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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### Atheism

It is not a very difficult thing to find out what is the real meaning of Atheism, and it does not call for a superhuman intelligence to understand it. A short careful study is enough for any average man or woman. I do not say that the enquiring person will be satisfied, any Christian will be within his rights to say that after examination he is not satisfied, or say that Atheism is just nonsense. All these things are matters of opinion. All I am stressing is that it is very easy to understand Atheism, its meaning and its inevitability.

What I am trying to show is that Atheism can hardly be a beginning and an ending with just an opinion, just as natural selection cannot to-day be put aside with just a "Well, it might be." Such things to-day are primary matters of fact, and every writer owes the duty of plain speaking to his readers. It may injure his reputation, but that is another question. And it should be made quite plain to all that "Atheism" is not a matter of yesterday, it appears to be at least as old as religion, and that is, of course, as old as it could be. In its early days it was just a conflict of understanding against fear. And that is the "worldly" situation to-day, the fear of God is weaker.

What has been said of Atheism as a mental attitude applies nowadays with regard to the Atheist as an individual. Once upon a time, when Christianity had made it a matter of the gravest danger for a man to make known his dissent from established religion, misunderstandings concerning Atheists as individuals were excusable. Christian lying and Christian malignity pictured the Atheist as a monster of wickedness, the ordinary person seldom came into contact with him, and took the mythical Atheist as postulated from the pulpit as the genuine article. But Atheists are not so uncommon nowadays, in fact they are too common, one would imagine that even the ordinary journalist should be able to present the real article. Yet on glancing at a bundle of Sunday papers, I came across the following which was written evidently for what the writer took to be a mark of good-will towards an Atheist:—

"I have known many Atheists, but in nearly every case they reluctantly left the fold because they could not reconcile the teachings of the church with the bare ideas of truth. They were seldom up against genuine Christianity, but always against Churchianity and shame."

If that is all that semi-Christian can say concerning the qualities of Atheists, the less we have to deal with him the better. We Atheists are not merely opposed to the character of Christianity because Christians are apt to be unpleasant, and even brutal towards Atheists. Bad behaviour towards

non-Christians has been notorious every since Christianity existed. Christianity is bad when it is genuine in its teaching. It does not understand the idea of equality between men and women.

But as it happens we have a number of Christians who are regular readers of our paper. I would like them to tell us how many known Atheists really answer to the description, how many people have they come across who have become Atheists because they were not treated kindly by Christians? Goodness and kindness are appreciated by decent Atheists as much as others. We do hear of Christians throwing over a Church because the parson did not lecture nicely, or the hall was chilly, etc. But never have I known them change their "opinion" because situations were not pleasant. I should like to know where these people come from, and where they go to—if they exist.

I am not denying that the breaking of friendships is something that leads to much pain, irrespective of whether it comes from a difference of religion or any other cause. It is painful in any case with decent men and women. And if I were asked, I could reply with truth, that in a long life I have never yet lost a real friend. It is a certain fact that nothing in the "civilised" world has done more to break up friendship, husband and wife, parents and children, than has religion. I think there might be put on some of our walls the warning—"Beware of Christianity. It is apt to break the good, and to make much of the bad."

Take another point. I have often been asked whether Atheism could ever satisfy human nature. I have invariably replied that it satisfied me, and so far as I represent human nature, it should satisfy others. I agree that what we are satisfied with will to some extent depend upon what we are looking for, and to the kind of human nature with which we are dealing. A whisky-soddened person will not be satisfied with lemonade, and a constitutionally unreflective and superstitious nature will not be content with Atheism. What such questioners are saying is, that while one is a religious believer he can never be satisfied with Atheism. That seems rather a silly thing to say, but so many religious deliverances are silly when one stops to analyse them. But if after a process of mental development the religious man outgrows his religion, he can quite as truthfully say that religion would not satisfy him. The one statement is just as true, and means just as much as the other. Naturally Atheism will not satisfy the religious person; with equal truth religion will not satisfy the Atheist. Both are satisfied with what they are, and when they arrive somewhere else they will experience the same degree of mental contentment. The mere fact that a particular belief has been discarded is evidence that it became irksome and less attractive than the new one. If ever an Atheist expressed regrets at having got rid of his one time religious beliefs, I can only conceive his doing so as a means of comforting

his weaker brother who is still in the same mental state that he once was.

Why on earth should an Atheist feel his position comfortable, let go of religion reluctantly, or look back upon his earlier state with regret? As an Atheist he has all the qualities of mind and body that he had when a Christian. One does not cease to admire, to love, to venerate, to value truthfulness or honesty or cleanliness because one has ceased to believe in religion, or has given up the traditional jargon respecting these things. As I have often had occasion to point out, there are no such things as religious feelings, there are only human feelings directed towards a religious object. What Atheism does is to strip these feelings of their religious covering and make their nature plain to all. It leaves the legitimate avenues for their exercise open and untouched. It does not deny the value of a single human quality. What it does is to emphasize their significance. It is true that the Atheist would arrange human qualities in an order of value different from that of the Christian scale. He would place more reliance upon reason and less upon faith; less upon self-sacrifice and more upon self-development. He would have less to say on the charity of mere almsgiving, and more upon that of sympathy and intellectual hospitality. He would not prate about "our poor weak human nature," and he would not go about fearing lest each new advance in knowledge should bring the social structure about his ears. Wrong the Atheist may be, but his position is unquestionably hopeful. It is one of the curiosities of the situation that they who proclaim human nature to be too weak to stand alone, should charge those who take the opposite view with facing the world armed only with a cold and cheerless philosophy.

