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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### Religion and Morals.

BEYOND question more nonsense has been written on the subjects of religion and morals than on anything else. In connection with both subjects there has been a superabundance of oracular utterances, with a comparative paucity of common sense. In each case a great deal has been made of the mystery of the moral law and of the nature of religion, with a strong disinclination to face facts. The general result has been that in both fields charlatans have flourished, while lazy and hazy thinkers have felt themselves at home. The real importance of morals and the fancied importance of religion have served to keep both subjects before the public, while the desire to pose as teachers—when no lower motive operated—has served to open the floodgates of words that have, as often as not, added confusion to that which already existed. Luckily for humanity, the practice of morality is independent of any formulated philosophy of morals. Had it been otherwise, morality would be one of the things that is to come in with the millennium.

Consider what has been made of the assumed mystery of both religion and morals. It is my unfortunate duty to read—at the risk of bringing about brain-softening—every year some thousands of yards of sermons and essays on these topics. And the large majority of these simply revel in the impossibility of clearly understanding the matter under discussion. They commence by dilating on the "mystery" surrounding both subjects; they proceed in the same vein; and conclude with a triumphant demonstration that the mystery must remain to the end. Nor have I very much doubt that these writers would be quite grieved were they forced to admit that the essential nature of both religion and morals lies well within the grasp of a properly-educated intelligence.

For in strict truth neither religion nor morality is a mystery to those who care to clear their minds from prepossessions. Of course, if we ignore all that is really known on these subjects, or put on one side this knowledge as irrelevant, they are a mystery, and will remain so. But if we carefully study the question in the light of easily-accessible information, all mystery disappears, even though many problems remain.

Let us take religion first. Of the nature and development of the religious idea there is to-day no substantial doubt. Ever since Tyler, in the nineteenth century, published his "Primitive Culture," there has been no substantial doubt as to the way man made his appearance, and how he made his gods. The story runs from the philosophy of the savage thinker to that of the modern professor of theology; it is a philosophy which "unites in an unbroken line of mental connection the savage fetish-worshipper and the civilised

Christian." We know that we are descended from the savage mentally as well as physically, and that to properly understand the civilised descendant of the savage we must study the savage ancestor of the civilised. When we do this the "mystery" of religion disappears. We see religion coming into existence as the result of perfectly understandable conditions; we watch primitive man manufacturing ghosts and gods by the score, and trembling before the creations of his own mind. We see these gods dwindling in number and altering in character before the advance of civilisation, and we realise that, let these gods become refined as they may, they owe their origin to the speculations of the primitive savage, and but for the savage would never have existed. Of the truth of this, I repeat, there is no longer room for substantial doubt. There are still problems connected with the evolution of religion, but there are no mysteries to the unprejudiced student.

Fear and ignorance created the gods in man's own image. This is the great lesson of anthropology—a lesson that should be inscribed above all places devoted to the study of religion. It is a lesson enforced by the study of savage life all over the world; a lesson enforced by the very universality of the belief in Deity. Can anyone seriously believe that primitive humanity, with its scanty knowledge and small mental capacity, could have believed in gods were that belief a product of the refined speculations that meet us in modern Theistic writings? To merely state the question is to answer it. With little curiosity, small knowledge, and limited capacity, the prevalence of the belief proves that it must be the product of causes in such an environment, and these causes are, in their broadest aspect, the inevitable ignorance of man in primitive times; the misunderstandings of familiar experiences, now completely explainable on quite different ground. This is the one great lesson of modern anthropology, and it is the one that most religious apologists decline to discuss. The evidence for the natural development of religious belief is quite plain. So plain that it is very difficult to relieve our highly placed religionists from deliberately lying.

As with religions in general, so with morality. When we come to religious leaders referring to morality as "the will of God welling up into the human consciousness," we can only say that it is a case of "lying for the greater glory of God."

In its broadest aspect a moral code is a summary of rules enjoining or prohibiting conduct that experience has shown to be beneficial, or injurious, to humans living in association. In fact conduct was expressed in practice long before it was formulated in theory. Its expression, even to-day, is chiefly independent of theory. In its earlier expressions we see morality concerning itself with conduct in relation to the family or the tribe. Then we can watch the application of conduct and rules of conduct over a

