

THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED BY CHAPMAN COHEN •

VOL. LXXI.—No. 20

SUNDAY, MAY 18, 1941

PRICE THREEPENCE

TO ALL READERS

This copy of the *Freethinker* may never see the light. I sincerely hope it will not; for it will mean that the special emergency, to meet which this issue has been prepared, has not arisen. In that case it will be broken up and the type will be recast.

But the bombings of the City of London proved that nothing was safe, and one could not count with ordinary certainty that what one had planned would come to fruition. I might leave the publishing office on Tuesday evening feeling that another issue had been "put to bed," only to find that during the night, and before the issue could be "run off," it had been "dissed" by one of the enemies' bombs.

So this issue was prepared, "locked up" and taken away to another place to be kept there in the hope that it would never be wanted, and that not even a wave of German bombers had stopped the regular issue of our paper.

Naturally we have had to dispense with the usual topical comments. But next week we hope to appear as usual, and meanwhile our readers will excuse everything that requires excusing.

The great thing is that the *Freethinker* has appeared. Nothing else matters very much.

The occasion to meet which this copy was prepared came on the evening of May 10th. The "*Freethinker*" was burned to the ground. For the time being all letters, etc., should be addressed to 68, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

EDITOR

Views and Opinions

Taboos

In his retirement ex-Dean Inge cannot be considered an unmixed blessing to the Church. He writes very often for the *Evening Standard*, and what he says with regard to religious belief must make some of his brother clerics squirm. The pity is that Dean Inge did not say these liberal things where they were most needed—in the pulpit. Liberal things about religion are said by many parsons nowadays, but usually in the press or the public platforms. Once in the pulpit they return to the old crudities with the implication that their belief in these orthodox doctrines remains substantially undisturbed. It is a pity that Dr. Inge did not, while he was in the pulpit, say the things about religious beliefs that he now often says in his retirement.

A defence of this policy is often made by saying that people do not go to church to listen to criticisms of religion. That apology evades the real issue, and is quite wrong in substance. To criticize is to pass a reasoned judgment on a given subject; it is not confined to either praise or blame. When there they indulge in criticism as much as when anyone out of the pulpit says that the wisdom of God has its limitations and that his goodness is open to question. The Christian does not object to criticizing God; he goes to Church for that purpose. But he

demands that the criticism of God must be a favourable one; he loves to listen to the parson criticizing God, but he insists that it must be in terms of praise. Then he sings "Praise the Lord." But if it is an unfavourable criticism he calls it blasphemy and damns the critic. The only way in which a Christian attending Church can avoid hearing God criticized is to fall fast asleep directly he enters the building, and not wake even in time for the collection. Liberal-minded parsons should give unprejudiced criticism where it would do the most good—in the pulpit. A little more fearlessness in the pulpit, a little more straightforwardness of speech, might lead to the development of better men and women. It is true that it might lead to a rapid decline in church attendances, but one cannot have anything in this world without paying for it.

It is interesting to find Dr. Inge dealing with taboos, in the imposition of which he has spent much of his life. But the pulpit habit of distorting a truth that must be told dies hard. Dr. Inge furnishes a good example of this. He defines a "taboo" as "something which is forbidden—no questions asked." That definition is not inaccurate, but is inadequate; and its inadequacy has the effect of making the definition misleading, and to that extent incorrect. Of course a taboo is something that must not be done, but there are thousands of things that must not be done which no one would dream of describing as taboos. The law says I must not pick my neighbour's pocket; a mother warns her child that it must not play with the fire; a doctor orders a patient to avoid red meat. There are a thousand and one prohibitions, but no scientifically-minded person would dream of calling them "taboos." Certainly a taboo is something that must not be done, but it must not be done for an understood and sufficient reason. If no questions are asked it is because the reason for the taboo existing is well understood. Dr. Inge is not fair to his readers; he misleads them by instruction. It really looks as though Dean Inge while no longer in the pulpit is still of it. Where telling the whole truth is concerned religion still lives as an instance of a taboo.

The whole significance of "taboo" is religious. A thing becomes "taboo" not because it is something forbidden; it is forbidden because of certain supernatural consequences that will follow the breaking of the taboo. When a certain food may not be eaten, or, if eaten, in a ceremonial manner only, it is because of supernatural associations. The Jew who will not eat pork is illustrating a survival of animal worship. Our sabbatarianism is a taboo because the Sabbath is said to be a day devoted to God, although it is derived from a "sabbath" which was observed because the supernatural influences controlling that day would have made the doing of certain things dangerous. The refusal of Jesus to permit a woman to touch him, after the resurrection, is an example of the belief in a dangerous supernatural influence that was supposed to be associated with females. When court etiquette demands that a man must not come into close contact with a king, we have an example of the

belief that the king is an incarnate god, and that close contact with an ordinary human would be dangerous for the latter. The god-king was a live wire that needed insulating for the benefit of the subject. The taboo placed on revealing the real name of the Bible god was due to the belief that an enemy might work magic with a name, and so the power of the god might be undermined. The real name of the Egyptian god Ra was kept secret for this reason. In parts of Southeast Europe a child is given two names, the real one that is kept secret to avoid magic and another pseudonym for general use. Sacred prostitution, the prostitution of a virgin in the temple, is again an illustration of a taboo. For only by this method was it believed that a man could protect himself from the supernatural influence emanating from intercourse with a virgin.

