

THE

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## Views and Opinions

### The Quality of Religion

THE Government at the opening of the war avowed its determination to prevent profiteering. But it probably did not interfere with the greatest of all forms of profiteering, that of the Christian Churches. We do not mean in this respect the Christian Church is the only sinner., Priestly profiteering did not commence with religion, but it became closely associated with it just so soon as acquired knowledge came into conflict with inherited superstition. Apart from this qualification we may say that the exploitation of human fear and ignorance in the interests of superstition begins with the earliest and persists with the latest forms of religion. Put any man in the dark, and no matter how great his courage, he becomes just a little fearful—not always enough to attract attention even by himself, but to an extent that might be registered if an instrument capable of doing so existed. Even the care with which a man moves in the dark, the consciousness that is developed of the likelihood of falling over something, or banging his head against something, are factors that diminish certainty and assurance. Undiluted courage is sharp and decisive. Courage knows what it wants and sees the best way of getting it. But where the obstacles to be overcome are unseen or unknown or merely anticipated, there comes indecision and with indecision fearfulness—not of necessity of a dishonouring character, but still fear. "The native hue of resolution is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought," and "must be" give place to "there may be."

Those who understand religion—*understand* it—know that fear and uncertainty lie at the root of all religious belief. They form the matrix by which all the gods are formed. And once the gods are established the technique of religion is simple. If things go well the gods must be thanked for fear they should withdraw their favours. If things go ill it is because

man has offended his gods and men must grovel before them in the hope of regaining their good-will. In this matter the primitive and modern believer in the gods move on exactly the same cultural level. In the history of religion the language of servility and adulation offers little variation, and the vocabulary of religion varies still less. If the modern bishop were to change dress with the primitive medicine-man, each would find the official clothing of the other a perfect fit; and allowing for linguistic differences the two might swap pulpits without either feeling out of place. The difference between a shovel hat and a feathered head-covering is no greater than that between Tweedledum and Tweedledee.

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### The Clergy and War

So when the war broke out the policy of the clergy and their supporters gave us nothing that was new in the history of religion. In the main the lines followed were those which history has made familiar ever since man believed that his destiny was determined by supernatural beings. There was a slight alteration in form, but none in essence. Less than a century ago we should have had a Day of National Humiliation. The idea at the back of this would be that we had offended the great Mumbo-Jumbo, and as a consequence he had inflicted the war on us. Sir Thomas Inskip (at present disguised as Lord Caldecote) would have supported this belief on the ground that we had desecrated that taboo day, Sunday. Cardinal Hinsley would have backed the belief because grovelling is one of the most esteemed spiritual exercises in the Roman Church. Lord Halifax would have chipped in because he has the undeveloped type of intelligence that can see no harm in prostituting a public office to the service of a sectarian or personal belief. But grovelling is not so fashionable as it was, so instead of a day of humiliation we have had several days of prayer, and have contented ourselves with merely asking God to help us achieve victory, without putting it quite plainly that we wish God, out of his goodness, to help us slaughter a considerable portion of another group of his children known as Germans. We have not asked for this in so many words, we have adopted the method of the "cabby" of the old days who when, asked what was his fare, replied "I leave it to you sir." So in our days of petition we just throw out the hint and leave it at that.

At law one of the grounds on which a document may be set aside is that of ambiguity. And in these days of petitions to God to save Christianity he may be inclined to disregard the prayers on the reasonable ground that the petition is too ambiguous in its wording. What Christianity is he to save? Is it the Christianity of the Roman Church, the Greek Church,

the English Church, the Baptists, the Methodists, the Christian Scientists, the British Israelites, or the Seventh-Day Adventists? So far as we are concerned, we have never been able to find out what Christianity it is for which we are supposed to be fighting, and we should not be surprised if God is equally puzzled? Requests, like bequests, should be free from ambiguity. God might even think of these days of national prayer (one of which is taking place on the date borne by this issue of the *Freethinker*) that he did once upon a time go to extraordinary lengths to establish a Christianity, and what has become of it? Even the Roman Church has not remained wholly faithful to God's revelation. He gave them a flat earth, and its shape was altered at the behest of a number of Freethinking scientists. He left the Sun going round the earth, and someone made the earth go round the Sun. He said "Thou Shalt Not suffer a Witch to live," and he has been met with the denial of their ever existing. God said that they who would have people forsake him should be stoned to death, and the very people who are arranging this day of prayer permit unbelievers to occupy the highest posts in the State. And for many years the Church of God has lived by swallowing its own teachings. God Almighty might well call into consultation the chiefs of his heavenly army, and ask them what it is these people who are bleating to him want saving: which is the Christianity he is to save?

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#### In Defence of Parsons

I really commenced writing these notes because of the record of an interview with the Rev. Rowland Jones, Vicar of Denton, Manchester, which appeared in the *Daily Herald*. Mr. Jones, who in his own judgment is a very daring kind of a fellow, says he thinks that people are dissatisfied with Christianity because they see bishops and archbishops receiving large salaries, living in huge houses, etc., etc., while other people lack the wherewithal to live a decent life. He objects to those army chaplains who are receiving £450 a year, while taking the salary from their church, and leaving a curate to do the work. He objects to the Archbishop getting £15,000 a year, and says that he would be content with £500—which is not altogether a starvation wage. And he supplies us with some "high-falutin" talk about building up society on a Christian basis, without it ever striking him that it is precisely what is a Christian basis that has puzzled people ever since Christianity emerged from the myths and superstitions of the pre-Christian world. He says that Jesus came to give us "life in abundance," and forgets that the life that Jesus came to give us was the life after we are dead. No one has ever objected to our getting that life. Even Hitler does not care a damn what kind of life we have after death, or how much we get of it, provided we get the life he wishes us to have while we are on this side of the grave. Mr. Jones thinks the Archbishop of Canterbury looks ridiculous in his "out-of-date" clothes; but in that I disagree with him. It is his distinctive dress and the distinctive dress of the clergy that enables poor creatures like myself to distinguish a parson from a costermonger, and also to accept the doctrinal message he gives us as a product of "divine wisdom." Mr. Jones should read again Carlyle's philosophy of clothes. The chief warranty for the wisdom of the Church is that its representatives do not dress as do other folk. There is often greater wisdom in a bishop's hat than there is in a bishop's mouth, and the cut of a clerical collar carries with it greater persuasion than his speech. You may as well divest a clown of his make-up as rob an Archbishop of his dress.

#### Fact and Fancy

But I think Mr. Jones is wrong for other reasons. I do not believe that the salaries of the Bishops and Archbishops have much to do with the present intellectual and social standing of Christianity. The Archbishop of Canterbury has a large salary, so have the bishops, but so have many outside the Church. Mr. Jones says Jesus did not draw a large salary. But he never had the opportunity of drawing one, and in any case the career of the wandering eastern preacher no more yielded large salaries a couple of thousand years ago than it does to-day. I do not labour consideration of the fact, stressed by many writers who called themselves Christian, that the robe of the mendicant monk often covered as much vanity and selfishness and pride, and even camouflaged as much greed and selfishness as is met with in those who wear ordinary dress. After all the Christian who "restrains" his passions *because* he will reap great reward hereafter, the monk who leads a solitary life, or foregoes family life to save his own soul, or denies himself the "pleasures" of a few years of life here so that he may gain an eternity of enjoyment hereafter and so escape the attentions of the heavenly Gestapo, is not really the highest type of character.

If Mr. Jones does not object to my saying it, he has a great deal to learn concerning the present situation of his own religion. People never went to Church—honestly and sincerely—to admire the clergyman's uniform, whether he was Archbishop, Bishop, or Vicar. They went to Church because they believed in the doctrine preached. They did not go because they wished for better salaries, houses and clothes. They wanted these things as all have wanted whatever their religious opinions may have been. The Church was there because people believed in the doctrines it taught, and because they credited the priest with the power of a mediator between them and their gods. They attended Church because the Church was a "sacred" place and the priest was a "holy" man. This tirade against highly placed and highly paid parsons, is either to hide the fact that with a large and growing number religion is played out, and is recognized as a survival of a world-wide primitive mythology and superstition. If there really existed a God such as religion claims, if he could do for men what it is claimed he can do, and if the clergy could really do what the original priest claimed to do, and what the Roman Catholic clergy still pretend to do—act as a mediator between god and man—no one would complain of large salaries and spacious houses. They would be worth all they are paid, and far more.

But that is not the position. The position is that religion has been found out. From being a living belief—among primitives—it has become an inherited superstition. The priest from being a self-deceived mediator between man and his imagined gods, is rapidly becoming a figure of fun, or a hypocrite. Mr. Jones wants to abolish the Archbishop, or at least reduce his salary and alter his dress. That is childish. What Mr. Jones should be aiming at is not the abolition of the Archbishop's dress, but the abolition or purification of his ideas, or of people's ideas concerning the pantomimic dress he wears. But I do not think Mr. Jones really wishes that.

CHAPMAN COHEN

While the minds of men are thus heated by theological strife it would be idle to expect any of those maxims of charity to which theological faction is always a stranger. While the Protestants were murdering the Catholics, and the Catholics murdering the Protestants, it was hardly likely that either sect should feel tolerance for the opinion of its enemy.—*Buckle*.