steadily enlarging area—not, be it noted, as the result of the acceptance of any special theory or even as the result of the perception of the value of certain moral rules, but because of the pressure of forces always in operation with groups of human beings. Right conduct is not created because of a perception of its value, any more than a particular type of organism is evolved because the animal sees it will better harmonise with the environment. In both cases it is the conditions that are the great determinant, although there does arise later a consciousness of the value and meaning of the process. But, to begin with, all we have is an organism capable of modification, and presenting almost endless variations, with a set of conditions that determine the survival value of the organism and its functions. And it is not at all difficult to trace the main lines of the moral process in relation to groups of human beings. Some regard for others, however limited it may be, is essential if even the family is to exist. Some degree of honesty, truthfulness, chastity, loyalty, is necessary if people are to live in groups. There may be numerous variations within limits, but beyond a certain point the law of survival places an emphatic veto. In other words, just as the survival of the fittest secures in the one direction a certain degree of physical efficiency, so it secures in another the development of certain qualities essential to the tribe in its struggle against other tribes, or against its non-human enemies. Morality is thus of importance so far as social life is of importance, because it expresses the conditions under which associated existence can be maintained.

This view of the matter will also answer to a point much dwelt on by contemporary theologians of the better type. These tell us that an argument in favour of the "divine government" may be drawn from the fact that virtue is, on the whole, triumphant over vice. But if it be true that morality is fundamentally no more than an expression of the laws of social existence and persistence, the statement amounts to no more than saying that life is more powerful than death. And, so long as the race persists, this is a truism. Morality triumphs because, and so far as, life triumphs. The conditions of social survival determine the existence of certain forms of conduct, experience elaborates these forms, and conscious reflection shows their utility and expresses the result in codes more or less exhaustive or beneficial.

There is, then, nothing "mysterious" about either religion or morality, once we face the facts intelligently. Morality does not, as some have held, emerge from religion, nor does religion, as others have maintained, emerge from morality. Both are the result of social conditions—religion of psychological and social conditions that are transient in their nature, morality of forces that are permanently in operation. And in early stages religion and morals are so intermingled as to be almost indistinguishable. The social conditions enforce certain lines of conduct, and the prevailing mental conditions enforce other lines of conduct in relation to man's imaginary deities. And as knowledge modifies man's attitude towards these "spiritual" existences, morality comes to be separated from religion and to rest upon its own independent basis. But religion is never, in the best sense of the word, a moral force. It is far too conservative to be that. Besides, the essential condition of a healthy morality is progressive adaptations to changing conditions, while the whole force of religion makes for sub-

servience to a fixed and arbitrary standard. Finally, while among a civilised people religious belief can only be maintained by constant and forced dwelling upon it, the practice of morality is secured by the pressure of forces that can only cease to operate with the disappearance of human society.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## DUALISM AND THE "PROBLEM OF EVIL"

### II

THE riddle presupposed by the problem of evil is insoluble upon the monotheistic premises as presumed by the majority of theologians. An all-wise, all-good, and all-powerful god who creates a world which is from the moral standpoint so vitiated with evil as is ours, constitutes a glaring logical "saltus" ("leap"), almost, in fact, a contradiction in terms, and since it would be idle to deny that the historic ranks of the theological army have contained some acute speculative intellects, this glaring disparity between the Creator and his supposed attributes of the creation found expression in religious philosophy, and in theology at an early stage in what Edward Caird has termed the "Evolution of Theology." Very early on in the annals of religion it was perceived that the spectacle of an omnipotent and beneficent creator responsible for the Fall was an inherently ridiculous conception.

How then preserve the conception of god, whilst absolving him from the responsibility for the evil universe which yet indisputably exists? Such is the basic problem which the philosophy and theology of Dualism set out to resolve.

Broadly speaking, there were two fundamental solutions offered to the problem of evil. One, philosophical and academic, the other, theological and popular. One of these theories is the theory that god, the beneficent creator was yet not omnipotent, and in his work of creation throughout the ages was baffled by the stubborn and intractable nature of the material universe upon which a necessity presumably anterior to his existence, compelled him to work. Upon this philosophic view, the Deity was a good workman, only his tools were deficient.

Such, put baldly, was the view of the Creator and his creation put forward by a number of philosophical dualists: a theory on which even the brilliant author of "The Timaeus" permitted himself the licence of speculation: and which from the days of Plato to those of John Stuart Mill has recurred periodically.

From the theistic standpoint, that of theistic logic, the above theory presents certain obvious difficulties. It obviously presupposes that matter is anterior to, or at least, coexistent with, the Deity. In which case if the material universe is self-existent, why presuppose a Creator at all? Surely making such an assumption, the very hypothesis of a creator, a necessary "First Cause" becomes superfluous.