Almost any modern scientific work on the beginnings of religious beliefs will supply hundreds of illustrations of the power of taboo. It is man's utter dependence on the gods for whatever he needs to maintain life that makes the taboo so powerful. Those who care to consult the third volume of Frazer's *Golden Bough* will find many hundreds of examples of the taboo, and will also, if they have the wit, be able to trace the significance of existing customs, from "common" superstitions among the "people" up to the ceremonial of a court presentation or a coronation service. And the main feature in the taboo is the element of fear. Remove the factor of fear and religion is left unexplainable. Such things as "sacred" books or places or buildings furnish other examples of the taboos. It was taboo for anyone to use the "host" wrongly because the anger of God would be excited. A Church is taboo for certain functions because that, again, would anger God. In the South Seas when a man puts a "taboo" on a tree, or any object he values, it means, not merely that use of it or injury to it is forbidden, but that the tabooed object is now under the protection of a God and that those who break the taboo will be punished by him. The essence of the "taboo" is a religious prohibition.

Now I do not mean to imply that Dean Inge defined a "taboo" in the way he did in order to mislead his readers. He adopted the language of the man in the street without pausing to consider that the essence of taboo is a religious belief, not that something is forbidden. I take it that not being in the habit of tracing religion back to its origin in the fear and ignorance of primitive humanity, hardened also by years of life in the pulpit, and irritated by the troublesome interference of cranks, he let loose the word "taboo" as suggesting fussy and ignorant people who are never happy unless they are regulating others. It is annoying to a man who is peacefully devouring a beef steak to be attacked by a ferocious vegetarian, or for a man who is quietly drinking a glass of beer to be denounced by one who is intoxicated with the vision of a world devastated by drunkenness. Probably the ideas of most people concerning reform never get beyond a repetition of "Thou Shalt Not." It never strikes them that the achievement of freedom may consist in destroying prohibitions as well as imposing them.

Dr. Inge says that "religion is the most conservative instinct in the world, and has preserved many antiquated absurdities and petrified fossils of thought and practice." I do not agree with "religious instinct" because there is no such thing, but it is true that religion has preserved a host of antiquated absurdities and petrified fossils of thought. But this is because religion is in its essence an antiquated absurdity, although the power of the taboo frightens people to such an extent that few are allowed to speak of it as what it is. Who but those who live mentally

in the past can take the prayers and religious processions, the incantations of priests, the posturings of a pope and a bevy of cardinals, the chatter about virgin births, sacred days and sacred books, and so on without end, without turning their back upon the present and worshipping "antiquated absurdities"?

These beliefs die very slowly, and even when they are officially dead they still flourish in a more or less clandestine manner. Nor is this attachment to outworn forms of thought confined to the "lower classes," they are just as common with the "upper" strata of society. There is nothing commoner than to find the crown of the king, the robe of the judge, the cap of the professor, the uniform of the general, the learning of the "man of letters," and even the authoritative knowledge of the scientific specialist, accompanied by beliefs that have their roots in the most primitive phase of human existence.

This is a commonplace of experience, but there is another feature to be noted that is not so generally seen. Taboos had their origin in the fear of the supernatural. Men were afraid to do and dare because of those grim and incalculable gods that were believed to govern human destiny. The belief in some of these dies, but even then they leave behind them a legacy in the shape of a fear of change, a suspicion of hidden and incalculable dangers which make men bear the ills they have rather than run the risk of offending the unknown. Men have the courage to dare the unknown on the physical level. Nothing on earth, under the sea or in the air, will deter them in these directions. But it is when the call comes for adventure on the higher intellectual level that the spirit of adventure falters, and we find men falling back on a state of fear that is a direct outcome of the phase of mind that created the "taboo."

The power of the "taboo" is responsible for our inheritance of what Dr. Inge properly calls petrified fossils of thought and practice. But it has done more than that. It has given us a fear of change that strikes at the root of orderly progress. But change is of the essence of progress, and the nation that dreads change invites stagnation. At the present moment we are witnessing the handing over of at least a third of the population of Europe to a more revolting tyranny than the world has ever before seen, because gangs of lying statesmen have been able to work upon this ingrained fear of change, this heritage of the taboo. A little more intellectual courage on the part of the people would have crippled the power of those who have by lies and double-dealing brought our world to the pass it has reached. We would not take the intellectual risks, and we pay for it in the coin of human suffering and the threatened disruption of civilization.

So it has been through history. In all the reforms that have been won during the past century and a half, the fight for the equality of the sexes, the struggle for a proper system of education, for freedom of thought and speech, the root obstacle has been that fear of change which is a direct heritage from the "taboo." We do not advance from precedent to precedent so much as we strive to repeat precedents in a never-ending succession. We do not so much strive to improve on our ancestors as to repeat them. Much of the vitality has gone out of the "taboo," but we still worship at its shrine and shiver in the shadow of its name.

CHAPMAN COHEN

(Continued from next page)

men and all lands, still less for all time. For the Abracadabra Game is played slowly by its professors, who know quite well that teaching implanted in childhood is difficult to shake off, and comparatively few have knowledge and strength of will to do so.

MIMNERMUS

The Abracadabra Game

Thus do I ever make my fool my purse.

Shakespeare

The Smith family is reputed to be the largest in the world. That great humourist, Mark Twain, dedicated one of his books "To John Smith, in the hope that every person of that name will buy a copy, in which case the author will die both happy and prosperous." Members of this great family have given us famous authors, reputable soldiers, a great economist; and one was misguided enough to found a religion.