## Swinburne as a Man

Authors who have influence are merely those who express perfectly what other men are thinking; who reveal in people's minds ideas tending to the birth.—*Joubert.*

ARISTOCRATS often make excellent Democrats. Byron and Shelley at the commencement of the nineteenth century, and Swinburne at the century's close, are all cases in point. Even our own Bernard Shaw has informed us that he does not spring from the working-class, but that his father was "the second cousin of a baronet." All these men were born in families of feudal instincts and traditions.

Algernon Charles Swinburne was the son of Admiral Charles and Lady Swinburne, and was born April 5, 1837, at Chester Street, Grosvenor Hall, London, and died at Putney Hill, London, April 10, 1909. He was early attracted to literature, and first goes to school hugging a volume of Shakespeare under his arm. Curiously, he made no mark at Eton or Oxford. Not only did he fail to obtain a degree, but he missed the Newdigate with his poems entitled "The North-West Passage." Although he attracted the attention of Benjamin Jowett, who had a keen eye for intellect, Swinburne almost shared the fate of Shelley by imperilling his position with his outspoken Republicanism. And, later, when he visited Paris, his parents made him promise he would do nothing rash to further his Republican principles. So well known were the poet's political views that he was actually invited to stand for Parliament by the Reform League, but, on the advice of Joseph Mazzini, he declined wisely to give up the slopes of Parnassus for the political arena.

It is not the least wonderful phase of that amazing mind that, amid the drawbacks due to a deafness extending over thirty years, Swinburne could pursue his literary ambition and write his books, when other men would have found existence almost intolerable. Deafness was in his family on both sides, and his brother, eleven years his junior; was also afflicted. During later years Swinburne could hear nothing, unless it was said, head-by-head, slowly and deliberately. A story is told of a journalist who met the poet on Putney Common, and to whom Swinburne said, "I see you are speaking to me, but I can hear nothing."

With the publication of *Poems and Ballads*, Swinburne awoke one morning to find himself famous. No such tumult had taken place in literary circles since the appearance of Byron's saucy and witty *Don Juan*. The air resounded with clamour. Robert Buchanan voiced the respectable view in a pamphlet, *The Fleshly School of Literature*, and complained that *Poems and Ballads* was unfit reading for young ladies. This roused Swinburne, and he retorted with crushing effect: "I do not write for schoolgirls, I leave that to the Buchanans." The accusation of fleshliness was ill-founded, but it served to advertise the book, which was a masterpiece. Henceforth, until his seventieth year, Swinburne was an acknowledged force in European literature. For two whole generations he upheld the tradition of Republicanism and Liberty.

One thing Swinburne did bring away from Oxford University, and that was an excellent knowledge of Latin, Greek, French and Italian. This knowledge he turned to excellent account, and his translations from Villon and Victor Hugo, his friendship with Mazzini, and his devotion to the cause of Italian Liberation, owed much to the poet's command of language.

Most writers lead sedentary lives, and men like Villon, Benvenuto Cellini, Cervantes, Burton and Stevenson, are quite rarities among authors. For over thirty years of his life Swinburne lived at Putney with his best-loved friend Watts-Dunton, himself a poet, who Meredith declared had changed his name be-

cause he had no wish to be confused with Dr. Watts the hymn-writer. So quietly did the years run, that it became an event for Swinburne to publish an article in the *Nineteenth Century*, or a poem in the *St. James's Gazette*.

Swinburne's extraordinary memory never showed itself to better effect than in table-talk on books and things. He quoted Dickens as readily as Ben Jonson. A great admirer of Scott, he revelled in lesser men's writings, such as Wilkie Collins, Eugene Sue, Charles Reade, and had them at his call. For the Scots Border Ballads he had an especial liking, both knowing and imitating them easily. Swinburne had no ear for music, but he prided himself, justly, on his exquisite taste in words. He loved little children, and was never happier in his verse than when chanting their merits.

Curiously, there are very few good stories of the great poet's life. For one thing, Watts-Dunton was a monument of discretion, and Swinburne's talk was very Bohemian. One of the few that have survived is an altercation with a cabman who asked for a black-mailing fare in bad language, "Come down, and hear how a poet can swear." One evening Swinburne spent a few hours with Sir Richard Burton, the famous explorer, and translator of *The Arabian Nights*. Swinburne told a story of Sheridan drunk outside the House of Commons, and a policeman asking his name, which he gave as "William Wilberforce." I would rather, said Swinburne, have returned that answer than have written *Hamlet*. If a man could be so witty when drunk, what must he be when sober?

Only one love-story is recorded of Swinburne. At the age of twenty-five he proposed to a girl who had given him some roses. He declared his passion suddenly and too impetuously, and she laughed at him. Afterwards, Swinburne, always shy and reserved, had no further entanglements with women. An interesting story deals with the first meeting between the poet and Guy de Maupassant, in which the great French novelist was rowing in the sunshine of the "Azure Coast," when suddenly there emerged from the water beside the boat the head of Swinburne, "How astonishing," said Maupassant, "to make your acquaintance in the middle of the ocean."

Swinburne, says his latest biographer, "hovered on the fringe of the struggle" for Liberty. That is not true. An avowed Freethinker and an unashamed Republican, Swinburne risked, even in his early years, expulsion from Oxford University, and later stood always in the forefront of the battle. The one outstanding quality of Swinburne's writings leaps to the eye of the most superficial reader. It is his endless enthusiasm for Freedom, which has a generosity and fervour unequalled even among poets. How he has sung the praises of Cromwell and Milton, of Shelley and Landor, of Whitman and Victor Hugo, is well known. Recall the lovely lyrics celebrating Mazzini and Garibaldi. The greatest poet at the close of the last century was a militant Freethinker, and an avowed Democrat. For fifty years Swinburne expressed radical ideas in his poetry and prose, and his consistency is proved from the publication of *Atalanta in Calydon*, the work of his young manhood, to the august utterances of his later years. No one who has read his work attentively can doubt his passionate sincerity. Hear the lyrical cry which came from the heart in his *Mater Triumphalis*, one of the noblest and most profound poems in the language:—

I am the trumpet at thy lips, thy clarion  
Full of thy life, sonorous with thy breath;  
The grave of souls born worms and creeds grown carrion  
Thy blast of judgment fills with fires of death.  
Thou art the player whose organ keys are thunders,  
And I beneath thy foot the pedal prest;

Thou art the ray whereat the rent night sunder  
 And I the cloudlet borne upon thy breast.  
 I shall burn up before thee, pass and perish,  
 As haze in sunrise on the red sea-line;  
 But thou from dawn to sunset shall cherish  
 The thoughts that led and souls that lighted mine.

MIMNERMUS

## The Spiral Path of Religious Liberty

GOETHE once asserted that to tolerate a man is simply to insult him. Ingersoll better expresses in his term "intellectual hospitality" the mental and moral attitude of those who appreciate the right of others to think and act differently from themselves. So long as conduct conforms with the well-being of the individual and the community of which he forms part, a departure from the codes and conventions customarily imposed should be granted, not as a gracious concession, but as an inalienable right.

Luther and his protesting contemporaries are frequently credited with the introduction of the principle of religious liberty. Buckle's contention, that the Reformation, in weakening the Roman monopoly, lessened the power of the priesthood, and thus permitted an ampler play of the intellect, is partly true. But that the leading Reformers were less animated by the repressive spirit than their Catholic adversaries, is a proposition devoid of foundation in fact.

Luther was convinced that justification by faith alone constituted the Christian's sole security from the pains and penalties of eternal torture. Also, as Luigi Sturzo declares in his important *Church and State* (Geoffrey Bles, 1939, 218.): "Nor in Calvin's system of thought can free inquiry be separated from the theory of predestination or from the rigid religious-political structure of his communities. Luther and Calvin were therefore logical when they maintained the right of banishing or burning heretics, sectarians and all those who by denying one of the dogmas resulting from the common interpretation of the Bible, denied at the same time the new Christian society and the basis of social power."

The burning alive of Servetus by the Calvinists at Geneva in 1553, aroused the horror and indignation of all enlightened Humanists. The group of Italian intellectuals who had sought shelter in Geneva included Lelio Sozzino, better known as Socinius, as well as Gentile of Cosenza. The authorship of an essay published under the name of Martinus Bellius was attributed to Socinius. But this pamphlet was probably the joint product of several Italian refugees who were animated by the generous spirit of Erasmus. Its chief contributor, however, appears to have been Castellione, who had already infuriated Calvin by inquiring in the preface to his Latin version of the Scriptures: "Who would not esteem Christ a Moloch or some such god, if he wished live men to be sacrificed to Him and burned?" Bize took up the cudgels on behalf of Calvin and issued his pamphlet on *The punishment of heretics by the civil magistracy against the nonsense of Martinus Bellius and the new sect of Academicians*. Trouble arose: some of the Humanists suffered; others were reduced to silence, while several escaped to Poland where Unitarianism and Deism had appeared. These heresies spread as far as Lithuania and Transylvania where the teachings of Socinius made headway.

The Socinians were an advance-guard of Freethought. They disavowed the Old Testament, and only retained those parts of the New which appealed to reason. The

validity of prophecies, mysteries and miracles was left to private judgment. These pioneers vainly aspired to unite all the discordant Christian sects on fundamentals, leaving all details of a dark or doubtful character an open question. On this basis they hoped to erect a non-persecuting religion.