Probably, however, a more serious objection to the hypothesis as one suitable for practical religion is that it lacks the element of the dramatic which strikes the public eye and enlists popular support. The popular instinct in all ages requires the dramatisation of a personal conflict. The spectacle of the Creator painfully and with very imperfect success, trying to instil the elements of morality into the primeval chaos, altogether apart from its logical difficulties, has never enthused the mind of the devout believer sufficiently to become the foundation of a popularly recognised creed. It has remained a lecture room conception only.

Quite other has been the historical destiny of theological, as distinct from the philosophical Dualism. For the notion of two gods, the Good Creator, and the Evil Destroyer, who between them carry on for all eternity a struggle for the moral mastery of the universe in general, and in particular for the souls of men and women: this notion so essentially dramatic, and which

lends itself so admirably to the age-long desire of the masses for the concrete realisation of abstract metaphysical conceptions, has played not only a speculative, but an important practical role in the evolution of religious thought, and equally, in the practical creation of religious organisations. At the very dawn of recorded history we have the struggle of Light versus Darkness, of the Good Osiris versus the Evil Set, so vividly depicted in the bas reliefs of Ancient Egypt. And throughout the intervening ages the theological conception of the personified battle between good and evil has formed the dramatic basis for a whole succession of dualistic creeds.

The traditional stronghold of theological dualism has been the Iranian or Persian plateau, whence came in antiquity the ancient dualistic creeds of Zoroaster and Mani which arose against the background of still older mythologies from out of the night of Time. From the Persian citadel of Dualism, Manichean and Gnostic ideas percolated into medieval Europe and established a firm, and apparently unshakeable foothold in that dusky, hardly-known subterranean world, the world of "heresy" in the Catholic and totalitarian Middle Ages. As Gordon Rylands and others have adequately demonstrated, it was the gnostic sects in, or on the verge of Primitive Christianity who laid the foundations of the vast pyramid of Catholic theology itself, and it was Gnostic heretics of this kind, all more or less tinged with dualistic ideas who first recognised the vast potentialities of the Christian Church, and who envisaged it as a new world religion, and not as the earliest Christians had done, as a mere Jewish sect, they gave it the idea of a "New Testament" to cut it off entirely from the religion of the old.

Nor even in the present day orthodox Christian theology are dualistic conceptions altogether lacking. For it was from that historic citadel of dualism, Ancient Persia, that the rigidly monotheistic Jews of the era of the Babylonian Exile borrowed what famous theological character, Satan, who, as the bogey man of theology, as the "Puck" of medieval fairy tales, and as the literary hero of a whole series of great modern writers, has played so notable a role in modern life and literature, and, incidentally, has also contributed so notably to the revenues of the clergy, that the Church has found it necessary to expel and excommunicate even its most learned servants, from Origen to Mivart, who had the temerity to deny His Infernal Existence.

In this last connection it may relevantly be added that Satan, the Devil, Old Nick—call him what you will—the Evil One of Christian and Jewish theology (the religion of the Koran styles him as Eblis) represents an importation from dualism into monotheistic theology. The Christian Satan is, in fact, the Persian God of Evil, Ahriman, provided with horns and bereft of his original omnipotence. He is in fact an infernal insult to logic. For whilst dualistic theology introduces the Evil God as an explanation of the evil inherent in the universe, Satan, whom Christian theology emphatically declares an original (very original) creation of the only god, constitutes really an additional liability to his Creator: who is not only now conceived as the Creator of Evil, but as the creator of a special agent to propagate it. Obviously, if Lucifer, as the Bible records, fell from Grace, an omnipotent and omniscient Creator cannot but have foreseen his revolt and all that would flow from it.

The examples given above demonstrate Dualism as an important historic creed. Our last article will describe its chief historic manifestations.

F. A. RIDLEY.

(To be concluded)

## BLASPHEMY AND THE LAW

WE have been asked whether there is any specific law against attacking Christianity. There is only one, called the "Blasphemy Statute" of 1697, but it was never put into operation. It claims to be an Act for the more effective suppressing of Blasphemy and Profaneness. The following is the Act:—