Is it too much to expect that religious folk will cease from the dishonesty that lies behind the pretension of religion bettering the world; but we know the only time when Christian preachers will endeavour to put an end to the foolishness that surrounds us will be when the desire for truth takes the place occupied by church. But I believe we shall have to wait for a long time before truth will be blazoned in the press or the pulpit. Who is not concerned with truth as truth, but rather, what ought they to tell concerning the truth? But we do move. For many years the churches have been losing their power. Man is more than he was and if he has not yet learned what he might be, the lesson has not yet been learned. Sterne thought that those who travel from Dan to Beersheba cried, "All is Barren," and we shall be thought the same if with life before us we cannot make a better world than the Christian.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

A MODERN MYSTIC

READING "Occult Science" by Rudolf Steiner, recalled the essay on mysticism by Havelock Ellis, in which he concluded that a scientist is a true mystic in his science, and a mystic a true scientist in his mysticism. For Havelock Ellis, mysticism was synonymous with religion; for Rudolf Steiner, occultism is a science; so it seems we have squared the circle.

This book tells us that every branch of science has its special field of enquiry and that of occult science is the "super-sensible world". That such a world exists is shown in that feelings, consciousness, memory, cannot be observed by the senses; even physics deal with an unseen world, as with the infra-red and ultra-violet rays. Each branch of science has its own terms and

technique, so also has occultism; sciences have their instruments to aid and improve sensibility, so also clairvoyance has its instruments and methods. Just as other sciences need special preparatory training, so also occult science. As other sciences are judged by results, so also can occult science be tested by anyone with sufficient patience and perseverance. Clairvoyance can be developed by anyone with the right training and technique.

One must learn the theory to apply the method. All scientific theories seem strange till one gets used to them. This theory is no more difficult to understand than that of living forms developing from a gaseous nebula; it is a logical development from it. In the evolution, the condensation of the gaseous substance produces not only the physical forms, but also the super-sensible. After the physical body came the "etheric body", the vital force, appearing in plants; then came the "astral body", the consciousness, apparent in animals; followed by the "ego", with memory developing in man. In man's evolution appears the "spirit soul" or "sentient soul"; then the "intellectual or rational soul"; followed by the "divine man," the divine soul.

In man's evolution there is the development of "self-consciousness" which appears with the forms of the Christian angels, angels, dominions, thrones, etc.; the Lords of Form, Will, Wisdom, etc., known in theosophy, and known by other names in Vedic Hindu, Zoroastrian Persian and Chaldean, Egyptian and Hermetic mysteries; leading on to the Christian Mystery and the Christian mystics of the middle ages. An extremely elaborate consideration of all this seems necessary, as well as of life and death, and of sleep and the waking state, to lead up to the "Mystery of Initiation."

The dream, the twilight between sleep and waking, is a form of initiation, which enables man to use his "spiritual organs of perception," that is "self initiation," a kind of "self-awakening" giving "soul satisfaction and inner warmth." The seven stages of the evolution, as from the nebula, and as through the "Atlantian era," through the Indian, Persian, Egyptian and other periods, is also reflected in the Karma concerning "this and other incarnations," and also comes in the methods of training and of meditation. Examples of contemplation are given, as of a rosy cross, a black cross in a ring of red roses. But objects or even abstract ideas may be used as symbols.

Intensity in concentration is required. This involves feeling-impulses, desires and passions. The successive stages of the method comprise, the use of reasoning powers; attainment of imaginative cognition; "reading the sacred script" corresponding to inspiration; "working with the philosopher's stone" which corresponds to intuition; cognition of the relation between microcosm and macrocosm; being one with the macrocosm; and finally, beatitude. In the early exercises, we feel a truth, even if we do not see; but eventually both see and feel. We can appreciate the feelings, the pleasure associated with vision, as in the graphic arts, or with sound as in music, or with smell, as with perfumes or scent; and that he is expressing personal experience in typical mystical contradiction.

It all appears like a psychological study. His idea of "love," of a "strong inclination" to feel "absolutely happy" in a world "we have created for ourselves," is like Freud's notion of wish-fulfilment. His "guardian of the threshold" is reminiscent of the Freudian censor. His idea of "self-perception," of "images" as a "reflection of its own being," of "pictures" that "reflect what man himself is," as though "one lived in two egos," recalls Jung's idea that the dreamer identifies himself with the dream vision. But he claims that his method gives a "sound power of judgment," a feeling of "certitude" and "control," against the objection of deception and self-deception, suggestion and auto-suggestion.

We can appreciate the mystical contradiction, for the essential ideas he is expressing are enshrined in the terms and phrases

of everyday language; the very words we commonly use are loaded with theological and mystical implications. The mystical tradition is part of our cultural heritage. This theory accommodates ideas inherited from the past, expressing psychological experience in physical terms; that is, non-physical fact in terms of physical analogies, so giving objective character to subjective fact. It is based upon traditional rather than scientific explanation, of the relationship between, and the difference between, objective and subjective, as well as personal and social experience.