This was an American named Joseph Smith, the founder of the Church of the Latter-Day Saints, popularly known as the "Mormons." He was a poor agricultural labourer with a "bee in his bonnet." His particular fad was that he was the favoured recipient of a divine revelation with a new Bible and a fresh code. The Scripture was *The Book of Mormon*, which he wrote himself, and pretended had been originally inscribed on gold plates. No one ever saw those golden plates, but the wondrous story, with an angel in it, drew attention to the book, and he soon had a following, very poor and very innocent folk like himself.

All this happened in, or near, New York, a few years after the Battle of Waterloo, a period when ignorance was very rife among the people. This Mormon Church would, in all probability, have died out altogether, but the new sect incurred the displeasure of the Government by the rumour of its advocacy of polygamy. This led to popular disorder, and in a riot Joe Smith was shot dead by the military, and became a martyr.

Smith was a man of no conspicuous merits. Ignorant, fanatical, half-mad, he could never have made the Mormon Church a great institution. But as a martyr he inspired his followers. More bitter persecution followed, which led up to the leadership of Brigham Young, the great trek to the West, the building of Salt Lake City and the colonization of Utah, up till then a hunting-ground of the native Indians.

Mormonism ran true to form like so many religions. A mad, or half-mad, founder, tales or marvels, a fresh Scripture, martyrdom, and final financial success. *The Book of Mormon* is a salmagundi of sheer nonsense, with no literary merit whatever. It claims to give an account of the American people from the legendary story of the Tower of Babel until the fifth century A.D., the native Indians being described as "the lost tribes of Israel." It teaches the restoration of the Jewish tribes, and the second coming of Christ in a new Zion, simply a rehash of an old theme.

Brigham Young, the second President, was a man of action, not a dreamer. Fanatic he may have been, but he was a born leader and organizer. He not only personally led the historic migration of the one hundred and fifty pioneers thirteen hundred miles from New York State to Utah, but he built Salt Lake City and civilized the surrounding country. So keen was he to carry out his grandiose idea of town-planning that he came to England as a missionary and took back with him to Utah skilled mechanics and up-to-date equipment. High wages was his lure with a prospect of future employment, and on one trip alone he returned to America with hundreds of emigrants. All through the years a constant stream of men, women and children has been enticed to Salt Lake by the Mormon missionaries who have worked untiringly in many parts of Europe.

The truth about the polygamy of the Mormons is that Joe Smith toyed with the idea because the Ancient Hebrews had adopted it. But Brigham

Young used it as a desperate bid for survival. The Mormons were cruelly persecuted in their early days, and Young realized that their only chance of survival was to increase the numbers of members until they were too formidable to be massacred. When he died he left seventeen wives and forty-seven children to mourn him, but his Church had increased from the original one hundred and fifty pioneers to about one hundred thousand, and to-day numbers well over half a million, in addition to large numbers of Non-Mormons now living in Utah, which is as large as Great Britain. All these people pay taxes to the Church, which owns enormous property.

This polygamy existed through two entire generations, though only about five per cent of the Mormons practised it. Then the American Government again interfered, and the great legal fight ensued. Six years the battle lasted, and the end was a compromise. During that time the Mormon Church was actually disestablished and disendowed by the Government. Eventually the plural wives and children of the past were declared legitimate, and polygamy for the future was barred. The Mormon Church has loyally kept its bargain, and its property has been restored.

This Mormon Church is now enormously wealthy. As a farm-hand, its founder, Joe Smith, never earned much money, but as a prophet and preacher he was not too proud to accept cash and other gifts. Mystic he is called, but even he must have perceived the difference between solid cash and dreams. Brigham Young, his successor, had a very shrewd Yankee head on his shoulders, and, owing to his business qualities, the Church soon owned enormous property in Utah. Not only that, but tithe was imposed on all church members, and believers encouraged to give freely of their substance in return for which they got empty "blessings." Is there not some truth in the old adage that the more things alter, the more they are the same. Tithing, "the sacred tenth," comes from the twilight of religions, and was customary in Ancient Egypt, the very Motherland of Superstition. Not that Joe Smith knew much of Egypt, but he had sufficient sense to see the usefulness of ten per cent in the Abracadabra game.

Christians have lied about the Latter Day Saints until the average man or woman thinks Mormonism is synonymous with polygamy, and that the sole object of its members is to chase good-looking women. What plea do advocates of this religion offer in answer to their charge? They urge the Old Testament precedent of Jewish polygamy, and point to the terrible "social evil" in every town and village of Christendom, which exists partly as a result of monogamy, and claim that on the whole things were better in Utah than in Christian countries. They also say, that the overwhelming number of Mormons now have only one wife, and that the exceptions are very old people. The "Saints" are also strict teetotallers. They can point to the gross intemperance found in Christian lands, which contrasts so unfavourably with the abstinence from wine and strong drink insisted on in their prophet's *Book of Wisdom*, which contains a very strict code of conduct.