"Whereas many persons have of late years openly avowed and published many blasphemous and impious opinions contrary to the doctrines and principles of the Christian religion, greatly tending to the dishonor of Almighty God, and may prove destructive to the peace and welfare of this kingdom; Whereas, for the more effectual suppressing of the said detestable crimes, be it enacted by the King's most excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the lords spiritual and temporal, and the commons of this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, that if any person or persons having been educated in, or at any time having made profession of, the Christian religion within this realm shal, by writing, printing, teaching, or advised speaking, deny any one of the persons in the Holy Trinity to be God or shal assert or maintain there are more gods than one, or shal deny the Christian religion to be true, or the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be of divine authority, and shal, upon indictment or information in any of his Majesties Courts at Westminster, or at the assizes, be thereof lawfully convicted by the oath of two or more credible witnesses, such person or persons for the first offence shal be adjudged incapable and disabled in law to all intents and purposes whatsoever to have or enjoy any office or offices, employment or employments, ecclesiastical, civil, or military or any part in them, or any profit or advantage appertaining to them, or any of them. And if any person or persons so convicted as aforesaid shal at the time of his or their conviction, enjoy or possess any office, place, or employment such office, place, or employment shal be void, and is hereby declared void. And if such person or persons shal be a second time lawfully convicted, as aforesaid, of all or any the aforesaid crime or crimes that then he or they shal from thenceforth be disabled to sue, prosecute, plead, or use any action or information in any court of law or equity, or to be guardian of any child, or executor or administrator of any person, or capable of any legacie or deed of gift, or to bear any office, civil or military, or benefice ecclesiastical for ever within this realm, and shal also suffer imprisonment for the space of three years, without bail or mainprize from the time of such conviction.

Provided always, and be it enacted by the authority aforesaid, that no person shal be prosecuted by virtue of this Act for any words spoken, unless the information of such words shal be given upon oath before one or more justice or justices of the peace within four days after such words spoken, and the prosecution of such offence be within three months after such information.

Provided also, and be it enacted by the authority aforesaid, that any person or persons convicted of all, or any, of the aforesaid crime or crimes in manner aforesaid, shal, for the first offence (upon his, her, or their acknowledgement and renunciation of such offence, or erroneous opinions, in the same court where such person or persons was or were convicted, as aforesaid, within the space of four months after his, her, or their conviction) be discharged from all penalties and disabilities incurred by such conviction, any thing in this Act contained to the contrary thereof in any wise notwithstanding."

The words italicised were repealed by the 53 George III. Cap. 160, which was designed to protect Unitarians. But this Act is not included in the revised Statute Book, being apparently treated as spent; and the Unitarians may therefore be just as liable as Freethinkers. Justice Best, indeed, in the case of Waddington (1822) held that it was really not permissible to attack "the divinity of Christ." And it is obvious that if the words in italics were absolutely repealed the whole Act is repealed—which has always been held not to be the case. The qualification in favour of Unitarians was really inconsistent with the Act it limited.

## ACID DROPS

Here are two cases for study. One is a formal clergyman who has been called by God to service. He is a proper representative. The other is a man who claims to belong to another Church, of a different kind, but it will serve. The first one would not consider the second one as a proper representative of God. But they both are claiming to be serving the same God. Only one receives payment. To the outsider there does not seem any difference. We take first the one who has no title and receives no payment. He has different doctrines to the other preacher, but he claims to be talking to the same God as the other one. His name is Johnson. His chief function seems to be to keep the books—business ones—in order. But he is not satisfied with the state of religion. He says deliberately to his people, "We must confess that we have lost our hold on youth, and it is surely a menacing situation." Everyone will agree on that. But it is really worse than it seems to be. The people do not merely give the churches a "go by," they are very joyful over it. Mr. Johnson says that "the young people seem to think that God should give a vote of thanks for what they have done for him."

Now we do not say that the attitude of the young people is as polite to God as it might be, but it is quite true that the young people have done, in their days, a great deal for God, and God, in turn, did much for the people. All the gods, the Jewish, the Christian, the Mohammedan, etc.: all these gods did something for the people. The gods made the corn grow, they wiped away disease—after a time. But the gods did appear to do something. It will be remembered that at the beginning of the world war great preparations were made for what God would do to help his people. But it came to nothing. Men openly declared that whether we praised God or not did not seem to be of very great importance. We feel certain that Churchill believes that he did more to win the war than did God.

There is another matter that concerns gods far more than it interests Man. History shows that Gods need feeding as much as does Man. The food that is given to the gods may not be like that which Man takes, but it is there. Once upon a time a sheep was killed for God; wine also went that way, and above all the gods lived on praise. History will prove to us that when Man stops praising God, then God begins to wither. Among the Greek people, "The nectar of the Gods" was an illustration of what was given to the gods by Man. Gods live on praise, and, in return for giving praise, they help poor Man. That, we think, is the essence of the relations between Man and God. Mr. Johnson has hit the mark much more than he believes he has done. If God has helped Man, Man has helped God. More, it is mere theory that Man cannot live without God. It is a plain truth that God cannot live without Man.