We do not doubt that our author has obtained results in this way. We can well understand his insistence that the theory must enter into the method. A scientific theory is part of the method and has its place in scientific practice. We are concerned with ways of thinking, and the question is one of interpretation as well as of fact. The way a question is put determines the answer, and it may well be that here is the theory that determines the results, rather than the method. Perhaps we can better understand the book if we remember that modern psychology has developed from such mystical practices, together with a progressive elimination and simplification in theory. The facts may be considered in other terms.

Ocultism is claimed as a science, but there is one respect in which all this is definitely unscientific. A scientific explanation should be in terms of the known. As Einstein said: "Science aims at an explanation with a minimum of assumptions." But here we simply wallow in them. "Number magic" and "superstition" are eschewed, there is nothing of the seance room, nor of astrology, yet the basic ideas are still those of religion. Our modern mystic appears as a refined survival of a pre-scientific psychology.

H. H. PREECE.

## THE NON-COMMERCIAL SHORT STORY

IT is not long since Mr. Somerset Maugham, addressing the Royal Society of Literature on "The Short Story," made a plea for the rediscovery of Kipling as an artist to be admired. Many who do not share the ideological position occupied by Kipling will readily admit the justice of Mr. Maugham's plea; but at the same time it has to be admitted that the intellectual climate of the day is all against the type of short story which Kipling wrote.

Mr. Maugham suggested that there are two types of short story, one deriving from Maupassant (and it is to this type that Kipling owed allegiance), and the other deriving from Chechov. It is undoubtedly the Chechov type which is most admired to-day. Katherine Mansfield was probably the most marked exponent of this type of tale in English, and in recent years H. E. Bates, L. A. G. Strong, and, very lately, Reginald Moore (see his first collection of tales, "Silence Comes After") have followed in her footsteps. There are, of course, a few eccentrics, such as A. E. Coppard and T. F. Powys, who are exceptions to all rules, but they have had few, if any, followers.

The short stories of to-day, then, have a way of following a path marked out by Chechov and Katherine Mansfield, and the main characteristic of these is that they do not have an accepted plot, in any sense of the word. They are not, in other words, anecdotal, but present the reader with a sketch of character or a picture of a situation. Nothing really happens in these stories, and they grip from the power of their authors to portray character or to look at life.

The reader of short stories in the popular, commercial magazines, I am afraid, will not recognise the truth of what I have said. It is not at all easy to see that the stories of, say, Peter Cheyney, neatly constructed and well written as they are, are a superficial, synthetic product, which is not related to real life any more closely than were the brilliant plays of Edgar Wallace. It is this, in fact, which separates the com-

mmercial from the non-commercial short story. The product of a market which aims at giving the reader a chance of escaping from the dilemmas of a civilisation in crisis, what I have called the commercial short story is therefore necessarily concentrated on exceptional individuals, who may be gangsters or may be millionaires, but who will be outside the general pattern of twentieth-century civilisation.

The non-commercial short story, which probably earns very little money for its author, is a far more satisfying affair. It expresses an attitude to life which its author finds convincing. And it will not be read by a reader intent on escape. Often it will call attention to something which is not a healthy symptom. Few periods of crisis will fail to have aspects which are unhealthy; but the reader who wants to understand life must take these unpleasant matters into account as well as the more pleasant things which we all know something about.

In the thirties there was a tendency to make short stories into political tracts. The "New Writing" group were especially prone to push their political theories into the fabric of the stories which they wrote. This attitude now seems to have faded into the past; but the emphasis is still upon the political and economic dilemmas of the day. Man is now exhorted to understand his environment, but to understand it as a living being rather than a political automaton.

I am not going to say here and now whether I think that this is a good tendency or a bad one. I am attempting to describe the tendencies of the time, not to analyse them. But I think that it is necessary for every alert-minded reader, wishful of understanding what is going on in the twentieth century, to read short stories.

During the war years many writers who would normally have written novels were driven by the exigencies of the time to write short stories. Some of them have continued to devote their main energies to this type of writing since, and often their best writing is in this genre.

Publishers sometimes say that short stories are not read—at any rate, when published in volume form. That there is a certain amount of truth in this it would be idle to deny. And yet there is a great deal of pleasure to be derived from the reading of a book of short stories, especially when the book has been conceived as a whole and not as a mere group of tales from devious sources, collected arbitrarily between two covers. A few months ago Guild Books reissued James Joyce's "Dubliners"; Penguin Books have just given a new lease of life to Sherwood Anderson's "Winesburg, Ohio." I defy any reader, no matter how blasé from the reading of much fiction, to fail to get real joy and real mental stimulation from a careful study of these two books. M. P. Shiel's "Best Short Stories," recently collected in one volume by John Gawswordh, is yet another example. And if these masters of the past (they are all recently deceased) can be read with pleasure and profit, we shall neglect their successors at our peril. The non-commercial short story can be a work of art; it can also be an analysis of the human situation. For those reasons I feel that the average reader should devote more attention to it than he customarily does.

JOHN ROWLAND.

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## ACID DROPS

There is an old saying that when rogues fall out honest men get their due. That is certainly true when priests of one branch of Christianity begin to criticise the priests of another branch. Here, for example, we have the Reverend Max Bryant, Church of England, who says quite plainly that Cardinal Griffin, Roman Catholic, is not telling the truth when he says that the Pope is opposed to Communism and, on that matter, we agree. The Pope is not against telling an untruth, and Cardinal Griffin is simply following the practice of his chief. He points out that the people were friendly towards Joyce, to Mussolini, and others. It must always be remembered that a large financial argument was settled over parts of Rome. He also points out that while the average Englishman has a very strong dislike to Communism, it is the very soul of the Roman Catholic religion. That is a papable hit by Bryant, and he finishes with a biting remark that men have hated Rome because they loved freedom above all things. The English priest scored unmistakably.