Catholics and Protestants, however, denounced Socinianism as a pestilent heresy which denied the Trinity, and while masquerading as a Christian cult smoothed the way to a rationalistic Deism divorced from supernaturalism. Consequently, they must be persecuted to the point of extinction, and their lot proved a bitter one. Yet, despite all their ill-treatment, they survived in Central Europe and their influence extended to France, Britain, America and other lands. Among the intelligentsia their teachings carried weight and their humanitarianism was not restricted to religion. They opposed capital punishment and denied the right of any form of warfare. Some of the more extreme were positive Anarchists who refused to acknowledge the authority of the temporal Power. Thus, their spiritual and civil intransigence naturally united the secular and sacerdotal orders against them.

Holland was then the most tolerant of all European States, and there Socinian breadth of view found its first practical application. The Netherlands had recently witnessed the envenomed and sanguinary struggle between Catholicism and its Calvinist enemies. It was sanguinely assumed that religious rage had been stilled by the Ratification of Ghent in 1576, and the Peace of Religion at Antwerp two years later. Then followed the Union of Utrecht, which the Catholics counterbalanced by the creation of the Union of Arras, supported by Spain and Farnese. As Sturzo notes: "This was typical of what was happening all over Europe. Protestants refused freedom of worship to Catholics, Catholics to Protestants. Hence civil wars and general wars, revolts and conspiracies, truces and peace-pacts, edicts of toleration issued only to be violated or revoked."

Yet a more tolerant attitude emerged and Coolhaers pleaded for Christian appeasement, and the theory of the necessity of the extinction of heresy by fire and sword was openly assailed. But the theological rancour of the two contending parties caused so great an uproar that, when the States issued a decree of toleration, its provisions were forbidden public discussion. Unfortunately, Maurice of Orange deserted the Reformers and joined their adversaries in 1618. Oldenbarneveld was executed and the great Hugo Grotius narrowly escaped a lifelong imprisonment. Other Humanists went into exile until, with Maurice's death, freedom of teaching and worship was for all parties restored.

The Edict of Nantes granted by the sagacious Henry IV. of France to the Huguenots in 1598 predated the Dutch concession. But the idea of toleration as something invaluable in itself began to pervade Dutch philosophy. It is significant that the concept of Natural Law found its first complete expression in Grotius who urged that "all true authority in both civil and ecclesiastical matters resides in the State." This doctrine directly denied the Romanist contention that the Church possesses her own independent rights in virtue of her sacred and universal character, while the heretical Grotius restricted the activities of the clergy to the arts of persuasion and ethical and religious instruction.

Socinian teachings were introduced into England by Jacopo Aconcio, an Italian Latitudinarian. These doctrines influenced the thoughts of Locke, Hobbes and Milton. Francis Quarles (1592-1644) expressed similar sentiments in his poems, while John Dury composed the first systematic exposition of Latitudinarian prin-

principles in his *Peace Ecclesiastical* in 1639. Also, the German Erastus repudiated the Church's right to excommunicate and maintained Civil supremacy in all spheres ecclesiastical, and this theory, now known as Erastianism, has long directed the English Government's policy in its relations with the National Church.

Apart from John Milton, whose services in support of intellectual liberty were pronounced, the two outstanding English pioneers of this period were Locke and Hobbes. The religious controversies which then occupied so much of the time and attention of public men, were set aside by the author of *Leviathan*, who based his concept of the State on Natural Law. The ruler's unrestricted sovereignty is necessitated by the circumstance that a motley multitude can only become a social organism when it submits to authority. The standpoint of Hobbes is purely secular, and he avers that when religion is at variance with temporal interests, Civil authority must prevail. For "the sole interpreter of divine and natural law is the sovereign, who has therefore the right to decide to what persuasion his subjects must belong." However repugnant this particular doctrine may appear to the modern democratic mind, it has certainly been very extensively applied by all the totalitarian States.

John Locke sounded a nobler note, despite the limitations imposed on his humanism by the relative intolerance of the times. In 1666, appeared his *Essay Concerning Toleration*, which foreshadowed his later pronouncement on the same theme. During his days of exile Locke had become intimate with the brave, enterprising spirits of Holland and France. Also, the Free-thinking speculations of Lord Shaftesbury and Anthony Collins enlarged his outlook.

Locke differs greatly from Grotius and Hobbes in his championship of personal rights. The community he regarded as simply a co-partnership of social units, whose individuality continues unimpaired by their entrance into society. Their individual identity remains. Although the State's authority in the secular realm is supreme, it has no moral right to coerce its subjects into conformity with a prescribed creed or to constrain them by penal laws directed against dissent. Voluntary association or religious bodies of varying tenets might co-exist in terms of charity and mutual esteem and, given such circumstances, the State should recognize their right to celebrate their respective services.

This arrangement was to be confined to law-abiding Christians only. All those inimical to social harmony, notably persecuting sectarians who refused to keep faith with heretics; those that displayed disloyalty to an excommunicated king; those who acknowledged an alien ruler as head of their Church and, last but not least, Atheists, were placed outside the pale of protection, because anti-theism threatens the integrity of the State. The second and third of these exceptions concerned Roman Catholics who were by Locke regarded as intolerant, seditious and socially dangerous, since they owed allegiance to a foreign Pontiff.

These, however, were but the beginnings, and a long, tortuous and weary road had to be traversed before a practically complete emancipation from religious tyranny could be consummated. But sadly to relate, that freedom of thought and expression which once seemed secure has entirely vanished in several leading States, with more than a menace of its effacement in France and other invaded lands.

T. F. PALMER

## God's Signposts

GOD gave us the Ten Commandments. He put up direction-boards so that we could carry on the business of living. In His Own Time (quite a long time by our measurements) he sent his only beloved son down to earth. The commandments of *père* were needing amplification; they were supplemented by the directions of *fils*. Fils gave us better stuff. The new signposts that Jesus erected only had to be followed and all would have been well. Man would have been happy and contented. But man would pay no attention to these signposts. He was told to take no thought for the morrow and instead of paying attention he set to work on such things as Old Age Pensions. This was blasphemy; this was wickedness. It was an indirect sneer at the Lord's promise of Magnificent Mansions *in the clouds*; it minimized the soul and maximized the body. Gross materialism! So God got wroth. In his mortification, he sent floods and pestilences. And still man thought of his stomach. Then, in the course of time and despairing of the effect of sending us another dearly beloved Son, he sent Hitler. What we are suffering at the present moment is the Wrath of God; the vengeance of God. We have neglected his signposts.

Divine after divine is telling us that we have treated God's signposts with contempt and are deservedly reaping the consequences. Man has erected signposts in his time, and what he has erected has served the purpose. Man makes a job of things as far as elementary matters are concerned. But what an unholy mess God has made of his notice boards. Followers of the Son of God all over the world have spent their activities in arguing whether God's Signposts have said Manchester, Newcastle, or London. Just now man is taking down his road signposts for what he considers a more practical immediate purpose, but he refrains from substituting the word Newcastle for Grantham. He thinks this would mislead. But God has no such sensitiveness. He mixes up his directions like chocolates in a box. Even on the big Arterial Road leading to Heaven or Hell the devout gather round, pray without ceasing, and devour the sacraments, and whilst they are doing so Brown is swearing that God's signpost is pointing to Heaven and Robinson is prepared to take his oath that it is pointing to Hell.

It is hardly necessary to stress the point. It is too obvious. The Dean of Exeter confirms us in a review recently in the *Sunday Times*. He makes his point so easily and so simply that one is still in doubt as to whether he grasps its implication. He reviews a book on the *Christian Ethic*,<sup>1</sup> a book in which a handful of devout, prayerful, sacrament-swallowing, personages undertake the job of telling us what God meant when he gave us Christian Morality. It is now a couple of thousand years since Christian Morality came to light in a stable in Galilee. Since then the prayerful have got together and said What did Jesus mean? That signpost over there: Does it read Jarrow or Eastbourne—Whitechapel or South Kensington? They are as near to deciphering the direction as ever. And yet they pray, and yet they consume the blood and the body. The Dean of Exeter tells us that some of the writers in this book say that the true pointer is towards Pacifism; others towards joining with faith and joy in a Christian Crusade. Others (and the majority) are frankly perplexed. Put it in other words. This Christian Morality, this ethic which we have failed to observe and thus brought about God's vengeance, commands one devout Christian to Go North, another to Go South, and to others the board is but a palimpsest.

<sup>1</sup> *The War and Christian Ethic: A symposium.* Blackwell.

The more any one speaks of himself, the less he likes to hear another talked of.—*Lavater*.

sest—there is nothing for it but to give up the attempt to decipher. For them it is but a case of squat down and stay put.

Could any sneering sceptic put the case more severely. Christian Morality, we are told, is in a mess. Even the devout don't know where they are. God's Signposts instead of guiding are having a worse result than if they were not there at all. They are just misleading. Judge not at all, but judge Hitler. If Hitler asks you to go with him a mile go with him twain. One Christian signpost tells us to love our enemy, but at the same time, says Mr. Duff Cooper, hate Hitler as I do. *It is the only way.* Should we help to starve our Christian brethren in Germany? Yes. No. Yes and No. No and Yes. As Galsworthy said during the last war: What religious belief can stand against such reeling subversions?