Mr. Johnson complains that people will not come to church. The Rev. Norman Hook, Vicar of Wimbledon, agrees that we need more church-goers. But he does not believe that inviting people to come to church will serve alone. He says that people must "be first reconciled with God." That is quite good from his point of view, but it will not go far, and his point only means that if people are religious they will come to church. Of course they will. No one can doubt that. But the situation is that people nowadays understand something about the real origin of Christianity and religion in general. He forgets that for nearly one hundred and fifty years the people have looked on the established Churches to keep things in order, and now that trust is going or gone. The belief is now rapidly dying. The truthfulness of historic Christianity is shattered beyond recovery.

Meanwhile we are interested, without being instructed, when we deal with "Communism," as though it were of necessity something that was incurably vile. As a matter of fact there have been, for many, many ages, humans who struggled to secure some form of communism, some in the form of religion, to secure what we should call "a fine social group," etc. There

is a strong attempt by Roman Catholics to picture a very vile form of communism. In politics we get a very weak form of communism, in religion we have a dangerous form, and so we may go on, playing an honest part where possible. It is on that ground that we say beware of the form of communism you are supporting.

The Dean of St. Albans feels greatly injured that, "Neither the League of Nations nor the 'United Nations Charter' makes any mention of Almighty God," and more recently, "Unesco" has formally resolved to exclude religion from the scope of its cultural work." But why this shock? Consider the prayers that were sent to heaven—direct from London—to prevent the war; but the war came. Then there followed a series of prayers to end the war at once; but it has hardly finished to-day. While we write, new steps are being made to be ready for another war—and God seems to be doing nothing. We think it may safely be said that if we cannot do a particular thing without God, we can do very little with Him.

Of course, if the "Unesco" plan does break down, the responsibility will rest with Man because we did not call on God to take a hand. But why that? If a man saw a child about to be run over would he call on God for a helping hand, or ask someone to advertise that He saved the child's life? The probability would be that the man would go quietly, satisfied that he had saved the child. A God who merely helps a favoured few is not good enough. What we need is a God who is as good as a good man. Then things might be better. We will be kindly and say that gods are played out. Apparently struck by the idea that his talking is rather weak, the Dean asks, "Can a Christian be a Pacifist?" And to this he says, "So long as Christians believe in the incarnation, so long as we believe in the fatherhood of God—No! Humanity is one. All we can say is that the sooner we get rid of this God, the better.

Some of our Members of Parliament appear to be rather misunderstanding the cause of Anti-Semitism. For example, Mr. A. Greenwood, M.P., says—in opposition to what is called "Semitism"—that Anti-Semitism grows where there are economic difficulties. It is not easy to account for any age-long social movement, and it is almost ridiculous when it is applied to a Jew-hunting. The root of Jew-hatred is built on the two systems of religion—Christian and Jewish. The Jew separated from others, from purely religious motives, and the Christians showed that they could make their religion as bad as Judaism in their narrowness and in other ways. Whatever other factors may be brought forward, religion is the source of the evil. Take away the religious quality and the whole thing is different. Historically, the religion of the Jew made, largely, a country within a country. And no other religion has ever committed so much evil as Christianity.

The "Daily Mirror" reports that the Government takes a grave view of the recent episode of the refusal to serve a coloured man in a London restaurant. Readers will know our opinion on the colour bar, which we consider as one of the products of religious thought, as is also all racial prejudice. The idea that Negroes are somewhat less human is substantiated by that ridiculous story in the "Good Book" when the descendants of Ham were condemned to be the slaves of men, because Ham saw his father in a disgusting drunken state. Readers of the "Bible Handbook" will be able to verify the passage.

We see that the Archbishop of York strongly objects to the use of Atomic bombs. That is good. It must be admitted that if there was only one maker of bombs, and that one was "us" the picture might have been different. But this is not something from God. Every country may have atomic bombs, and there is no guarantee that we shall have control over their use. In most wars, we were certain we had God with us. In the last war we had to fight "on our own." We felt that we should win out safely; but an atomic bomb gives us no such guarantee. A bomb might drop in the middle of Buckingham Palace, and having secured the right Monarch, we cannot run the risk of having all our plans broken because of an atomic bomb. We have no contact with God, but we hope the Archbishop will pass his opinion on.

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## SUGAR PLUMS

The Annual Conference of the National Secular Society on Whit-Sunday, May 16, will be held in the Grosvenor Hotel, Deansgate, Manchester. The business sessions will be from 10-30 a.m. to 12-30 p.m. and from 2-30 to 4-30 p.m. Only members of the N.S.S. can attend, speak and vote, and the current card of membership is necessary for admission. A reception of delegates and friends will be held in the hotel on Saturday evening at 7-30 p.m. Details of hotel accommodation required and booking for the conference lunch must be sent without delay to the General Secretary, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1.