The original Mormons were worthy, but very innocent folk. They may even have half believed the story of their prophet, and accepted his new Bible on trust. But present-day Mormons are brought up in the "faith," and are unlikely to quarrel with their bread-and-butter when they reach years of discretion. Like Christians, they may pay lip-service to the "Church," and treat with respect a vast vested institution which has much money to spend. No more than the average Christian are they equipped educationally to question if their religion is suited for all

(Continued on preceding page)

Hunters and Trappers in Many Lands

CONTEMPORARY savage and barbarian peoples still preserve the mode of life pursued by the distant ancestors of modern sophisticated communities. Primitive tribes such as the Andaman Islanders collect fruits and berries, capture turtle and fish and chase the wild boar for food in the jungle. A slightly higher stage is reached by the natives of Brazil who, although chiefly dependent on the food they collect, produce a modicum of sustenance from the soil.

In districts where there exists a good supply of game, fruit and fish, comparative prosperity reigns. But when great scarcity occurs, as it does in savage Australia, the native tribes were driven to subsist on roots and insects or any other edible materials. As the late Sir Edward Tylor noted in his justly famous *Anthropology*: "The Fuegians wandering along their bleak inhospitable shores feeding mostly on shell-fish, so that in the course of ages their fish-bones and other rubbish, have formed great banks above high-water mark. Such shell-heaps or 'kitchen middens' are found here and there all round the coasts of the world, marking the old resorts of such tribes, for instance, on the coasts of Denmark, where archæologists search them for relics of rude Europeans who, in the Stone Age, led a life somewhat like that of Tierra del Fuego."

Use is second nature, and the Brazilian natives display an expertness in tracking game which amazes the European visitor. It is said that the native hunter is fully cognisant of every habit, and indication of the presence of the birds and beasts, and that the remnants of fruits, nuts and pods serve to identify the species that has fed on them. The hunter imitates the cries of his intended victims so successfully that they will approach within range of his poisoned dart. The Brazilian Botondo will swiftly ascend the tallest trees to retrieve an animal whose dead body has become entangled in the branches, in a manner that no white man could emulate. The chase concluded, the hunter "laden with game and useful forest things, such as palm fibre to make hammocks, or fruit to brew liquor, finds his way back to his hut by the sun and the lie of the ground, and the twigs that he bent back for waymarks as he crept through the thicket."

For untold centuries the dog has been man's assistant in the chase. Even the Australian aborigines trained the dingo to accompany them in their exploits. The wallaby and kangaroo have long been their prey and the extinction of the giant flightless birds of New Zealand may be traced to human and canine activity. Still, there were native tribes to which the dog was a stranger. But the most bloodthirsty mammal used in hunting was the cheetah. This powerful animal was carried in an iron cage to the hunting-ground and then liberated among the deer. When the deer had been killed the huntsmen enticed the cheetah or hunting leopard to re-enter the cage, where it was rewarded for its services with a joint of venison. This custom seems to have been confined to India and Persia.

Hawking or falconry was in vogue in classical times, but judging from Marco Polo's description of the Grand Khan of Tartary's hawking display, this so-called sport must have attained its maximum development during the Middle Ages. For Polo speaks of the Khan's 10,000 falconers unleashing their hawks against great flocks of cranes and pheasants. And it was from the Orient that falconry spread over Europe, and in England hawking was long an aristocratic diversion. Indeed, it was as late as the closing years of the past century when Charles Bradlaugh drew

public attention to the existence of a salaried sinecure enjoyed by a Master of the Hawks. But although falconry has practically disappeared in Europe it persists in Persia and other parts of Asia.

With the introduction of fire-arms, destruction of the lower animals was conducted on a gigantic scale. With the spread of agriculture the need for flesh food has diminished, but the old barbaric passion for "sport" still flourishes. The extermination of the buffalo in regions where it once roamed in countless multitudes is in many ways deplorable. It is alleged that the American Indians were always wantonly destructive in their buffalo-hunting, but when they obtained the white man's guns the slaughter became prodigious. We are told that "travellers have found the ground and air for miles fouled with the carcasses of buffalo killed merely for the hides and tongues." Fox-hunting, and other pastimes of "civilized" society clearly illustrate the persistence of ancestral traits. The tenacity of barbarism even in the higher circles of society is also manifested by the wholesale slaughter of pheasants and partridges deliberately bred for purposes of destruction. A celebrated scientist has said that while the more primitive methods of the chase are preserved in grouse shooting in Britain, and wild boar hunting in Austria, where game killing appears at its best, it is seen "at its meanest, where it has come down to shooting grain-fed pheasants as tame as barn-door fowls."

The pitfall is employed by various tribes in capturing animals. In its rudest form this trap is made by making a hole in the earth sufficiently deep to prevent a heavy animal from escaping once it has fallen in. In Africa the pitfall is concealed with soil or brushwood and the Bushmen capture a quadruped as large as a hippopotamus by these means. Birds and mammals are also snared with the noose. This device was used for trapping purposes by the Red Indians much as farmers and poachers snare rabbits in England. For the nooses were placed in the path or run frequented by the game, and the animal's heads were caught within them. More elaborate methods are utilized by the Malay who suspend a spear "with an elastic bamboo so bent back that when released by the animal it will spear him."

Netting game seems to have been almost universal from prehistoric times. It has been observed that the Australian aborigines net game in the same fashion as the ancient Assyrians or modern European poachers. Netting the birds of the air is of high antiquity. This art has been realistically depicted on the monuments of hoary Egypt, where it is shown affording gratification both to the quick and the dead.