Confusion grows even more confounded—if possible. Those who love not the Lord, those who think it silly to waste time in deciphering the Lord's signposts, are being asked to come in and join the *Christian Crusade*. In the battle for Christian Morality, Muhammadans of our Empire, take up the Cross. You *heathen* inhabitants of India, stand up for Jesus! You infidels, unbelievers, in our own country—you know what Christians did to you when the friends of Jesus had the power and opportunity. You know our bloody record. You know how we have tried to exterminate you and, when we failed to do that, how we have maligned you and tried to make it hard for you to earn your daily bread. Now we beg of you. Please, PLEASE! Stick the Cross of Jesus on your chests. March with us on this Christian Crusade. Help to make Christianity strong. Bring back our power and our glory so that we may turn on you and rend you. Roll up from Hindustan, from Hawaii, from Hong Kong. From Heckmondwike, from Huddersfield. *From Hull, to Hell, through Halifax.*

The convolutions of this dying creed are beyond contempt. The contribution of Christianity to civilization during the thousand years of its opportunity was, according to Lecky, *contemptible*. Are there stronger epithets than contemptible? There may or there may not be, but the official Christian is making a big effort at the present moment to bring one to birth.

Most of our writers on Christian Ethics, says the Dean of Exeter, agree that the war is God's judgment on this wicked world. Men have neglected to read God's signposts written in words they do not understand. They have listened instead to wicked men like Thomas Paine, men who put in thought and energy to create a decent world here and now. God does not like such men and is accordingly sending devastation on the earth. He does not like Lecky who wrote of the distinctive Christian contribution to morality as contemptible; Buckle who said Christianity had no distinctive morality of consequence at all; Morley who said that Christianity had caused more bloodshed than any other institution; Galsworthy who said that Christianity could not live and propagate reeling subversions; Wells who said he would as soon worship a scarecrow as the patched-up deity of the Christian trinity. Bad men all! God does not love them—and because of them he has sent us his judgment. Come back into the fold you who think! Up Faith and down Reason! Pray without ceasing. Work without ceasing. Do both at once without ceasing. We stand for Jesus and the Reeling Subversion: the Creed of our Fathers. Down with Anti-God; down with the Infidel! Hate Hitler, Love Hitler! We appeal to you, you infidel, you atheist, you anti-Godite. Remember our old bloody banner. Remember our old slogan: *No faith with heretics.* Does that not make you glow, your blood grow warm. Roll up, for your country needs

you. Those of you whom God does not like, those who have caused the war, stand up for Jesus. We beg of you. We beseech you!

Does a good cause need such a buttress? Could it be doing a good cause greater disservice than attempting to align it with such sorry claptrap? It would be well if the carriers of the Cross could speak truthfully and speak calmly—but it is too much to hope. Surely no folly could be greater than Christian folly in this year of disgrace.

T. H. ELSTON

## The Dog

CANIS FAMILIARIS is a domestic animal. The whole species, with but a few exceptions, have been from, probably, the Neolithic period, boon companions of man.

These exceptions, a few wild dogs, are found in various parts of the world—the dingo, in Australia; the Indian dhole; the Pariah dogs, etc., and they are all surely domestic varieties that have run wild.

No more faithful friend can be found in the world than the dog. Its owner may beat it, ill-use it as he pleases, though he slay it yet will it trust in him. All men may forsake its master, but the dog will not; it defends his property; its swiftness, strength, keenly developed sense of smell are placed at his service; indeed, the dog is ever ready to lay down its life for its friend—faithful unto death!

The dog seems to always have occupied a higher moral plane than man. Small wonder is it that the Esquimaux believe themselves to be descended from the dog.

Many volumes of prose and poetry have been written about the dog. Space does not even permit of their mention. In the following I purpose to treat, briefly, of the dog in religion, folk-lore, and science.

The Jews and their tribal God detested the dog. It was to them an unclean beast. They were jealous of it. It possessed qualities which they lacked. A pious friend assures me that in an inspired translation, values remain unchanged, that, numerically, dog is equal to God. Cabalistically then, this numerical value of God + dog = 1. So the dog was vilified by his equal, this inverted dog, and his peculiar people—birds of a feather!

His tabernacle was not to be desecrated by an offering of the price of a dog:—

Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the Lord thy God for any vow: for even both these are abomination unto the Lord thy God. (Deut. xxiii. 18.)

The most offensive expression that a Jew could use was to compare a man to a dead dog. (1 Sam. xxiv. 14; 2 Sam. ix. 8; xvi. 9; 2 Kings viii. 13.)

Christ may have brought to light many things to benefit man. He brought no comfort for the dog.

In Matt. xv. a woman had a daughter who was "grievously vexed with a devil," as though that was an extraordinary thing! Christ in refusing to exorcise this fourfold-spirit, said "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs." To which the Canaanitish woman replied "Truth Lord: yet the doggies—the little dogs—eat of the crumbs which fall from the master's table." Our blessed Lord's expression implied disgust, just as the woman's did that of affection.

The Old and New Testaments, from Genesis to Revelations, have not one good word to say in the dog's favour. Dogs were not allowed to enter heaven. (See Rev. xxii. 15.)

Of Mohammedism: Eastern dogs are all of one class. Like Christians they show a wonderful uniformity, but

little unity. A well clad European—"a dog of an infidel"—is detested by them, while the vilest dressed Arab is welcomed. Significant! An English dog would teach them better manners!

If a devout Mussulman's robe touches the wet nose of a puppy, the garment must be washed seven times. The dog, whatever happens, comes to grief. Every Arab has a kick for a dog. And if he wishes to throw a bad word at any one, Dog! is used as freely as the English damn. Yet, Katmir, the faithful dog of the seven sleepers was admitted to Paradise by Mohammed, vide *Koran*, Sura xviii. Here the Koran may be said to excel most religions!

Other nations held different opinions. Greeks, Romans, and the old Celtic inhabitants of Scandinavia were accustomed to sacrifice dogs to certain of their deities. Whilst on the other hand, dogs were employed as executioners, and even as a living tomb.

To finish this section without mention of the dog of Tobit, in the Apocrypha, seems a mistake. The dog gets mention no less than four times. Twice only worth noting. In Tobit v. 16, we are told of the Angel and Tobit how that "The young man's dog went forth with them." And in xi. 4, how "the dog went after them." Only this and nothing more. In the first place the dog went in advance of them, in the second place it kept behind them. Why? The dog does not seem to have looked upon Raphael as anybody extraordinary. And Byron tells us that "dogs have such intellectual noses."

In every walk of life the dog is to be found. Folk-lore tells us that the dog was held in adoration by the Egyptians.

Its howling is said to be unlucky, heralding many kinds of misfortune. And many curious customs must be observed to avert this sign of ill-omen.

When the dog eats grass it is a sign of rain. When it rolls and scratches, a change of weather may be expected.

St. Luke's day—whip-dog-day—a custom of bygone days in York, of dog-whipping because a priest while celebrating mass, dropped the host after consecration, which was suddenly snatched up and eaten by a dog that lay under the Communion Table.

Folk Lore doesn't say much about the dog.

Science, on the other hand, has so many interesting, enlightening, creditable, and very significant things to say about the dog, that were I but to attempt to briefly, give them utterance I should in the opinion of many readers law myself open to the charge of the Walrus, in *Alice in Wonderland*—"The butter's spread too thick!" So, I'll use but one scientific record to simplify affairs a little—Darwin's *Descent of Man*. See Index!

Darwin, speaking about the memory of dogs, tells how he purposely tried the memory of one, a savage bad-tempered beast, for five years. Then he went to the stable where it lived and shouted in his old familiar manner, the dog showed no joy but instantly followed him, behaving as usual, just as though he had only been absent for half an hour.

Dr. Hayes, in his book on *The Open Polar Sea*, repeatedly remarks that his dogs, instead of continuing to draw sledges in a compact body diverged and separated when they came to thin ice, so that their weight might be more evenly distributed.

Carrying a wounded partridge a dog came upon a dead bird. After trying to pick it up, and finding she could not without letting the other escape she, after a few minutes thought, killed the living one she carried, and then picked both up.

Our domestic dogs are descended from Wolves and Jackals, and though they may not have gained in cunning, and may have lost in wariness and suspicion, yet they have progressed in certain moral qualities,

such as affection, trust-worthiness, temper, and probably general intelligence.

Barking is a new art with the domesticated dog, we have the bark of eagerness, as in chase; that of anger, as in growling; the yelp or howl of despair, when shut up; the baying at night; the bark of joy, as when starting a walk with his master; and the very distinct one of supplication, as when wishing for a door or a window to be opened.

Of religious devotion: the feeling of religious devotion is a highly complex one, consisting of love, complete submission to an exalted and mysterious superior, a strong sense of dependence, fear, reverence, gratitude, hope for the future, and perhaps other elements. No being could experience so complex an emotion until advanced in his intellectual and moral faculties to at least a moderately high level. Nevertheless, we see some distant approach to this state of mind in the deep love of a dog for his master, associated with complete submission, some fear, or perhaps other feelings. The behaviour of a dog when returning to his master after an absence, is widely different from that towards his fellows. In the latter case the transports of joy seem to be somewhat less, and the sense of equality is shewn in every action. Professor Bran-bach goes so far as to maintain that a dog looks on his master as on a god.

The dog is a social creature like many other animals. Polar travellers tell us how they will leave comfortable quarters to be near man. Man's love for his dog, his dog returns with interest.

Beside love and sympathy, animals exhibit other qualities connected with the social instincts, which in us would be called moral; and Darwin agrees with Agassiz that dogs possess something very like a conscience.