Man's troubles are many, and varied. He has to learn what is good and what is bad, and although he may learn more the longer he lives, he does not always turn his knowledge to the best advantage. Present day events are at a very low level, but the attempts we are making to meet our problems are at least an advance on the efforts of a century ago. For example, William Wilberforce, by nature a decent man, shows his worst qualities when his Christian prejudices come uppermost, and although he was on the right road in many things, his Christianity was a bar to many of his efforts. He supported the "Combination Laws" and the following extract from his "A Practical View of the System of Christianity" will give some idea of the warped minds that are the products of Christianity. When Wilberforce was informed of the bad conditions of the working class, and the people who were dying of starvation in the early part of the last century, he said, apropos the working class:—

"A lonely path has been allotted to them by the hand of God, and we should contentedly bear the inconveniences about which worldly men conflict so eagerly. To that peace of mind that religion offers indiscriminately to all ranks, and affords more truth and satisfaction than all the expensive pleasures which are beyond the poor man's reach. In this view the poor man has the advantage. If their superiors enjoy more abundant comforts, they are also exposed to many temptations, from which the inferior classes are exempted, and those that have food and raiment should therewith be content since their situation in life, with all its evils, is better than they have deserved at the hand of God; and finally, that all human distinctions will soon be done away . . . as children of the same heavenly Father . . . will be alike admitted to the same inheritance. Such are the blessed effects of Christianity."

If the foregoing can be accepted by a "good Christian" one wonders what the quality of the bad ones would have been like.

## PARSONS AND POLITICIANS

BEFORE dealing with the subject at issue, I propose to give a little personal history which will explain my point of view. Reared in a Conservative household I (of course) went to Sunday School and Church, eventually becoming a Sunday School Teacher. It is now over forty years ago that, because of my interest in the "Clarion" Cycling Club, I read Blatchford's "God and my Neighbour." This book I read twice in twenty-four hours and such was the effect on me as a young man that I called on the parson who accepted my resignation. I was rather surprised at the time that he never argued with me, which is rather strange in view of the many organisations for converting the "heathen" to Christianity. Apparently, however, that work has to be carried on outside this country.

I think I can say that from that time I have been the "perfect Atheist." Probably my conversion was due to my reading of Astronomy, which has been the science which in the past confounded the Godites. From that time onwards I have read "The Freethinker" and followed up the exposure of religion in books of the Robertson type. Nothing I have read, however, has had the slightest influence in restoring "Humpty Dumpty" on the wall.

It will be noticed that Blatchford, like Paine, wrote both of Social problems and also of Religion, and although Blatchford's other works, such as "Merrie England" have been quoted by his supporters, his real classic—"God and my Neighbour"—has been ignored. Needless to say it was in my opinion much better writing than his Socialist works, good though those were. The same remarks are true of Paine, though I consider his "Rights of Man" much deeper and provocative of thought than, say, "Merrie England." Paine, however, was condemned because of his "Age of Reason." The combination of the two, anti-religion and trenchant criticism of the social fabric, were enough to bring anyone to the stake in earlier times.

When I say I had become the "perfect Atheist" I mean that I was not attracted to any other religious body. Some people seem to delight in running through a whole lot of Nonconformist chapels in their search for the "true" religion. Others worship a god which is about as elusive as the light of a candle and, indeed, one opponent described god to me as being similar to the electric current propelling a tramcar. Others have gone to Spiritualism, Christian Science and a host of other break-away religions, the chief purpose of which appears to be the support of the parson and the erection and maintenance of a building of some kind.

Probably it was my experience in the Church of England that decided my course of action. After all, an electric current could hardly send a Son down to earth to be crucified for mankind and even if he had we should be justified in asking what was the voltage! Above all, however, I had in mind the enormous size of the Solar and Sidereal systems and when I recognised this, away went Heaven and Hell and this Earth became in my eyes what it is—a speck in the universe.

I became familiar with the reasons for the growth of the religious idea, but what puzzled me at first was the persistence of religion and the crude ideas it represented as compared with the scientific point of view. I could understand the Church of England and its doctrine and also the growth of the Nonconformist Movement, which was essentially Liberal in its politics. The growth of the latter was a challenge to the Church with its landlords and moneyed supporters and naturally they accepted the same God and its traditions including the Bible. Really it was the growth of Liberal Christianity, just as idiotic and biased as the Church they broke away from but also imbued with the idea that they would be much more free in their own chapels. Every member of the Church of England who has given up religion will agree with this. It is a commentary upon Christianity itself that in this country we have over 500 different sects, each claiming that they are the "One and only"

and all at loggerheads, although of recent years they have become more tolerant in view of the growth of Rationalism. In my day, my mother used to laugh about the "Wee-sly-uns" which gives readers an idea of the antagonism to which I am calling attention.