Apropos of what we have just said, we observe that the Vatican radio reports that anti-Catholicism is sweeping through the Netherlands. We are not surprised. The Netherlands have suffered much at the hands of Rome, and the Dutch are a very stubborn people when they are aroused. Holland has always loved liberty.

The Dean of Exeter, who amuses himself with scribbling a few words weekly, which are supposed to enlighten "somebody," has now declared that Christianity is an "historical religion." Of course, there is a sense in which truth and a lie, and everything that exists, can be turned into an historic fact, in so far as anyone will not remember what was done or fancied that something happened. These phrases are good samples of the way in which people play the fool with other fools.

For example, Dr. Carpenter, the Dean in question, tried to prove his point by saying that Jesus rose from the dead, and that he appeared on the third day after his crucifixion. But that is not a proof of anything. It can only mean that someone said something to someone, and he said it to someone else, and so the game ran on. But the statement is just as stupid after a million have repeated it as it was to begin with. Dr. Carpenter should be more reasonable with his statement than he is, or perhaps his followers do not want any evidence, they prefer parrot repetitions.

The Dean also says that there is "the undoubted fact that Christianity as a religion began from that day," and even that is not true. The features of Christianity, in all their forms, were all there long, long before the Christian name existed. The early Christians were not even original in claiming for themselves what belonged to others. There really is little that can be said to be original in Christianity—not even the lies that are told concerning it.

It appears that Churchmen are complaining at the small amount of salaries for their work. We can appreciate the difficulties of making ends meet to-day. We know what that means in many other houses as well as for those who work in the Church. But we note that it has been said by the leaders of the Church that it is the duty of the laity to see that the priests are properly paid. But when the Christian Church began, the preachers looked to God to provide food, shelter, and clothing. These things were sent generally by "Heaven." One would like to know why food cannot be sent in the same way to-day. It may be that when God looks down at the character of his servants, he probably feels they are not worth looking after. Even our Chancellor of the Exchequer, who moans that we can get nothing without God, also says that we must get what we want in our own way.

How wilfully do our Christian guides play the "Tom-Fool" with the people? Here is the Archbishop of York again indulging in a spate of words that are unnecessary or damnable. He gives the world a long dissertation on the value of being honest, truthful, kind, etc. That can be quite out of place when young people are smothered with what is right and what is wrong.

Young people were never made as most of us would like them to be, and lesson after lesson may be of little use. We have not the slightest hesitation in saying that religious teachers have helped to turn children into undesirable adults, as a consequence of religious lessons.

Stands Glasgow where it did? Certainly not, for after a lot of struggling, and in spite of seventeen representatives of God, the authorities have permitted, by way of experiment, two cinemas to be opened in the centre of the city and three in the suburbs on Sundays. That permission is to last for three months; then, we presume—if God shows no signs of being insulted—the shows will be continued on a larger scale and for an indefinite time. The Scotch people were never wanting in courage, but they are taking the risk of interference from the powers above. We would like to make a bet that the angels who will be sent out to watch will have a very happy time. They must be terribly dull in the Christian heaven, and we would wager something that there will be a scramble in Heaven to watch the shows.

There is a certain house that for many years has been noted as a first-class place for first-class ghosts. But as is usual, the ghost never came just when he was wanted. Why ghosts should be so shy in presenting themselves is puzzling. But ghosts generally behave in that way. One of these ghosts made it a rule to give to one of the people living in the haunted house all sorts of things. He was quite a good ghost, and if he would give us the same attention we promise him, or "it," a cordial welcome. But now comes a representative of the "Daily Express" who, on making inquiries, was told by the people living there now that they had never met a ghost of any kind. "But," said the lady of the house, "if there are any ghosts about we should be pleased to meet them."

The Rev. G. H. K. Peddy, Vicar of Paignton, says: "I feel that I cannot say anything more deeply serious from this pulpit than that I believe Christianity is absolutely necessary for the survival of Western Democracy." Now that is honest, very straight, but we cannot agree with the preacher. Not so long ago, clergymen would not have spoken in that way. Actually the ideas that are now being preached from the pulpit would have landed men, years ago, into prison. We suggest that this priest, and others, should read "Ancient Society," by Lewis Morgan (1887), and the "Communist Societies in the United States," by Nordhoff (1875). It is a pity that so many of our young people do not read these books along with others. The Vicar would also be the better for the reading.

We see that the B.B.C. is reviving the "Brains Trust." We sincerely hope that the Brains will be better this time than they were formerly. No religion was then permitted, save on a very light scale. No one of the "Trust" would be permitted even to wish to say anything against religion, and it was to the shame of certain members of the Trust to sit listening to the praise of religion and remaining silent. We had it on high authority that it had to be remembered that the broadcasts went into the homes of poorly educated people, so that religion had to be kept on the lowest intellectual level. And it may be noted that if anything inimical to religion was said there was a method of cutting out what was not wanted. It says but little for the men and women who submitted to this censorship.