Enough has now been said to show that only religion damns the dog.

From the founder of Christianity we get but compassion for man, and hatred for the dog. From a greater than he we get love, and a quality of mercy that droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven, not only for man, but for every sentient being.

From Christ we get a great utterance!

Love your enemies!

But Shakespeare's Cordelia, with voice ever soft, gentle, and low, finds finer, greater, more eloquent expression:—

Mine enemy's dog,  
Though he had bit me, should have stood that night  
Against my fire.

GEORGE WALLACE

## Acid Drops

Dr. Partridge, Bishop of Portsmouth, is a very curious man. He says:—

The Church has held a proud place in the record of damage. Not for the first time have churches in the diocese, whether mainland or Isle of Wight, been battered by gunfire. In this war, as in others, high and low, rich and poor, bear an equal share in suffering.

Now what, in the name of all that is absurd, is there to be proud of in having one's house or one's church bombed? One might be proud in not being frightened, or in not being disheartened, but what room for pride is there in knowing that one's house or church, has been bombed? And as to rich and poor, high and low, bearing an equal share in suffering, that is sheer rubbish. There are some consequences of a bombing in which all may have the same degree of suffering. But does anyone feel proud because someone he knows has been killed? We may be proud of the courage with which he met his death, or the cause for which a life was lost, but no one

save a Christian priest with a semi-pathological desire to get into the limelight would be proud because a church, or a building of any sort, was bombed. Decency would have led the Bishop of Portsmouth not to have drawn attention to the fact that his God is no more capable of protecting the buildings devoted to his worship than he is to save the dwelling-house of a priest. Common sense would have taught him to avoid awakening the suspicion in some minds that if the present state of the world is what Christianity has to show after its long reign, we might well dispense with it in the future. And on the Day of National Prayer the Bishop will be conducting a service exalting the power of his god—in a church which is heavily sand-bagged—just as though it were a bank or a cinema. Humbug could hardly be more loudly proclaimed.

Cardinal Hinsley has ordered every Roman Catholic to repeat "Lord Have Mercy," whenever an air-raid warning is heard. The Cardinal must have unflinching confidence in the stupidity of his followers when he can so plainly suggest that the bombs that may drop are so obviously under the control of God. And what will happen if God does not have mercy and the cross-wearing Roman Catholic is killed? Will anyone tell the bomb-controlling deity what he thinks about him? Or will he, in the proper Christian spirit, grovel some more?

It is well known that Quisling, the Norwegian who sold his country to Germany, was a member of that semi-erotic Christian Association, the "Oxford Movement," otherwise known as Buchmanites. Buchman was also well known as a supporter of Hitler, and once at least publicly thanked God for Hitler. Now William Hickey, of the *Daily Express* has brought forward a deal of evidence that this "Oxford Movement" was very largely a cover for Nazi propaganda. This does not, of course, mean that all members of the movement were supporters of Hitler, only that the encouragement given to Hitler by many in this country, until it was discovered that the game was too dangerous, found a Christian justification in the Buchmanite manoeuvres.

Manchester has a population of 750,000. The City Council passed a vote in favour of the Sunday opening of cinemas. The discussion, as is usual, pursued the wrong lines, and the main reason given was the need for soldiers to have Sunday entertainment. But the issue does not turn upon whether Sunday opening is bad or good, since there is no question of cinemas remaining open during week-days. The question of whether soldiers need them is also irrelevant. It is a question of whether there is any reasonable objection against citizens having them. If cinemas can be shown to be bad, then they should be prohibited altogether. But to make the goodness or badness of an action, or entertainment, depend upon a particular day of the week is a question that could only be seriously discussed by a people that had been nurtured on the imbecilities of Christian theology.

But Manchester has a Watch Committee, mainly, we believe, dominated by the police, and the Watch Committee has referred the matter back to the Council. Why? Whatever public reason is given we have no hesitation in saying that the cause of this reference back is due entirely to bigoted religious prejudice, either on the part of the Watch Committee alone, or because the Committee has been influenced by those who do not wish to see anything permitted on Sunday that may act as competition to Church or Chapel. It is a public scandal.

It must be noted that all over the country police authorities have testified that conduct in the streets on Sunday has improved wherever cinemas were opened. That is what one would expect. Nothing is more injurious to good conduct than an idle lounging about. We do not know whether church and chapel audiences have been increased or decreased by the opening of cinemas—probably the latter. The certain thing is that it is fear

of this occurring that is responsible for the opposition to Sunday freedom. Manchester has a population of 750,000. Of these 150, according to the *Manchester Evening News*, have objected to people seeing the "pictures" on Sunday, and the Watch Committee has impudently and insolently ordered the Council to reconsider its decision. The Council deserves to be kicked out if it submits to this dictation.

Now we suggest to Cinema proprietors that it is time they made a stand for themselves, ceased to behave like sheep, and conducted themselves like men. The old Sunday law prohibited admission to entertainments on Sunday, to which admission was for money or for tickets sold for money. The new law did not, we believe, repeal this section of the law: It merely made it legal to charge for admission. But there are legal decisions which are to the effect that charging for a reserved seat is not a charge for admission. Therefore if a cinema is open and it holds, say, a thousand seats, fifty of the seats may be free; all the rest could be charged for as "reserved."

There is no reason why cinema people should not follow this rule. No reason, but one. Most of the proprietors have no interest in the matter save to take money, and some have confessed to us that if they followed this plan they would be subjected to all kinds of petty annoyances by the police. But there is a vast sum of money invested in and behind the cinema business. If the police became too troublesome or a prosecution was tried, the case could be fought through all the courts, and in that case we feel confident that any persecution or undue interference with licences would be stopped. It is time that the cinema industry stood for a little more than making money.

We wish to put a simple and straightforward question to the *Church Times*. In its issue dated August 30, it says, "What might not happen if only the English Church would set in order its own neglected house and throw it open for a meeting-place of Christian nations." Now what we would like to know is what constitutes a Christian Nation? Without answer to that question the advice is just verbiage.

The Pope says he is a "lightning rod," and is staying in Rome because while he is there Rome will not be bombed. We consider this very partial, and unfair to the rest of his followers. Why not test his capacity as a lightning conductor by spending a month at Turin or Milan, or better still in one of the large Italian aeroplane works? The result might not be conclusive, but it would at least test the sincerity of the Pope.

There is something in the New Testament about pulling the beam from one's own eye before complaining of the mote in the eye of another. The Vicar of Lillington reminds us of this when he finds fault with other Christians for the failure of Christianity. He says:—

The Church of England is well endowed; it enjoys all the prestige that the backing of the State gives it; every village has its parish priest and parish church. There is no persecution and no antagonism on the part of the State, and if, since the last war, England has become un-Christian, it is a very grave indictment against the Church of England.

We ought to be fair in our criticism even when it is a criticism of our friends. How on earth could the Church of England prevent the country becoming less Christian? The country has been doing that ever since the days of Copernicus, and even before that. If the clergy had been ten times as active and as good as they have been, they could no more prevent the country getting less Christian than they could prevent a boy from developing to manhood. The priest did not derive his power from his being a good man, but from his being a great "medicine" man—a "sacred" character. It is quite probable that the Rev. A. J. Carter is actually less of a Christian than any of those he criticizes.

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# THE FREETHINKER

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"OWD JACK."—"To-Day's Prayer," as published in the *Sheffield Independent*, is rightly described by you as a "bleat." The only other word suitable would be a "Heehaw."

CISE CERE.—Letter received. We greatly appreciate its contents.

J. F. PRICE.—An excellent letter. We hope it appears. It is clear and to the point.

W. RICHARDS.—You have full permission to make any use you please of either our articles or any other of our writings. With acknowledgment when possible, but, if advisable, without.

H.M.—Pleased to receive your appreciation of our "Thanks to Hitler." But it would need expansion if we adopted your suggestion of turning it into a pamphlet, and we have no time for that at present. But you wield a pretty pen yourself. Why not take those notes as a basis for a booklet? There is plenty of room for expansion, and we desire no further acknowledgment. There are several series of booklets in being that such an essay would fit.

J. W. PATTERSON (New Zealand).—Thanks for letter and renewal. Money Order to be made payable at Ludgate Circus P.O. London.

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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

This issue of the *Freethinker* is being prepared for the press between air-raids. This curtails the time during which the composing-room is in action. For this reason we have had to hold over some correspondence and other items. As it is we do not know if there will be another interruption before the day is over. Three or four raids per day has been the usual ration lately.

We have several times mentioned the readiness of the *Freethinker*, the N.S.S., and the Secular Society Limited, to send free packets of literature to the forces. We now want to ask the assistance of Freethinkers to help in this work. At present we are sending literature—to a considerable extent—in the dark. That is we have no means of knowing whether the kind of literature that is sent is the kind required. So we are now asking for help in two directions. The first is this. We will send free copies of the *Freethinker* for four weeks, post paid, to anyone

## SPECIAL

WITH a view to meeting circumstances that may arise with a prolongation of the war, we should be greatly helped if each subscriber to the *Freethinker* would be good enough to send us his, or her, name and address. We refer only to those who procure their copies through newsagents. Those who order direct from the office have their addresses already on our books.

The circumstances we have in view may never arise, but it is well to be prepared for all kinds of difficulties. We have, so well as we can, guarded the future of the paper in many directions, and this suggestion represents the last contingency of which we can think—at the moment.