The rise of the Nonconformist Movement, too, made possible a host of preachers, each taking their particular line of argument as to what Christianity stood for and on the political side bringing out men and women who challenged the right of the Church people to their monopoly of local councils, etc. In this way one sees the clear connection between Religion and Politics. All of them preached a doctrine of brotherly love once a week (and sometimes oftener) which was totally at variance with their actions, and in any crisis in history none was quicker to attack an enemy of the State and to encourage wars than these followers of the "Gentle Nazarene." Once outside their camp, the contradiction of belief and action was obvious and what is more, it has been the same right through history. The worst thing that could happen to the Christians is that their Resurrection would be true and that for an eternity they would have to live together. As Bernard Shaw has shown, Hell would be preferable!

When I tried to find why it had persisted so long, however, I found that a variety of laws and also custom prevented an exposure of their lies. I began to realise the vested interest represented in their buildings and their multiform organisations. The extent to which the parsons depended for their "living" upon the continuance of ignorance and to appreciate the genius and also sacrifices which had been made by men to expose and destroy this infamous doctrine. Surely I thought the rise of education will mean this absurdity will pass away, as I believe it is doing as a belief, and mankind will refuse to be saddled with this debt of dead religions and their hangers-on. Modern society has no place for them in a competitive world. I still found their representatives, however, in privileged positions (House of Lords, etc.) and in council and other elections, whatever the candidate might think, he or she was very careful not to disclose any anti-religious ideas. Probably most readers of our paper have had the same ideas that I am putting on paper and just as I solved the problem with my vicar as a young man, so I think that I have solved the problem of the modern state supporting an outworn religion despite the difference in our century compared with that which marked the rise of Christianity.

My first tussle with the religious idea proved to me that although I was alone in my ideas, they were correct. That is to say, I did not say that because everyone was opposed to me they must be correct. Democratically they would have outvoted me, but then they had not the same knowledge that I had. In fact, democracy becomes the sheerest fallacy in a world when the source of information is smothered and people are kept in ignorance of the facts.

So that, briefly, I saw in Religion the handmaiden of the State in keeping Law and Order. Christianity dates back to the Roman Empire and ever since then its parsons and its books have been used to propagate the idea of subservience to the ruling class. It has paid the State better to have this "mental" Policeman than to depend upon the Iron Glove. We now know that "Pie in the Sky" is the promise beyond for what we are robbed of in this world. In and out of season the Church (of whatever denomination and with very few exceptions) has preached contentment to slaves, villeins and the proletariat. All the Iconoclasts have had to stand the charge of being Anti-Christ.

Right down history the chief weapon of the State was the "Roman" Catholic Church. How this tried to become independent of and even above the State most people know. The State, however, in this country elected its own Church, faithful to its own politicians.

I must call attention to the word "Catholic" however. There is no organisation in the world with a greater knowledge of human nature and the intrigue necessary to maintain its power than the Roman Catholic Church. Looking at the events of to-day we can say that whenever and whatever it supports is reactionary. It has its paid supporters throughout the world, with their entry into every Roman Catholic household, its confession, remission of sins and above all, its traditions. Eugene Sue in "The Wandering Jew" has given us a masterly novel showing how it works. It hopes always to be the same world power that it was years ago, when ignorance was greater, but now it pins its faith on backing reaction in our capitalist world, and it is the bitterest enemy the working class in any country should fear.

Last year I visited Yugoslavia and in Rab (one of the islands on the Dalmatian coast) took photos of a religious procession which has been running probably since the year 850, when a Bishopric was established there. Now the people of Yugoslavia are critical of all reactionary bodies, including the Church, as is evidenced by the small number in the procession. In all these Eastern countries beyond what is called the "Iron Curtain," the Roman Catholic Church has been all-powerful in the past, and one can safely say that to the extent that education is fostered they will get less support than ever from the people. This does not mean to say, however, that reactionary politicians will not finance them to use their influence against the new democracies, and one has always to remember that the Vatican is wooed more to-day by reaction than ever before.

Therefore we cannot expect Religion to fade away until we have a world in which Democracy is in full control and all those forces which exploit the people for selfish ends are brought to heel. So I think all lovers of Freedom have a key to the future. If you find the Church supporting any policy it must be bad. Any other conclusion would be a denial of common sense.