The Pope has been pressing, begging, and even threatening to win the battle of the election in Rome. It may not be a matter of life or death, but it is of great importance that the voting should go as he wishes. Only a few years ago, "Our Lady" came from heaven carrying Jesus in her arms. "Then all at once the Sun began to spin round, just like a ball of fire, green, red and of every colour, etc." Now if the Pope had that scene arranged for Rome, there would be hardly a single man who would not vote as the Pope wishes him to do. A few months ago the whole of the Holy Family made their appearance, and a repetition of that show would bring all the votes on the side of the Pope. Why, even if we saw it, we might also join the Roman Church at once.

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## PHILOSOPHERS IN BEARS' SKIN

It was in the Congo where I caught sight of a bird of the queerest shape. This fact could be interpreted in two ways: (a) To relate that such and such creatures live in the Congo, or (b) to examine the cause of the developments which, under prevailing conditions, must have proved the most suitable way for survival.

The present writer uses the second method of looking at beings as the result of their environment. Most people, however, are satisfied with recording the mere facts as stable, rigid forms, devoid of their substance and changes in an ever-changing world. This explains why Mr. Humphrey (in “Tribal Taboo”) cannot agree with me.

The same issue of “The Freethinker” (No. 11) carries an enumeration of “savage customs” (Sex Relations in Savage Societies), entirely detached from material conditions which gave birth to those seemingly queer ways of behaviour. I do not know the quoted work, yet I cannot imagine that any recent anthropologist can possibly ignore Morgan's pioneer work and Malinowski's research on Matrilinear Societies.

At present Exogamy prevails. In this respect, Mr. Humphrey is quite correct and I myself, in my contested article, stressed that my subdivision is valid only “roughly speaking.” However, there are no “pure” Savages nowadays. During my stay on the verge of the Australian bush I never met roaming aborigines. The Esquimaux, living in a stage of the Stone Age, are bartering for commodities of Capitalist production. A mishap of primitive customs recorded by explorers some 50 years ago is of no greater value than is the description of the Sauriers which represent a certain stage of Life under certain conditions.

Even then, however, the Australian aborigines were no genuine Savages (nor are there any anywhere). From a higher stage of Patriarchate with Exogamy they fell back—degenerated—due to certain changes in their environment we cannot dwell upon here. Material changes that bring about great historical changes in social conditions have always been accompanied by corresponding changes in man's ideas and views.

I, therefore, do not “lose sight of the fact that, in human affairs, the sexual urge predominates,” I simply deny this. When, at very rare occasions, Karl Marx uses the term “reproduction,” he speaks of the reproduction of the working class as a class to be exploited. It was only the Bloomsbury vulgarisers, bent on blending Marxism with Freudism, who introduced the “Sexual Hunger” as a basic category.

To the reproach of “Economic Determinism,” I can answer with Engels (letter to Bloch, September 21, 1890):—

“According to the Materialist Conception of history the determining element is, ultimately, production and reproduction in real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. If therefore someone twists this into the statement that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms it into a meaningless, abstract, and absurd phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure—political forms of the class struggle and its consequences, constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc.—forms of law (!)—and then even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the combatants: political, legal and philosophical theories, religious ideas and their further development into systems of dogma—also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles, and in many cases preponderate in determining their form. We make our own history; but in the first place under very definite presuppositions and conditions. Among these the economic ones are finally decisive.”

“Thus circumstances make men as much as men make circumstances” (Marx-Engels: “German Ideology”). Man, by “acting on the external world and changing it . . . at the same time, changes his own nature.” (Marx: Capital I.)

In other words, the mode of production of the material means of life, the way not so much what but how material life is being produced, determines the social, political and intellectual evolution in general; and this refers to sex relations as well. It is not Man's consciousness that determines his existence, but, on the contrary, it is his social existence that shapes his consciousness.

Primitive man, without any means of production at his disposal, is utterly dependent upon nature which becomes mirrored in his mind as a host of whimsical, amoral spirits. Unaware of the laws of physics, his conception of the world cannot but be metaphysical. Primitive man must never be thought of as a philosopher clad in bear's skin and who, by sheer reasoning, invents laws other than such as are being enforced upon him through his—natural and social—environment.

For the strict ban on endogamous unions with most primitives our moralists offer the silly explanation that the results of “incest” had made themselves felt. Science is by no means agreed that incest, unless certain deficiencies become accentuated through it, must necessarily be of evil. But with the primitive thinking on magic lines, the reasons must be sought in magic conceptions, and I consider totemism to offer the explanation. According to it any harm wrought on the totem must need affect the totem community as such; this means, in the case of wedlock within the totem clan, the extinction of the whole tribe, men, women and children. This, the totem clan thought, could be prevented by exogamy. Whereas, before the rise of totemistic notions, it was the most natural way to have sexual intercourse within the horde, all members of which, in the limits of age categories, considered themselves as brothers and sisters. And with the Ancient Egyptians, “sister” still was equivalent to “beloved” mistress.

Quotations from the “Holy” Scriptures bear no weight with me, there is no doubt, however, that, where polyandry was the natural outcome, people were as happy as we feel in monogamy. They, in turn, could not live under monogamous conditions nor could we in polyandrous ones. This is to prove that the “sexual

urge" can be shaped differently, that the sexual hunger, unlike bodily hunger, is *not* a basic category. The necessities of life are, above all, food, drink, shelter, clothing and a few others, which are indispensable for surviving. One can suppress the sexual urge, but not hunger; the latter, in the long run, becomes lethal, the former can be canalised into such activities as philanthropy (humanitarian dreamings of adolescence!), social enterprises or piety, up to a state of sexual frigidity. Hunger, on the other hand, leads to death or rebellion in one way or other.