All that is required is just a name and an address on a postcard or in a letter. We shall know to what it refers. Our readers have assisted us so willingly, and in so many directions, that we do not hesitate to ask this further help.

CHAPMAN COHEN

whose name and address is sent us by an existing reader. If the one receiving such copies wishes to have a further supply he may have it by sending us a post card on the first of each month asking for a continuance.

The other method is concerned with Freethought literature in general. Here there must be a number of men who find that their comrades are more or less interested in the matters with which our publications deal. In that case what we wish for is the knowledge of the kind of reading that will meet with appreciation. That will save us sending one thing where another is needed. At present we are sending in the dark, and while we have had plenty of evidence that in this war as in the last, a deal of good work was done by the distribution of literature in this way, we wish to achieve the maximum of result with a minimum of effort and expenditure.

We are very keen on this matter because there is such a determined effort being made to utilize the war as a form of propaganda for the Christian Churches. If Freethinkers and non-Christians dislike the lie that they are fighting for the preservation of Christianity, or the grosser lie that this war is one between Christianity and Atheism, they have here an easy opportunity of doing a little by way of correction. Now let us hear from some of them as early as possible.

We beg to thank all those who have written congratulating us on achieving the seventy-second anniversary of our birth. We feel fit for several more anniversaries, and if we are successful we shall not have to say "Thanks to Hitler." We are rather too close to the falling bombs for that.

We have received of late several accounts of attempted police interference with outdoor meetings in the provinces. Usually it takes the form of some policeman walking up to the speaker with a "You-can't-do-that-sort-of-thing-here" kind of air, and ordering the speaker to stop. Generally it will be found on enquiry that the policeman is a staunch Christian, and doesn't agree with what the speaker is saying. At other times the interference is probably due to the fact that with so many controllers in the land the policeman feels that he ought to be controlling something or someone, and that a Freethought speaker is fair game.

If the speaker acts with good humour and prudence the matter generally ends with the policeman retiring to reconsider the matter. It is enough to ask upon whose instructions the officer is acting, and what is the reason for the interference with the meeting. If the reply is not satisfactory an enquiry made at the local police station should produce a better explanation. In cases where religious meetings are being held there is no right what-

ever of interference with a Freethinking one. If after acting as suggested there is still an attempt to stop the meeting a report should be sent to headquarters, and the matter will be taken in hand. In all cases the names of willing witnesses should be secured.

We are pleased to receive good reports from independent sources of the successful meetings in the open-air that are being held by Messrs. Clayton and Brighton. Mr. Clayton operates in Lancashire, and Mr. Brighton roves around Northumberland and Durham. They both know how to handle an outdoor audience, partly because they know their case, and partly because they are not easily disturbed, and are good-tempered in dealing with the opposition that is offered. Mr. Brighton, in particular, manages to arrange a number of debates, many with clergymen, and these are usually profitable to the "Cause." It does not seem as though the war has weakened interest in the Freethought movement.

### More About Alf

My old friend, Mr. Nicholas Mere, whose articles have, I am sure, given much pleasure to readers of the *Freethinker*, has often said to me: "You must never allow anyone to talk you out of your common-sense." I might have challenged him to define the latter word—a word, like "reasonable," almost indefinable—but I knew what he meant, and I gratefully accept his common-sensed advice. Common-sense may not be easily defined, but, like many other words and things, we recognize it when we see it. This sterling piece of good sense came to my mind when I read Mr. C. G. L. Du Cann's article on the Franco-American writer, Henry Miller. Mr. du Cann's article, "What About Alf?" is, as most of his *Freethinker* articles are, well-written and informative, and had he stopped at thanking God for Mr. Miller (as he does) I should have been content to thank Mr. du Cann for introducing us to yet one more writer who puts the *individualist* point of view forcibly and well. But as he appears to endorse Mr. Miller's views—I do not say he does, but he writes of them in an enthusiastic strain—I think it is up to somebody to examine Mr. Miller from what I venture to call the common-sense angle.

I must now attempt, since I have volunteered for the job, to tell you what I mean by a common-sensed outlook. All systems of thought, philosophy, or logic which seek to reduce our universe to *monism* are against common-sense. I hold fast to this view although I am aware that Materialism is usually classified as Monist. I hold that the every-day world, the world which is around us, is a *dualistic* world, and that common-sense requires us to recognize it as such. It was open to God, presumably, to create a monistic world, but he didn't see his way to, so we must take the world as we find it. That is a damn nuisance, for a dualistic world is much more difficult to live in. Just imagine how much easier the world would be for all of us if there was only one sex, or, better still, no such thing as sex. But we must recognize that the two sexes exist and make the best of it.

What is true of the dualism of sex is true of many other human conditions and institutions. Chief among these is the dualism of the individual and the State, or, if you prefer it, the individual and the family, tribe, community, nation, in ever-widening groups. We now even talk of hemispheres; witness the New World warning the bosses of the Old World to "keep out." The individual and the community are both realities and common-sense recognizes them as such. Each has, or should have, its rights, its sphere of operation; and of political constitutions, defining the sphere of each, there is no end. The individual and the com-

munity both survive in a sort of uneasy symbiosis, each alternately making inroads into the *lebenstraum* of the other. Hence much heartburning and unhappiness. But the point is: we live in a dualism and being (sometimes) persons or states of common-sense we recognize this dualism and try to effect that adjustment which will afford the least hurt to each other. Schopenhauer's illustration of this by the figure of hedgehogs clustering for warmth will be familiar to many readers.

Now in order to effect this uneasy adjustment it is a first necessity that the case for both sides must be put clearly and forcibly. Mr. du Cann, who is, I believe, a barrister, will understand this. And here it is that at long last we come back to Henry Miller. He puts the case clearly for the individual, even if he puts it forcibly and obscenely. Good; we must thank him for putting it. At the moment there are not too many writers who can, or will, put the individual's case so well as Mr. Miller. And, by God, it does need putting now.

But common-sense will recognize that Mr. Miller's, i.e., the individual's, case is only half of the picture. The State has its case. It is the Fascist, or Communist, or Totalitarian, or what-have-you case, which common-sense will demand shall be put and listened to. The man or woman of common-sense will recognize that as the world changes (and no static world seems possible—the static world is utopian and, therefore, unreal) the intelligent individual will throw his weight on one side or the other as the case may require. Politicians, ecclesiastics, and all representatives of bodies of men will hate him and call him mugwump, but that can't be helped. The choice for the intelligent individual is by no means easy at any time; just now almost impossible except for the strongest. To win the war it appears to be necessary to sink our individuality in the herd. To save civilization it appears to be necessary to assert more strongly than ever individual freedom and initiative. In a word, to see to it that while the Fascists occupy and despoil Paris, Alf shall be kept alive to finish his forthcoming opus.

But, really, my Freethought comrades, are the products of Alf's brains and labour of such vital importance, at this hour of all? Do not the writing-folk tend to overrate their wares? Alf Perlès I have never heard of before. Henry Miller, I have: George Orwell has an excellent essay on him in his *Inside the Whale*. Du Cann's breezily-written, excellently informative, and well-reasoned articles, grace the pages of the *Freethinker*, a journal in which I am not unknown. Pointing to my books of verse I can claim to be a "literary gent." of sorts. But I would sacrifice gladly the whole of my literary output and that of all the other literary gentlemen I have mentioned if, in exchange, I could procure the liberation of Paris, and France, and Europe from the curse now afflicting individuals of worth there in the name of the Almighty State. If all the literature of to-day were to perish from the earth yet men be left free—really free, not merely politically free—we should witness a literary Renaissance that would put the Renaissance of the Fifteenth Century into the shade.

One final point: Henry Miller, like his admirers, T. S. Eliot, and Ezra Pound, belongs to the most *déraciné* (uprooted) class of people in the modern world, the small class of American literary people who live, or lived, in Paris, Vienna (like Sinclair Lewis and his wife, Dorothy Thompson) and other European city haunts. Their writings have their value (though Pound and Eliot are both reactionaries), but their case is necessarily one-sided. Common-sense will listen to the cries of those rootless men, but it will recognize their exceptional position. The fact that they abide no longer in Paris, Vienna, or Florence, is the final and crushing argument that the State must be recognized,

that we cannot wash our hands of it, but must reform it, or kill it.

Alfred Noyes (another Alf!) in his interesting book on Voltaire reports an interview between Voltaire and Boswell (Johnson's Boswell). In it the great French sceptic referred to the English Government. It was, he said, the best Government. But, he added, "if it becomes bad, throw it into the sea. It is for that very purpose that the sea surrounds you." Because the Christ-like Mr. Miller will not help to throw Herr Hitler into the Seine, even if he pleases Mr. du Cann, he does not please.

BAYARD SIMMONS

## The Chimpanzee at Play

Any parent will recognize that children have fashions in their pastimes. There has recently, for instance, been a vogue in stamp-collecting. At another period the time-honoured game of marbles will be "all the rage," or it may be kite-flying, spinning tops and so on.

Kohler found that apes, too, had fashions in their play. If you press the point that human fashions are largely determined by the seasons of the year, then this holds also with the apes. In the summer they would moisten pieces of straw and hold them out to catch ants. The food motive, note, could not be dominant, for there were plenty of ants to be captured by less interesting means.