Fish-weirs and dams are also ancient. With the receding of the tides at the mouths of rivers and in streams adjacent to the sea, fish remain stranded in the shallow pools. Taking advantage of this, the Fuegians construct stake fences, and similar methods are adopted by South African natives. Spearfishing by torchlight was long customary in Scotland and Scandinavia, and it may still be witnessed "in all its picturesqueness among the Indians of Vancouver's Island." Some very rude peoples capture fish by piercing them with the bow and arrow which they use with most marvellous dexterity. The fish-hook seems restricted in range, but quite lowly natives possess it as, for example, the Australian tribes who make their hooks of shell or attach a hawk's claw to a line when angling.

The ancient Egyptian hook was made of bronze, and the anglers of Old Nile anticipated the modern fisher by using both rod and line. Indeed, the most up-to-date appliances of the piscatorial art are merely modifications from immemorial ages. It has also been noted that the harpoon employed by American

whalers "with its loosely fitting point, which comes off when the fish is struck, only remaining attached by a long cord to the floating shaft" is copied with the simple modification of a steel point from the bone-headed harpoon of the Alcutian Islanders.

During the primal stages of human life man was little differentiated from the lower animals in his mode of life. Much in the manner of herbivorous creatures, he gathered food from Nature's store of fruit, roots and green vegetation. Later, as a hunter, he became carnivorous and tracked his victims much like a beast of prey. But with the advent of agriculture, the cultivation of plants and the taming of cattle, sheep, goats and other animals, the foundations of future civilization were firmly laid. Undoubtedly, Dr. Tylor was correct in his contention that: "Agriculture is not to be looked upon as a difficult or out-of-the-way invention, for the rudest savage, skilled as he is in the habits of the food plants he gathers, must know well enough that if seeds or roots are put in a proper place they will grow." Other causes than sheer ignorance conspire to prevent primitive peoples from acquiring the art of husbandry. Nomadic customs rule out permanent settlement, while harsh climatal conditions, in addition to the indolent disposition which characterizes so many native races go far to explain the fact that many of them still linger in the food-gathering phase and produce little or nothing from the teeming soil.

T. F. PALMER

Economics and the Church

At a recent Conference of the Church of England, there was a discussion on the economic question, some of the speakers coming to what may seem to some a rather belated decision against "private ownership." Except for a few of the nineteenth century clergy like Charles Kingsley, F. D. Maurice, and others, and a few loudly claiming adherence to Left Wing politics these days, our clergy have not been very conspicuous as opponents of what is called the capitalist system. One thing is certain, however, that what the Church wants more than anything else is to be in on the winning side, and if that side is predominantly Socialist, well, it is quite an easy matter to show that Jesus was a Socialist. It may be remembered that the late Dennis Hird wrote a well-known pamphlet on these lines.

Now the Church is a very wealthy institution—exactly how wealthy is exceptionally difficult to find out. I cannot remember ever seeing a fully detailed and documented account of the land in its possession, and income from that land, and how it is being used—though, of course, there may be such a publication. At all events, there is a body called the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, who have to look after that land, and all its secrets are certainly in their keeping. These have a nasty habit of cropping up sometimes, and when they do things do not look too happy for a Church whose curates often get hardly as much as a bare living wage.

According to our contemporary *John Bull*, "the Church of England is one of the richest 'industries,' and most secure professions in the country." A good many parsons no doubt have to work hard at whatever they do—though whether a good deal of that work is worth doing may be a matter of opinion. At all events, here are a few figures worth considering, especially when it is remembered that the heads of this institution are toying with the idea of abolishing private ownership:—

The total gross income of 12,595 incumbents in 1938 was £6,632,547 Stipends of assistant clergy

were £1,043,906. The Ecclesiastical and Church Estate Commissioners had receipts totalling £3,901,000 in 1939. Income from estates was £1,278,000; dividends, interests, were £2,308,000.

The heads of the profession come in for some splendid plums, as is very well known. The top man, the Archbishop of Canterbury, gets £15,000 a year. It is, of course, true that he will have to give a good deal of this back in income tax, and he has a lordly mansion to keep up with its many servants. Still, he will never be able to understand what real poverty is like.

The Bishop of London gets £10,000 a year, while the Archbishop of York receives £9,000, "more than double he received as Bishop of Manchester," we are told by *John Bull*.

As for the Deans, who function all over the country, their salary appears to be each above £2,000 a year—a sum which may be an absolute necessity for them, but seems rather hard to justify to a plain-thinking man. At all events, there must be thousands of parsons who get more than £500 a year, though there are many unlucky ones who get considerably less. If a workman is worthy of his hire then some of these must feel very bitter at those in the High Command. For the Church is rich enough to give all its priests a good fat wage.

Are the Ecclesiastical Commissioners good landlords? That is, do they act sometimes as a fairy godmother to those tenants who have fallen by the way? If they don't pay their rent, is the law called in to kick them and their belongings out?

Do the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, in the name of the Church, hold—or did they hold—slums and condemned property which is still paying rent? Do some of the holdings include coal mines and pubs? Are they grasping, mean, ready to fight to the utmost for their "rights," or are they always ready to allow the utmost latitude to needy tenants? It appears to me that these questions have never been answered in the fullest public light for the simple reason that almost all the work of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners is either not talked about, or if it is, the books in which will be found the necessary information are extremely difficult to get. We all remember, not so long ago, the holy row there was over tithes in which, if I am right, the Church won, or at all events got well out of a difficult position. And it will be particularly interesting to see exactly how much the Ecclesiastical Commissioners will pay out of the funds at their disposal for the rebuilding of the churches destroyed in the raids on England.

