XV., p. 491.

In the ceremony which is performed in connexion with this idea, certain cakes (*draona*) are consecrated, it is true; but not "covered with small pieces of holy (!) meat (the *myazda*)." The last word means fruit, but our people having gradually become meat-eaters, the prejudice against meat-eating disappeared in course of time, and the "fruit" was transformed into "meat" by the later translators of the Avestâ. Religion proper will never grant such an abomination; the whole of the Yasna enjoins every Zoroastrian to protect *goshpands* (kine, goat, sheep, horses, etc.). Hâ 32, paragraph 12, strictly forbids slaughter of, or injury to, animals, even in joke. Here it is one with Buddhism.

The bird represents a cycle, an eternity, a manvantara; it also represents the human soul.

If Mazdaism is similar to any religion, it is certainly not Christianity, nor Judaism, nor Mohammedanism, its own offspring, but the religion of the Vedas, as will be seen from the similarity of their languages, their worship, their philosophy, their national characteristics, and their one common ethnological source, the Aryan. It will take time, perhaps, before we shall be able to decipher correctly the symbolic inscriptions and to know the true rationale of religious rituals.

The portrait of Zoroaster which appeared in your March number is entirely new to the followers of that most holy Master. NASARVANJI F. BILIMORIA.

BOMBAY, April 10, 1897.

"IN NUBIBUS."

To the Editor of The Open Court :

In the March number of *The Open Court* is an article entitled "In Nubibus," in which there is the following statement :

"Again, all parties, theists and atheists, can agree (since the universe had confessedly some beginning—) in saying: I believe in a maker of heaven and earth."

Who confesses that the universe had a beginning? No one whose thinking is not dominated by the statement, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

So far from there being agreement that the universe had a beginning, it is not possible for an intelligent man of this generation to conceive of a period when the universe was not.

Let any one try to imagine it as springing out of nothing; or of thought, intelligence, or intellect as existing entirely disassociated from matter.

We may, indeed, conceive of evolution as moving in a circle; from nebula to man and from man to nebula, but not of the creation of fire mist out of nothing.

Imagine a period remote as a quadrillion quadrillion centuries ere our earth took globular form: we are then no nearer a beginning than now, and are forced

to admit that even then the universe had existed for more than a decillion decillion æons.

Nor are we able to conceive of a time when law was not.

Endeavor to think of an age when there was no law of gravitation, when one mass did not attract another, when the laws of nature did not exist or were variant from what they are at this time.

As to generals, there has been no beginning; the universe, matter, mind, motion, law, evolution have always been. As to particulars, myriads come into being each instant, there are countless new flowers, songs, birds, and sins; facts innumerable created every hour.

Men build houses, and gods may make men and earths. Of what has happened in the illimitable past we know very little; we find ourselves unable to dream of a condition when there had not elapsed sufficient time for the evolution from star dust of creatures equal to ourselves.

All philosophy postulated upon a beginning of the universe or its laws is baseless.

A. N. WATERMAN.

CHICAGO, ILL.

To the Editor of The Open Court.

In the February number of *The Open Court* I find that the Rev. G. J. Low, writing "In Nubibus," misunderstands the position and work of Mr. Frederic Harrison as the leading Positivist in England. Mr. Harrison is President of the English Positivist Committee, and, I am sure, would repudiate the title and functions of "high priest."

The February number of *The Positivist Review* contains an address by Mr. Frederic Harrison, entitled "Theological Reaction." On page 59 he says: "We repudiate the name of 'Comtists,' and we have never pretended to be bound by the language of Comte, bound to believe anything on his authority, and to practise whatever he chose to preach or to recommend. . . . But whatever may be the truth about the vast religious and social organisation which the genius of Auguste Comte inaugurated for the future, we have never presumed to the folly of trying to set up a working model of it in this place, and we shall never do so. Nor has any such thing been done in Paris by Pierre Laffitte, the successor of Auguste Comte in France. From time to time both he and we have tried to put in force, humbly and tentatively, some illustration or type of what we feel to be involved in a real religion of humanity. But the future must decide the ultimate form and features in which it must be cast. All this to me is a matter subordinate and capable of different solutions and issues. The religion of human duty must, in its own good time, evolve such practices, institutions, and expression as will satisfy the reason, the imagination, and the emotions."

In the same review you will also find an article by Professor Beesly, its editor, entitled "Positivism and Comte." Of course the Rev. G. J. Low had no opportunity of reading either of these articles before writing to the February number of *The Open Court*. But on many previous occasions both Mr. Harrison and Professor Beesly have clearly expressed themselves to a similar effect in regard to Comte, his doctrines, and proposals.

I hope there is considerable sympathy between the "positivists in England," who accept as their leaders Mr. Frederic Harrison, Professor Beesly, and Dr. Bridges and the "new positivists," who adopt "the Religion of Science" as presented by you. Both adopt the scientific basis. But "Comtean positivism" is

anthropocentric—all the powers of feeling, thought, and action being devoted to the progressive good of man, and natural laws being studied as conditions of improvement. The "new positivism" is monistic, and regards the progressive good of man as the product of the operations of a divine power immanent in man and in his environment, and whose modes of working are described in laws which are irrefragable.

Comte's system is indicated in his formula—"love, for principle" (or motive); "order, for basis"; and "progress, for end." And this same formula seems to me almost equally applicable to your system. Both forms of positivism may be regarded as differing rather in range than in their basis; for the foundation of each is science. Both are forms of a religion of love and truth and duty, and their respective adherents should therefore be on sympathetic terms.

Though the "new positivism" is the more satisfactory to me, I must honor those whose whole religion is "devotion to humanity," and I much regret the misapprehension into which the Rev. G. J. Low has fallen regarding "positivism in England" as represented by Mr. Frederic Harrison.

JAMES ODGERS.

Knutsford, England.

MISCELLANEOUS.

SOME RECENT FRENCH WORKS IN PHILOSOPHY.

Recent statistics have given the literary output of France to be more than twice that of the United States, including the American duplication of English works. This enormous production is almost wholly confined to Paris, and it reflects not a little credit upon the intellectual activity of the French capital, besides refuting a widespread popular impression to the contrary, that a relatively large percentage of French publications is devoted to philosophy, science, and practical education. Especially in the last two departments a high standard has always been maintained, and French text-books and expositions have for nearly a century served as models of lucidity, conciseness, and pedagogical tact. In philosophy, of late years, while nothing startling nor epoch-making has been produced, there has been considerable activity, particularly in metaphysics, and a fair level of originality, as distinguished from the re-elaboration of old thought, has been sustained. We have briefly to note here several of these works which have appeared within the last two months or so, and which come from the press of Félix Alcan,¹ perhaps the largest philosophical publishing house in the world.

M. G. TARDE, jurist and sociologist, now the head of the statistical department of the French government, has achieved an enviable reputation by his recent writings. He has successfully developed and applied the theory of *Imitation*, which explains so many social and psychological phenomena, has written several philosophical works, in which he has combated the theories of Lombroso, and also given to the world an interesting collection of *Sociological Essays*. His latest work, of which we now speak, *L'Opposition universelle, essai d'une théorie des contraires* (price 7 fr. 50), forms the complement of his book on *Imitation*. There he considered the things of the world and life as they were spontaneously reproduced, mimicked, and multiplied; here he views them under the aspect of their antithesis,

¹ Address: 108 Boulevard St. Germain, Paris.