Inasmuch as human beings produce their own means of subsistence they, indirectly, produce their own material life. Savages have no such means of production, they live as food-gatherers parasitically on nature. Barbarism is already a food-producing economy through cultivation of some plants and often also by breeding domestic animals. Civilisation was initiated in the alluvial valleys of the Nile, the Tigris-Euphrates, and the Indus, when the farmers learnt to produce a surplus of foodstuffs over and above their domestic requirements, and by concentrating this surplus used it to support a new urban population of specialised craftsmen, merchants, priests and officials. Our present civilisation was born under the whip of exploitation.

A mere enumeration of spiritual or sexual behaviour without a proper differentiation between the cultural stages is of no use.

PERCY G. ROY.

### THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

THE belief in some kind of Supernatural being exists amongst a large proportion of the population of the world, showing itself in many forms and generally becoming organised into a form which is termed Religion. In general, a man born in a particular part of the Globe will worship the god peculiar to that area, hence a man is a Hindu, Mohammedan or Christian depending on whether he is born in India, Egypt or England.

The Religions are officered by a group of men known as priests whose duty it is to ensure that the population under their "care" do not lose faith in their religion nor cease to support with their wealth and work the priesthood. This the priests do in a great variety of ways, but the most popular and the most insidiously effective is by intensive education of the very young, by threats and intimidations, cajolery and bribes.

The resulting effects of these incessant priestly activities are shown in the greater proportions of the nation's people who believe in the existence of a God.

It is useless to attempt to dissuade a believer by force of logic and reason; a general reply to a difficult question taking the form of a statement and affirmation of Faith. Faith in the face of indisputable logic and plain obvious facts. This blind faith, demonstrated so frequently by men and women otherwise sane and intelligent is a very distressing feature of modern life. It may show the amount of civilising work which has yet to be undertaken. It may conversely show the small degree to which civilisation has yet risen. In all events, it is incomprehensible that a man can survey the world, in the past or in the present, without feeling some qualms of doubt.

A closer examination of the God of the Universe may help to bring these doubtful points into relief.

If a god exists, he is ipso facto omnipotent; otherwise he is subservient to some other god, and he to yet another. . . Let us then take the god who governs and who is superior to all other gods. *He* must be omnipotent (unless he too worships and has a blind faith in some unknown, mysterious and non-existent being!) In that case he is responsible for the world and all that happens in the world. He is responsible either by design or by default. Whichever it may be, let him survey his handiwork.

A world which has never been free from bloody brutal battles, where men slay and are slain, where they are permitted to live, by his divine pleasure, without arms or legs or without either, without eyes or ears or noses, even without faces, all resulting from wars perpetrated through His Divine Command.

If this is not enough, Peace hath her terrors no less than those of war. This all-wise, all-powerful being looking down, patiently with regret, on a world at peace calmly inflicts upon the unfortunate population Famine, Floods, Pestilence and Disease. Thousands of human beings crawl into the fields to perish with distended bellies and pain-wracked limbs crying to an unheedful god to save them from their misery. They join the legions who have lost their lives in Hurricanes, Earthquakes, Tornadoes and Eruptions—those who, as the water engulfs them, as the walls of their once-proud homes collapse about them, make signs of the cross—and perish.

But should a people, by happy chance, reside in an area free from great and fearful happenings, they must not for a moment count themselves God's chosen people. Their only choice will be to act as the recipients of a group of diseases which will rapidly and efficiently remove from the earth a far larger proportion of them than would any war or natural catastrophe. Plague, typhus, typhoid, smallpox, influenza, form but a sample of a great and effective group of god-made bacteria whose delight it is to invade the human body and, after a period of excruciating agony, erase it from the face of the earth, taking it in a sea of pain from the arms of its loved and dear ones. But not for long! Unless they are extremely fortunate, they, too, will follow their fellow to the grave, helped and encouraged by these same all-powerful bacteria, each one stamped indelibly "Made in Heaven"! . . .

There is little that man can do to escape from the vengeful, cruel, devilish reach of this all-powerful god. An emotion has been planted in the heart of man which is strong and forcible. It can provide him with the greatest of pleasure and delight. It is entrancing, enticing, beguiling and seductive—it is called love, or sex, or what you will. Surely here is something which could have been left untouched; instead it has been beset with the worst of all diseases. Only a fiend could have devised this snare, this trap with its terrible, fatal, devilish consequences; and yet men in millions have faith in this Supreme God of Goodness! They look on with equanimity at the scene of Hiroshima, at the Burma Railway, at Buchenwald—and yet they have faith.

If there is a god, then he is responsible for all these beastly, cruel and wicked deeds; and for myself, I do not wish to meet him. That a man believes in a god, I can understand, but that he prays to him, worships him, hopes and even desires to see him in a later life—that to me is utterly incomprehensible.

I do not believe that a God exists, but if there is one I should consider myself a traitor to the human race if I desired or attempted to have communications or relations with him in any form.

DAVID MOORE.