Another popular pursuit was digging for roots with a stick, the latter being used with foot and hand in the manner of a spade. They took a lively interest in each other's plots.

Another fashion was stone-throwing, in which Chica achieved an accuracy of aim far exceeding Kohler's when he tried, by that means, to cure this gymnast of getting on the stockade roof. An even more human failing was the love of teasing creatures more stupid than themselves, such as hens. The hens from an adjacent poultry-run would be invited up to the boundary of the apes' quarters by bread. (The chance shedding of crumbs during feeding time had opened up this possibility). An ape would hold out a piece of bread to entice a victim and then withdraw it at the hen's approach. This can be repeated many times before the hen "gets wise." Or, as an alternative, the unsuspecting fowl would find itself poked heartily with a stick by another ape lying in wait.

It is interesting to note that Rana, the most stupid ape, and Sultan, the most intelligent, fed the hens, but in different ways. Whereas Rana threw it, Sultan strew it, not *at* them, but *to* them.

Nests were made, not only for use, but for play. Shapes were suggested by the material available; the ring was made first, and the rest left incomplete if all the stuff was used up.

A quite human weakness was displayed in the love of personal ornamentation. Bits of rag and twigs would be used; Tschego, the mature female, hung a chain round her neck; Tercera put strings round her ears, or anything that would satisfy the purpose of *dangling*. Sultan carried empty tins about, and discovered the acoustic effect of making noises into them. Chica even carried on her back a 9 lb. block of lava, and this same ape also made a speciality of the "jumping stick," which she used for vaulting, this being an after-effect of an experiment.

The idea of decoration possibly came from placing grass on the shoulders when it was raining. When decorated the ape became strutting and self-important, even to the point of unusual aggressiveness. The feel-

ing of something moving with the body apparently makes the bearer feel richer and statelier. (The ladies will permit me at this juncture to direct attention to their ear-rings.)

The apes easily conceived the idea of accumulating private property, and collections were made of all kinds of rubbish. When not in use, Tschego would cram her valuables, such as smooth stones, into her sex-lap. This mature ape was also the most interested in painting her body. The apes would moisten white clay in their mouths before daubing it on the walls and doors, and Tschego also painted her own legs. Observations on apes are here purely relevant to the study of primitive art.

Some of the apes had a liking for getting into a sack and rolling in it many metres at a great speed. Pranks would often be played on the passing bundle. Or an ape would be seen dragged along like a corpse by a comrade, or one would walk along with another hanging on by the neck. Then came the fashion of spinning round like a top; in this Tschego and Chica got a forward movement with their rotations, and the former would proceed to the accompaniment of her friend Grande's thumpings.

We are now prepared to find a collective dance emerging. Two apes would be wrestling round a post. More would join in and the post became a centre like a maypole. Konsul had already shown a love for placing his hands on the shoulders of a comrade, and then following in her footsteps. This popular little fellow would often be invited to do this by the others, who would place themselves in position. Possibly Konsul had seen Sultan try to use the keeper as a ladder. This idea spread, and a whole line of apes would trot in that fashion round a centre—the idea of a centre having first been supplied by a material object such as a post. Rhythmic stamping followed.

How is the idea of rhythm born? Kohler does not take within his immediate scope the question of these origins, and we can only surmise. We know, for instance, that Grande developed a habit of thumping. The length of her arm, a constant quantity, would no doubt often give some approximate consistency to the time span between each thump. Collective expectation, facilitated by rhythm, brings unanimity and so keeps the social demonstration going. We are entitled to assume that gregarious tendencies have been biologically useful. And in the case of primitive man collective action would befit a tribe to succeed in warfare against less united tribes. A primitive war-dance is a most instructive phenomenon. There is no need for the modern materialist to shirk explanations in the realm of aesthetics. Our love of art and music are natural emergents from the animal history of mankind.

Coming back to the chimpanzees, we find leadership in these dances, just as there are leaders in human parades. Tschego's size and maturity made her the accepted leader, and if she varied the dance by rotating on her own axis the others would follow suit. She would sometimes lead them, decorated and important, in and out of two posts or boxes, and on these occasions Rana would often take the wrong turn and throw the whole thing out of gear. Konsul, the comedian, would sometimes step out of the circle and wave his arms in accompaniment, and *in time to the trolling*. Each time fat Tschego came round he would catch her a sounding smack behind.

If Kohler himself started the game he would be joined by two more. If he stopped they would look dejected: they evidently relied on leadership.

We shall next inquire how the apes compare with human being in their feelings, sympathies and emotions.

G. H. TAYLOR

## Religion and Nonsense

[We have been requested to print the following, written during the last war, April 14, 1918, and gladly do so. It is quite applicable to the moment.]

We said last week that nothing seemed strong enough to stop the clergy talking nonsense. And the statement applies with equal force to religious writers as a whole. Presumably it is the fault of the subject. One cannot touch pitch and remain undefiled, and one cannot preach on a nonsensical subject and talk sense. When Charles II. was asked how he could account for the popularity of a certain shallow-minded preacher, he replied that "His nonsense suited their nonsense," and the reply serves as an explanation of much that occurs to-day. Anyway, we had hardly got rid of last week's notes before we came across another illustration of what we had said, this time from the *Times*, which provides its readers with a weekly religious article from an anonymous correspondent. The article is entitled "The Easter Assurance. An Answer to a Moral Demand." Where the moral demand exists it is impossible to say. It is as imaginary as the assurance is doubtful. Those who find comfort in the writer's "assurance" will quite justify Charles's explanation—His nonsense suits their nonsense.

What is the "Easter assurance?" What is "the moral demand" to which an answer is given? The Easter message is, of course, the resurrection. "Christ has risen"! And that follows upon the Christmas message of Peace on earth, good will to men! The first part of the message is a satire, the second is an insult to civilized reason. Think of "Peace on earth" when the nations who accept and profess the message are engaged in more ruthless slaughter than the world has yet seen, when the deaths of only a few hundred men are summed up in the laconic message "All was quiet at the Front yesterday"! When has there been peace on earth during the whole period of Christian history? Christian peace is like Christian veracity: it is something peculiar to itself. There is nothing like it in the world. And it is well for the world that there is not. It would be better still for the world if neither were so general. And the satire is equalled by the insult. A resurrection from the dead is beyond human belief, because it is outside the power of human conception. No one can believe it to be true, one can only say one believes it. The savage credits it because he is ignorant of the processes of life and of the nature of death. The civilized man cannot because his knowledge of life and death—imperfect though that knowledge may be—excludes real belief. A mere formula is made to usurp the place of reasoned conviction. The modern Christian does really try hard to remain a savage, but he is not altogether independent of his environment. The modern man will out, and the faith of the savage is apt to wear thin when it runs up against the insistent pressure of civilized life.

The *Times* writer is concerned with the many thousands of young men who have died and are dying during the War. To them and to us, he says, "faith in the resurrection assures us that those who have passed out of our sight have lost nothing that made their life true and beautiful." How so? Faith in the resurrection of Jesus can prove nothing so far as we are concerned. If Christ was God how can what happened to him be any indication of what will happen to us? On the Christian hypothesis he belonged to an altogether different order from that to which we belong. His resurrection may prove that Gods will not remain in the grave, it has no bearing upon what will happen to man. And he did many things that

are beyond our power. To commence with, he got himself born without an earthly father. How many of us can accomplish that? He fed thousands with a few loaves and fishes, and had more food left at the end of the meal than he had at the beginning. Not even the Government Food Controller can do that. He walked on the waves, stilled the tempest with a word, cast devils out of men and women, converted water into wine. How many of us can do these things? And if we cannot imitate him in these things, why should we be able to imitate him in rising from the dead? His end matched his beginning. Both are equally reasonable; and the man who begins by crediting the one has naturally, no difficulty in accepting the other. If he was a God his example is useless to us. If he was a man his birth, life, and resurrection are, in the light of reason, a tissue of fantastic absurdities.

The Christian doctrine of a future life, we are told, answers the moral demand that good shall prevail. It does nothing of the kind. The moral demand is that right shall prevail, not somewhere else, but here. And a postponement is not an answer. When a wrong is done, the moral demand is not satisfied because someone is punished for it. The moral demand is that it shall not occur at all. Man's faith in God is strained because the wrong occurs; it is not strengthened by being told that in some place God has straightened it all out again. That is merely stupefying the moral sense with the narcotic faith. And reason is apt to reflect that, if there be a God, he made this world as well as the next. It would surely have been as easy to him to so arrange this world that the reasonable demands of the moral sense should be satisfied. The plea of another world in which God has made things right, is an admission that in this world he has made them all wrong. It is bringing God under the jurisdiction of a First Offenders Act. God is given another chance to redeem his character—somewhere else. He has admittedly forfeited it here; he will reform, and vindicate it there. Man is very forgiving to his gods. He excuses their blunders and palliates their iniquities. He hopes that God will behave himself better in the next world. He knows he has conducted himself but poorly in this. A future life in which the thousand-and-one injuries of this life are to be removed is the hypothesis of a knave that will satisfy only the credulity of a fool.