A good deal more on these lines could be said, but now that the Church, as a Church, is condemning private ownership, exactly where does the parson stand? Will the High Command be ready to come down to the level of the poor curate in the matter of wages, or will all of them, priest, parson, curate, vicar, dean, bishop, archbishop, be ready and willing gladly to accept the sum which, if we all become Socialists, will be allowed us by the Government?

There is a great deal now talked of the brave new world which we must have when we have achieved victory. I am not arguing for or against such an idea, as we may all then be in a sorry mess, and some of us remember the promises made during the last war, and how they were kept. The question at the moment is not what may happen to us who are outside the paid leaders of the Church; it is, what will happen to *them*? Are they ready to abolish the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, throw in all the Church land and possessions into the common pool and be content, with everybody else, with what the State will give them? I ha'e me doots.

Finally, I cannot refrain from one other quotation.

Few papers are so ready to give what it is pleased to call *true* religion a boost-up as *John Bull*, and many a parson has been able to get his Christian message over, and be well paid for it. One of its contributors, Pallas, however, has managed somehow to loose this unmistakable bombshell in its pages, and we expect a thoroughly religious row as a consequence:—

The ostriches of the Church are always with us. They talk, and lead not; they argue, and dodge the main issue; they talk glibly of private resources, and ignore their own; they denounce the economic motive and will not confess that such a motive dominates their lives, as well as the lives of those whom they are supposed to guide and comfort.

This is not the way to refer to an institution founded by Christ Jesus, the Son of God, and carrying on that deity's teachings all over the world. It is, in fact, very irreverent, and even might have proceeded from the *Freethinker*. But it is a good sign that, in these days, when Christianity is almost being literally forced down our throats, even one popular journal can muster up courage enough to say in clear terms what it thinks *against* the Church. We are, after all, not quite alone in the field.

H. CUTNER

Spain and the Church

VARIOUS ingenious theories have been framed to relieve the Inquisition of responsibility for the remarkable eclipse of Spanish intellectual progress after the sixteenth century. It is one of the interesting problems in the history of literature that Spain, whose brilliant achievements throughout the Reformation period promised to make her as dominant in the world of letters as in military and naval enterprise, should, within the space of a couple of generations, have become the most uncultured land in Christendom, without a public to encourage learning and genius, and without learning and genius to stimulate a public. For this there must have been a cause, and no other adequate one than the Inquisition has been discovered to account for this occultation.

. . . The Inquisition was founded to extirpate Jewish and Moorish apostasy; in this it long had ample work without developing its evil capacity in the direction of censorship. . . . With the advent of Lutheranism there gradually commenced the search for errors; crude indexes of condemned books were compiled, reading and investigation became restricted; the pragmática of 1559 forbade education at foreign seats of learning and an elaborate system was gradually organized for protecting Spain from intellectual intercourse with other lands, while at home every phrase that could be construed in an objectionable sense was condemned. For awhile the men whose education had been free from these trammels persisted, in spite of persecution more or less severe, but they gradually died out and had no successors.

. . . The intellectual energy of the nation, diverted from more serious channels, continued through another period to exhibit itself in the lighter fields of literature, where the names of Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Tereso de Molina, Calderon de la Barca, Quevedo de Vilegas and others, show what Spanish intellect was still capable of if it were allowed free play. Even these however passed away and had no successors in the growing intellectual torpor created by obscurantist censorship, and a dreary blank followed which even the stimulus attempted by Philip V could not relieve.

To produce and preserve this torpor, by repressing all dangerous intellectuality, Spain was carefully kept out of the current of European progress. In other lands the debates of the Reformation forced Catholics

as well as Protestants to investigations and speculations shocking to Spanish conservatism. The human mind was enabled to cast off the shackles of the Dark Ages, and was led to investigate the laws of nature and the relations of man to the universe and to God. From all this bustling intellectual movement Spain was carefully secluded. . . . Even the great theologians and mystics disappeared from the field which they had made their own, and were succeeded by a race of probabilistic casuists, who sought only to promote and to justify self-indulgence. How intellectual progress fared under these influences may be estimated by a single instance. When, in England, Halley was investigating the periodicity of the comet which bears his name, in Spain learned professors of Salamanca and Saragossa were publishing tracts to reassure the frightened people, by proving that the dreadful portent boded evil only to the wicked—the Turk and the heretic. The perfect success of the Inquisition in its work is manifested in the contrast between the eighteenth and early sixteenth century, as illustrated by the statement of Juan Antonio Myansy Siscar, that a cartload of the precious MSS. bestowed by Ximenes on his university of Alcala was sold to the fire-works maker Torrecilla, for a display in honour of Philip V, and that several other similar collections had shared the same fate. . . . The awakening from intellectual stupor was slow, for Dom Clemencin tells us that there was less printing in Spain at the commencement of the nineteenth century than there had been in the fifteenth under Isabella. It is impossible not to conclude that the Inquisition paralysed both the intellectual and the economic development of Spain, and it is scarcely reasonable for Valera to complain that, when Spain was aroused from its mental marasmus, it was to receive a foreign and not revive a native culture.

That science and art and literature should thus be submerged was a national misfortune, but even more to be deplored were the indirect consequences. Material progress became impossible, industry languished, and the inability to meet foreign competition assisted the mistaken internal policy of the Government in prolonging and intensifying the poverty of the people. Nor was this the chief of the evils that sprang from keeping the mind of the nation in leading strings, from repressing thought and from excluding foreign ideas, for the people were thus rendered absolutely unfitted to meet the inevitable change that came with the Revolution. To this in large measure, may be attributed the suffering through which Spain passed in the transition from absolute to modern conditions.