### THE BIG SIX

ONE does not have to be a skilled mathematician to give the correct answer to the following little sum.

Add together Ignorance, Falsehood, Unreason, Superstition, Prejudice and Intolerance and divide equally amongst all the unthinking peoples of the world — and you have, of course, Religion.

The surprising element about it is that anything comprising such a collection of unsavoury qualities could possibly be regarded as a recipe for Goodness in any civilised community.

Just in case anyone cares to dispute the assertion, let us take each of the Big Six separately.

**IGNORANCE.**—The less one knows about Religion and the less one enquires about it, the easier it is to become a believer. The good Christian never questions. He puts his trust in the Lord and believes what the priests tell him to believe. As he distrusts his own intellect it is obviously useless and unnecessary for him to possess any intelligence. Thus Religion thrives on Ignorance.

**FALSEHOOD.**—The contradictory verses in the Bible are too numerous to mention. Science has disproved most of the ignorant statements made in the Bible—yet the priests and their dupes prefer to believe Biblical Untruth to Scientific Truth. Thus Religion thrives on Falsehood.

**UNREASON.**—Nothing is too unreasonable and absurd for the true believer to accept. For instance: a God of Love can also be at the same time a sadistic torturer and murderer, condemning people to burn in everlasting hell-fire! Or again, when the Christian prays for rain and God sends a drought—he is quite satisfied and sees nothing at all unreasonable in God's action. Thus Religion thrives on Unreason.

**SUPERSTITION.**—Religious belief originated in the savage mind—not in the cultured and educated mind. To-day people still believe, as the early savages did, that an unseen God or Spirit is all-powerful and punishes them if they do not fall down and worship him. Thus Religion thrives on Superstition.

**PREJUDICE.**—There is no one so prejudiced as the religionist. No argument, however conclusive, will ever convince him against his Faith. Those who do not believe as he does are infidels and heathens. He knows that he is right. Thus Religion thrives on Prejudice.

**INTOLERANCE.**—The whole history of the Christian religion is a record of the most bigoted intolerance; and the Christian has inflicted the cruellest tortures on his adversaries in the name of his religion. This is not surprising after the example set by God who slaughtered innocent babies to satisfy his bloodlust. To the Christian all other religions are forgeries. Thus Religion thrives on Intolerance.

And yet Christians dare to assert that without Religion no one could possibly lead a good and useful life!

W. H. WOOD.

**CREATION**

MARY had put a spray of elderberries in a thin vase on his desk. It was the cruellest thing that she could do—to go on believing in him long after he had any desire to believe in himself. Every afternoon he had to sit in his study, just as if he were writing his theological treatise. He had spoken for so many years about the theological treatise he would write one day.

In sheer frustration the priest jerked open a drawer of his desk. Notes on half-finished sermons . . . litter!

Trembling with sudden fury the priest seized the twig of elder and wrenched off the leaves and berries. Some berries rolled away among the pencils and trays of clips and india-rubbers, while others burst on the blotting paper with an ink-like stain. But the priest was looking at the sprig he still held in his hand. Without its leaves and berries, the pink elderwood looked like a branch of coral.

Mary, he thought, my god, I must find Mary and show it to her!

It was, after all, as much as an elderly clergyman could be expected to do. Yes, after all, he'd actually made something quite beautiful!

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

**POOR CHILDREN**

Says "The Catholic Herald," "parent and teacher must co-operate." There is a factor far more important and that is for the child to co-operate with teacher and parent. It is important for both parent and teacher to work together, but thousands of children never develop as they should because the parents and teachers combine to prevent the child developing. A child often has to struggle hard against parent or teacher, but when it is fighting against both, the contest is fatal to the child. Add to the undeveloped parent the over-authoritative teacher and the child is damned beyond repair.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

**DR. JOAD AND MATTER**

SIR,—It is pitiable to read such appalling ignorance of scientific terms as is displayed in Dr. C. E. M. Joad's letter.

He knows that matter is not immortal because bodies are destroyed and turn into worms. Apart from the fact that worms have life anyway, and that the statement is not strictly-speaking biologically accurate; science does not claim matter is immortal but indestructible. A distinction apparently too subtle for Dr. C. E. M. Joad to appreciate. Matter may change its form, but its substance in terms of weight remains constant. Research into the nature of the atom has in no way disturbed the validity of that statement. The explosion of an atom bomb, no matter how violent and disruptive, exhibits atomic fission, not the destruction of matter. Fission implies parts of a whole, and parts however small have weight and substance.

Finally, Dr. Joad's confusion as to the nature of mind would largely be dispelled if he would regard it as a function and not an entity.

But I expect too much. Dr. Joad's province is faith, not reason.—Yours, etc.,

RAYMOND BOTT.

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## THE EARLY LIFE OF THOMAS PAINE

[There have been a great many works published concerning Thomas Paine, but only a few dealing with Thomas Paine's early years. We are not forgetting the classical work by Moncure Conway. Mr. W. G. Clarke gives us here a lengthy and very interesting account of the comparatively unknown period in Paine's life. We consider the essay important enough to reprint.—EDITOR.]