The future cannot undo the past. An injustice once done, remains an injustice for ever. Think of the folly, the criminal folly, of telling the people of Belgium, or Siberia, or Poland, who have seen their homes ruined, their sons and brothers and fathers killed, their daughters, sisters, and mothers outraged, that justice will be done in the next world! Revenge—natural, inevitable revenge—may be gratified; but will that restore the life of the one or the honour of the other? How can the next world make good the loss of the many thousands of young lives that might have been spent in labour to make the world better worth living in? It is this world that mourns their loss; it is this world that is the poorer for their going. Poorer it might have been had they lacked the courage to face the prospect of departure; but the loss remains a loss none the less. Our grief over their death bears witness to the loss we have sustained, and it gives the lie to the pulpit theorizing of these pious traffickers in human sorrow. It is bad enough that our moral sense should be outraged by the slaughter of the world's youth, but surely there is no need to outrage our reason by this attempted justification of their death.

Death sits crowned in thousands of homes to-day, and will sit enthroned in many more with the passing of each day's sun. The fact is before us, gross and

palpable, and we all face it with what resolution we may. But it is surely unnecessary to pretend that this world-disaster is a blessing in disguise, and that childish faith is a fantastic future life compensates for the loss the world is experiencing. It is a lie to say that those who have died "have lost nothing that made their life true and beautiful," even though it may be true they would have lived a poorer life had they lacked the courage to lose it. They have lost all. If there is a gain, it lies with those who remain. The profit from the dead lies with the living; but it need not be the base gain of these profiteers of the pulpit. Our young men have faced death with their heads up and their eyes open, and we only show ourselves worthy of their sacrifice when we clear our minds of cant and face their loss with something of the same courage with which they faced their end.

CHAPMAN COHEN

## Islam and Christendom

(Continued from page 549)

The approach to History—at best a dubious collocation of data surviving by accident—may take several paths opening up particular vistas. The record covers all aspects, however imperfectly, or manifestations of human movement and achievement. And so varied is the total to be surveyed that its entire compass would call for a kind of encyclopædic content. To few is it given to register this possession. So the tendency is to concentrate on what appeals to the student as of especial import. The weakness here is emphasizing the personal persuasion as of chief import. Thus one may be particularly interested, say, in the development of music; or, the changing fashion and peculiarities of dress, clothing, adornment. Another in the multiple instruments and modes employed in extending the art of war and systematic homicide. To one mind the spectacle presented through the ages by the successive fortunes, the rise and fall and ruin of empires, is absorbing. A different temperament is affected over the lot and vicissitudes of the "Proletariat," whoever that may include; and the "materialist interpretation of history," whatever this may be taken to mean, and so on.

In the present connexion we are concerned mainly with belief; the interaction of diverse "cults," evoked by the human mind seeking explication of the nature of things, included under the generic term "religion." To review the reactions, internal and external, of two outstanding faiths; and to sum up their influence on what, to the writer, is the supreme interest of all. The search, that is, after truth regarding the problem of Existence and valid knowledge thereon, and its corollary—rational pursuit of the Art of Living. . . .

Islam and Christendom in their developed form, as they impacted from the ninth century onwards, were not simply an organized faith, ritual, doctrine but a polity, a legal and social system. Christendom, West of the Adriatic, incorporated on the material plane surviving elements from the ruin of the Imperial regime, if it ignored much of value in antique Culture. The Byzantine Empire preserved largely intact this heritage, until weakened by inroads of barbaric forces on its northern frontiers, and the pressure of Islam to the South and East. The Civil Constitution rested on the Roman Law as codified and simplified by the Jurists of Justinian in the sixth century. The Canon Law of the Church regulated the spiritual and moral relations of the faithful in the light of its creed. The theory of a revived Holy Roman

Empire, and the office of Cæsar in the Carolingian House by the Roman Church, created a centre of Supernatural and Secular Authority in one. The Feudal system, amid the confusion of the time, gave a cohesive principle to barbaric factors slowly coalescing into the national kingdoms of a later period. All which, whatever its limitations, roughly subserved the needs of a new order. If the Eastern or Greek Church refused recognition to the Paramount Claims of Rome, each communion presented an organic theocratic polity.

Muslim law was rooted at its first stage in the tribal customs of Arabia, as modified under the dictates of Mohammed and the precepts delivered in the Koran; who brought a measure of original intelligence to bear on the conduct of his community. These things touched infanticide, blood feuds, polygamy, property, reducing marriage to a legal quartette; and were linked with ritual practices, prayer, alms, inhibitions, and the like—the whole forming a quasi-religious code. . . . As the Saracen power extended over foreign lands it included subject peoples of a more complex material culture and usage with their own indigenous customs. As the Caliphate became consolidated, losing something of its first fanaticism in the process, it had to take account of these conditions, and, as they affected Muslims themselves. So the intimate Islamic rule came to be related to changing circumstances:—

There has grown up in every Moslem country at least two systems of Courts, the one administering this Canon Law, and taking cognizance of private and family affairs such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, its officials also giving rulings on purely personal religious questions, etc.; the other, the true law courts of the land, administering codes based on local custom and the decrees of the local rulers. . . . Non-Moslem communities settled in Moslem territory have been uniformly permitted to administer and judge themselves according to their own customs and laws. Save when they come into direct contact and conflict with Moslems, they are left to themselves with a contemptuous tolerance. . . . The Islam of theory cannot conceive of a mixed State, it takes account only of a State containing none but Moslems, and its ideal is that the whole world will in the end form such a State. In practice then Moslems try to shut their eyes to the existence of non-Moslems in their midst and make no provision for them until compelled. That a non-Moslem should have the same position as a Moslem is unthinkable. This, of course, produces an attitude of extreme contempt. The only citizens are Moslems, and all others are to be looked down upon and left to themselves. What they do or think among themselves does not matter, they are outside the ring-fence of Islam. . . .<sup>11</sup>

During the medieval period more Christians and non-Muslims were subject to Islamic Authority than the reverse. Their toleration varied on occasion with the character and humanity of the reigning House or Sovereign—a tempered absolutism. Thus some of the heretical Eastern sects found its regime more favourable than the bigoted Orthodoxy of Byzantium. In Spain, under the more enlightened Caliphs, Jews and Christians enjoyed a measure of intermittent equality. With its reconquest by the Catholic powers the surviving Moriscos were reduced to a servile status until their final expulsion from the country. This opens up an issue to be dealt with later.

So these two systems lived in a political vicinage for centuries without one exerting the least influence over the Dogmatic Constitution of the other. Apostacy was a mortal offence or mortal sin. For what grounds of compromise could there be between the Christian Church, its divine institution by the Son of God, with a final revelation of the divine purpose and means of

<sup>11</sup> *Ency. Brit.* (= "Totalitarianism.")

Salvation after the partial dispensation of Judaism—and this pretender from Arabia! What interest in an alleged vouchsafement made up of rhapsody, Jewish and other Eastern tradition or superstition, contemning and denying its own subtle Trinitarianism by positing a Unitarian Deity! . . .

For the Muslim these subtleties were so many obstructions to direct communion with Allah—to one who “walked with God” from day to day. To his simple worship its gorgeous ritual was so much idolatry, its ascetic code antipathetic to his own social amenities; while its “celestial choir” paled before the vision of his glowing futurity. . . Beyond intermittent lethal hostility the rivals sustained a choice line of abusive reference: “infidel, paynim, arch-impostor Mahound”; “giaour, Nazarene”! Its grotesque absurdity complemented by unquestioning credulity on either hand—each consigning the other cheerfully to Hell.

Yet, transcending doctrinal issues, the instinct of the West in its resistance to Islam was sound. For it embodied the element that distinguishes European culture from all its predecessors—the “classic” tradition of republican freedom and independence in its nascent form as seen in the institutions and literature of antique Greece and Rome. Though long submerged beneath a tide of Ecclesiasticism, it was destined to revive amid new circumstance and influence thought and action in the modern age. It included, too, aesthetic achievement in art, drama, sculpture which the arid “puritanism” of Islam negated on that side. A system springing from an alien ethnographical environment void of any similar principle whatever. Just as Republican Rome by destroying Carthage,—the centre of an Oriental predatory power with a native horrific cult overshadowing the Mediterranean—prevented its domination and conserved this for centuries as a European Sea.

The line of positive causality lay outside theology in the field of material interest, commercial association; and, through an access of free thought and scientific curiosity. It remains to appraise this sequence

AUSTEN VERNEY

(To be concluded)

#### HE PROVED HIS CASE

A firm of eastern attorneys recently requested that a midwest lawyer furnish more complete information regarding the title to an old lease.

The westerner had an abstract prepared showing “chain of title,” checked it to prove correct legal form back to 1779 and sent the papers east.

The “big city” lawyer approved the title as far back as 1779, but requested that it be traced back more completely, in order to show a flawless record of ownership.

The midwest lawyer replied:

“Please be advised that in the year 1779, the Continental Congress of what is now the United States of America acquired title to this property from the British Crown, at the points of bayonets in the hands of American soldiers, led by Colonel George Rogers Clark, by the capture of Fort Sackville, at Vincennes, Indiana.

“The British Crown had previously acquired title from France by conquest. The title of France was acquired from Spain by conquest.

“The Spanish title was based on the discoveries of one Christopher Columbus, a Genoese sailor, who had been duly authorized and commissioned to embark upon this voyage of discovery by Isabella, the Queen of Spain.

“Isabella, before granting such authority, had obtained the approval of His Holiness the Pope. The Pope is the vicar on earth of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the son and heir apparent of God—and God made the Midwest.”

This chain of title was accepted as perfect by the eastern law firm, and the trade was closed.

Truth Seeker (New York)

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