We have thus followed the career of the Spanish Inquisition from its foundation to its suppression; we have examined its method and its acts, and have sought to appraise its influence and its share in the misfortunes that overwhelmed the nation. The conclusion can scarce be avoided that its work was almost wholly evil, and that through its reflex action, the persecutors suffered along with the persecuted. Yet who can blame Isabella or Torquemada or the Hapsburg princes for their share in originating and maintaining this disastrous instrument of wrong? The Church had taught for centuries that implicit acceptance of its dogmas and blind obedience to its commands were the only avenues to salvation, that heresy was treason to God, its extermination the highest service to God and the highest duty to man. This grew to be the universal belief and, when the Protestant sects framed their several confessions, each one was so supremely confident that the secret of the Divine Being and his dealings with his creatures rested with it that all that shared the zeal to serve God acted in the same cruel fashion.

The Spanish Inquisition was only a more perfect and a more lasting institution than the others were able to fashion. . . . The spirit among all was the same, and none are entitled to cast the first stone, unless we except the humble and despised Moravian Brethren and the disciples of George Fox. The fagots of Miguel Servetus bear witness to the stern resolve of Calvinism. Lutheranism has its roll-call of victims. Anglicanism, under Edward VI undertook to organize an Inquisition on the Spanish pattern, which burnt Joan of Kent for Arianism, and the writ *De Heretico Comburendo* was not abolished until 1676. . . . The real responsibility can be traced to distant ages, to St. Augustine and St. Leo the Great and the Fathers, who deduced, from the doctrine of exclusive salvation, that the obstinate dissident is to be put to death, not only in punishment for his sin, but to save the faithful from infection. This hideous teaching, crystallized into a practical system, came, in the course of centuries, to be as essential a feature of the religion which it distorted so utterly from the love and charity inculcated by its Founder. . . .

This resolve to enforce unity of belief, in the conviction that it was essential to human happiness here and hereafter, led to the framing of a system of so-called justice more iniquitous than has been evolved by the cruellest despotism; which placed the lives, the fortunes and the honour, not only of individuals, but of their posterity, in the hands of those who could commit wrong without responsibility; which tempted human frailty to indulge its passions and its greed without restraint, and which subjected the population to a blind and unreasoning tyranny, against which the slightest murmur of complaint was a crime. The procedure which left the fate of the accused virtually in the hands of his judges was rendered doubly vicious by the inviolable secrecy in which it was enveloped. . . . It was the crowning iniquity that . . . it thus afforded to the evil-minded the ample opportunity of doing wrong. History affords no parallel to such a skilfully organized system, working relentlessly through centuries.

From *History of the Spanish Inquisition*,
By H. C. LEA (Macmillan)

Going to Extremes

ENGLISHMEN dislike the extremist. So Englishmen say. It is impossible to examine this proposition without first having a clear idea of what an extremist is. But, as with many another word in common use, to obtain an agreed definition is far from easy. Despite this fact, its significance is considered unpleasant by all, for the dislike to having the term applied to them is general. No one, in fact, admits to being an extremist; the expression has the same effect as it had on Douglas Jerrold's landlady when she heard herself called an isosceles triangle.

It may be possible to make quicker progress towards definition by taking concrete instances. Is it, for example, an extreme opinion that Bacon wrote the plays and sonnets attributed to Shakespeare? Or that disease is transmitted by germs, that the earth is flat; that scientists are absent-minded? Those who hold such opinions consider that the facts substantiate them; those who do not, think the facts do nothing of the kind, that these opinions are baseless, silly. Well, if silly is the word they mean, why not use it?

Silly opinions can be upset by showing them to be so. The usual process can be followed; the facts can be marshalled, conclusions can be drawn from them, and so the belief demolished. Or ridicule may be used with just the same effect. But ridicule succeeds

in upsetting the ridiculous because it is fundamentally an intellectual method. It is an attempt to bring the incongruous into the realm of the congruous, plainly, quickly, and mercilessly. It attempts to affect the reason by spotlighting a particular folly. The holder of it sees, or may see, that his belief does not fit into the every-day world of his experience and he is jostled, through his self-love, into readjustment. Ridicule is not everyone's weapon, but in competent hands it is a potent weapon indeed.

Others would prefer to say that they use the word "extreme" when they find a statement to contain some truth in a grossly exaggerated form. For example it may be held that Christianity had been responsible for nothing but good; that it has done much good; that it has done good; that it has done so much good, so much harm; that it has done nothing but harm. The first and last of these propositions they would hold to be extreme, and the persons giving voice to them extremists. Here again, in spite of the qualifications, it would appear to be the silliness of these statements that makes them think the term justifiable. The holders are considered guilty of getting an extremely long distance away from the facts. Still the use of the term extremist becomes intelligible in such cases.

In general practice, however, the term extreme is applied to opinions furthest at variance with generally received opinion. Then it becomes just an epithet, for it is surely an unjustifiable assumption that the received opinion is always right. Received opinion plainly differs from generation to generation and the extreme opinion of to-day becomes in cases the received opinion of to-morrow. The horror of Englishmen for extremes (so far as it is a fact) can be said to arise from the recognition that the adoption of any opinion rather remote from the belief of the herd is going to cause them discomfort. In the first place the herd do not like units of the flock to criticize them even by implication, and they visit upon such units pains and penalties. Apart from that the expression of an uncommon opinion may lead to discussion and as that involves the display of intelligence or non-intelligence the evil to be shunned is to them real enough.