## I

THOMAS PAINE was born at Thetford, Norfolk, on January 29, 1737; he died at Greenwich, U.S.A., on June 8, 1809, and these articles are offered as a tribute on the cairn of his memory, over a century afterwards. His vilifiers have had a lengthy innings, and their unfounded assertions have sunk deep into the popular consciousness. From the first there have, nevertheless, been men who have endeavoured to look at Paine and his life-work free of religious and political prejudice, and these have seen that he was a brave pioneer, who for his open-mindedness, his freedom from sordid considerations, his conscientious efforts to lead the peoples of three great countries—Britain, North America, and France—a further stage in the evolution of political, social, and religious liberty, has been attacked with the bitterness of despair by those whose interests lay in the maintenance of the existing order of things. Yet there is not a man or woman in the countries named who is not at this moment reaping some benefit from the words and deeds of Thomas Paine, from the ideals of freedom which he put forward so lucidly and logically, from the methods by which he sought to carry them out.

As early as 1817, William Cobbett in "an address to the Men of Norwich," alluded to "your famous countryman, Paine," and when on July 11, 1865, three persons were nominated at Thetford to fill the two vacancies in the Parliamentary representation of the borough, one of the speakers on behalf of the Liberal candidate was Mr. Charles Bradlaugh, who, standing above the porch of the old Town Hall and addressing the townspeople, said: "One day you will be proud to erect a monument to Tom Paine, as high as the Town Hall clock." Writing to Mr. F. H. Millington, of Thetford, on February 16, 1891, prior to the publication of his "Life of Thomas Paine," the late Dr. Moncure D. Conway said: "When I have told my story, good men like Dr. Fowler Smith" (rector of St. Mary's, Thetford, from 1862 to 1891, and a former master of the Boys' Grammar School)—"will recognise amid his faults, which will not be concealed, a stout-hearted Englishman, reflecting even in his faults, the wrongs of an England now extinct, and faithful to the best light he could get. Traditional severity of judgment will change in just men to deep compassion, and Thetford will respect the memory of its famous son."

But the day is not yet. Mr. J. Burrell Faux, a former Town Clerk of Thetford, had Paine's works finely bound and lettered "Tracts," probably because of the obloquy attached to any person known to possess them. Not until 1904 was there anything relating to Paine in the library of the Thetford Mechanics' Institute, but in that year eight of his local admirers purchased the "Life" by Dr. Conway and presented it.

It is the writer's hope that Thetford may some day disprove the ancient assertion that "a prophet is not without honour save in his own country and among his own kin," by making public recognition of the fact that Thomas Paine was born within the borough.

As already noted, Paine was born at Thetford in 1737, and after an unsuccessful attempt to start his own career on a privateer, left home on a like adventure in 1756, but soon tired of the sea, and subsequently found work in London as a staymaker, at the same time studying philosophy and astronomy. In 1758 he moved to Dover, and the following year set up in

business as a staymaker at Sandwich, Kent, where he married Mary Lambert, but the next year went to Margate, where his wife died. Paine thereupon returned to London and in 1761 to Thetford, at both places studying to qualify himself for the Excise of which his wife's father had once been an officer. Having succeeded in his object, Paine was appointed to Grantham in 1762 and to Alford in 1764, but at the end of the year was discharged, owing to his adoption of the common practice of registering visits which he had not made. He then worked as a staymaker at Diss, and afterwards served as an usher in London, but in 1766 was reinstated in the Excise, though a suitable vacancy did not occur until 1768, when he was appointed to Lewes, Sussex, where in 1771 he married Elizabeth Ollive, but from some cause which has never been explained he and his wife soon agreed to an amicable separation. His abilities appear early to have been recognised, for in 1772 he was selected by the whole body of excisemen to draw up the "Case for the Officers of Excise" in support of a petition for increased salaries to be presented to Parliament. This procured Paine an introduction to Oliver Goldsmith, with whom he continued friendly during his residence in England. Owing to unauthorised absence from Lewes, perhaps on account of debts incurred while working for his fellows, debts which were ultimately paid in full, Paine was in 1774 again discharged from the Excise, and on the recommendation of Dr. Benjamin Franklin decided to go to America, and arrived at Philadelphia just before Christmas.

About a month afterwards a bookseller named Aitken started the "Pennsylvania Magazine" and made Paine editor. For eighteen months he remained in this post, his first essay published being one against slavery, and subsequently he wrote article after article which would have been up-to-date at the end of the nineteenth century, and which evinced a wonderful prescience of the trend of political, social, and humanitarian movements. He advocated the abolition of duelling, pleaded the rights of animals, better treatment for women, showed the benefits of international arbitration, and national and international copyright. As early as 1776 he issued a proposal for steam navigation to America, but more urgent matters occupied his attention. He naturally took a keen interest in the politics of the Colonies and was one of the first to advise the Americans to assert their independence, and in his famous pamphlet "Common Sense," which appeared at the beginning of 1776, he voiced the popular feeling, and was undoubtedly the influence needed to nerve the colonists to break away from the mother country, which they formally did by the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. Few pamphlets have had so great an effect, and Paine showed his disinterestedness by giving the copyright to the States for the cause of independence. Cobbett is certainly justified in asserting that whoever wrote the Declaration, Paine was its author. Having done what was possible in this direction he joined the army and became a general favourite with officers and men. In December he produced the first number of "The Crisis," which was issued at intervals during the great struggle, and had a widespread and remarkable effect, being read, by Washington's orders, to each regiment on service. Of this Dr. Conway says: "The pamphlet was never surpassed for true eloquence—that is, for the power that carries its point."

W. G. CLARKE

(To be continued)

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