There was a time when witchcraft was beginning to lose strength as a belief. So great a number of people had squints, or hair-lip, or club-feet, or other forms of marked physical unattractiveness, that the duck-pond seemed unpleasantly near to them, or those dear to them. So scepticism on the point became articulate, and the subject then gained the privilege of discussion. To the question, Do you believe in witches? the two extremist positions became in time Yes and No. But the respectable, the "wise" opinion, "the opinion of all reasonable men," became something like this! There is much to be said in favour of the belief in witches. Very learned men are genuinely puzzled about it. Men who are not pietists, but, on the contrary, men of great forensic ability, deal with the evidence as dispassionately as they can, as they endeavour to find the culprit in a case of murder or arson and hesitate to be dogmatic. Because of this I cannot say Yes or No. It would be extreme to say either. Besides there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy. I advocate a suspension of judgment.

But witchcraft disappeared as a belief despite scientific caution and what masqueraded as scientific caution. It disappeared because, to a great extent unconsciously, the idea of causation was occupying a greater area in men's minds and the belief in witchcraft could not be made to fit in with the general life and habits of ordinary men. The critical attitude

grew, and when that happened, the witches fled, broom sticks, and bonnets, and all. And along with them went the extremists who said Yes and the extremists who said No. It ceased to be discussed—save in Church circles—for it had ceased to be believed.

Freethinkers have always been charged with being extremists and always will, for their place is, and will be, in the van. They believe in scientific method, and every well-educated pietist knows where that leads to. It is to the theologically-minded person that one naturally looks for the cautious qualified statement, the water-tight fool-proof aphorism. Without the religious respect for truth you get careless people little versed in the divine exactitude. You get godless people writing that the specific contribution of Christianity to civilization was *contemptible*,¹ that a large portion of the noblest and most valuable moral teaching has been the work of, not only of men who did not know, but of men who knew and rejected, the Christian faith,² that in the name of Christianity more human blood has been violently shed than in any other cause whatever,³ that Christianity is guilty of dealing in "reeling subversions,"⁴ that extinguished theologians lie about the cradle of every science as the strangled snakes beside that of Hercules,⁵ that at the test of war, disease, social injustice and every real human distress it [Christianity] fails and leaves a cheated victim,⁶ that religion when it can no longer burn us alive comes to us begging,⁷ that you must keep your children away from the priest or he will make them the enemy of mankind,⁸ that the unscrupulousness of the priestly character is proverbial,⁹ that we are done with the lie at the lips of the priest,¹⁰ and that the name of God has fenced about all crime with holiness.¹¹

We must avoid such extremes, say the Church. Let

us turn again to more modest forms of expression. Our forms of expression, the outcome of Christian morality. Listen to our god-assisted divines, who tell you that God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb and that his tender mercies are over all his works. Let us teach in our theological seminaries that the abolition of slavery was the brightest jewel in our redeemer's crown; that it is God's will that we colonize the earth. Let us go to the fount of wisdom itself and hear the gods themselves dealing in moderation. Let us remove our hats and go to the Sermon of the Mount for sobriety and restraint.

We will accept the invitation:—

Hate not at all.

Judge not lest ye be judged.

Take no thought for the morrow.

Woe unto you that laugh now for ye shall mourn and weep.

And a few other sober utterances from the same tongue:—

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

The poor are with you always.

Clifford, Inge and Swinburne were *extremists* when they wrote as they did about priests. The son of God it was who knew the restrained note to be the best. He simply called them whited sepulchres and a generation of vipers, and in his own inimitable way enquired how they would escape the damnation of Hell.

For many reasons, no doubt, Jesus trod this earth. And one of them was to impress upon us that there should be moderation in all things. T. H. ELSTON

¹ Lecky. ² John Stuart Mill. ³ John Morley. ⁴ Galworthy. ⁵ T. H. Huxley. ⁶ H. G. Wells. ⁷ Heine. ⁸ W. S. Clifford. ⁹ Dean Inge. ¹⁰ Swinburne. ¹¹ Shelley.

ESSAYS IN FREETHINKING

FIFTH SERIES

CHAPMAN COHEN

About Books. The Damned Truth. Maeterlinck on Immortality. On Snobs and Snobbery. Jesus and the B.B.C. Man's Greatest Enemy. Dean Inge Among the Atheists. Politics and Religion. Christianity on Trial. Woman and Christianity. Why? Man and His Environment. The Nemesis of Christianity. Good God! God and the Weather. Women in the Pulpit. All Sorts of Ideas. According to Plan. A Question of Honour. Are We Christian? A Study in Fallacy. Medical Science and the Church.

1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Series 2s. 6d. each

Price 2s. 6d. Postage 3d.

SOME CHRISTIAN TYPES

by

CRITICUS

Price 4d.

By post 5d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C.4

Realistic Aphorisms and Purple Patches

By ARTHUR FALLOWS, M.A.

320 pages.

Paper Covers 3/6.

Postage 4d.

(All Cloth copies sold).

Shakespeare & other Literary Essays

BY

G. W. FOOTE

Price 3s. 6d.

Postage 3d