T. D. SMITH.

## ANTI - FEMINISM

FOR many years past Mr. Anthony M. Ludovici has been known to the reading public as a prominent opponent of the more extreme advocates of feminism. In the latest book from his pen, "Enemies of Women" (Carroll and Nicholson; 10s. 6d.), he repeats many of the things which he has said in earlier books, but he is as stimulating and forthright as ever. He attacks both the Puritans and the Catholics for their attitude to sexual matters and he shows himself as aware as ever of the dangers attendant on late marriage, and on what he regards as the follies and fallacies of all who take up the extreme feminist attitude. He often quotes from women who have written from the approximately feminist point of view, such as Virginia Woolf, Mrs. Blanco White, and Miss Irene Clephane, and uses these quotations tellingly to place their opinions in what he regards as the correct perspective.

One of the points which he makes most strongly is his belief that the general theory that childbirth is a sacrifice made by women to advance the welfare of the race is a totally mistaken idea. Many readers, who may be in general sympathy with the case which Mr. Ludovici makes out, will feel that he is far too extreme in his advocacy of a case in many respects sound for it to receive the support which it might well command in the hands of a less biased commentator.

Nothing that I have said should, however, be taken as suggesting that the book lacks anything in interest for the intelligent reader. In these days, when opinion is so often mass-manufactured and taken ready-made from the popular Press and the radio, it is good that a man with a highly individual point of view should be enabled to give that

adequate expression. Mr. Ludovici more than once complains that his previous books have been largely ignored by the commercial Press of this country; and it may well be that a like fate awaits the present book, though it is pre-eminently a book which will be of importance to those who wish to understand and appreciate the problems of the present day as they have to be understood if we are ever to come out of the mess and muddle in which the twentieth century has plunged us.

The reader will understand that there is much in the book with which I find myself in the most complete disagreement; and I think that Freethinkers in general will not regard all Mr. Ludovici's statements as proved or in some cases even provable. But the book is deserving of careful study both by those who agree with it and those who do not. It is genuinely fascinating reading, even for those who will find the ideas contained in it infuriating.

JOHN ROWLAND.

### THE DEVIL

THERE are cases of illness which the saints themselves haven't the power to cure, cases in which it is necessary to call in a minister of the Catholic Church—the only being in the world to whom Jesus, as he bid farewell to his disciples on that evening of sacred memory, left this power. We speak of the sickness of Possession by the Devil.

This terrible sickness can be compared to no other. It is an agonising feeling of nausea, a ball of fire which rolls in the throat; it is a strange being which moves inside us, which roars, which blasphemes and curses as a heretic, howls as a wolf, barks as a dog. It shoots and darts, winds and twists, makes rigid the arms, at one minute makes its victim as light as air, the next minute drags him to the ground. It brings exquisite pain and sadness: it glues itself to the soul and can't be shaken off, and if its victim can't be freed it finally pulls him down to the pit of Hell.

Who is the one who is the cause of all this? The Devil! He is tall and painfully thin, with a black face, fiery squinty eyes, protruding chin, prominent teeth, white as china, a large mouth, thin lips on which is an eternal sneer, a bushy goatee, crooked horns, a long tail which also laughs cynically and is ever twisting. His black heavy body smells of sulphur and stinks of rotten meat.—From "Our Lady of Help," by Antero de Figueiredo, Chapter 5. Translated by N. F.

### CORRESPONDENCE

#### AN AMERICAN PROTEST

Sir,—As a veteran Freethinker, I have, at times, read many odd opinions in rationalist journals. But, I have never come across any to equal those contained in Mr. J. W. Poynter's article, "Freethought, Religion, and 'Rome,'" which appeared in the 28th March, 1948, issue.

Aside of floundering about in a good deal of specious argumentation, he makes a few highly significant statements which betray his emotional—and, one might truly say—religious leanings. Mr. Poynter informs us that he did not "give up religion," and that in his mind it was "only an erroneous form of it."

This becomes painfully obvious when we read the reasons for Mr. Poynter's taking leave of the Roman Catholic Church. It would be best to give it in his own words:—

"A few words as to the Roman Catholic Church. The present writer, once an ardent member of it, seceded because (mainly) of what he thought its oppressive governmental system . . . So it is here suggested that the Roman Catholic Church should be regarded in a less hostile way, as

being at any rate a great historic institution which has conferred, and still can confer, many benefits to society."

Now, it was not the body of belief held by the R.C.C. that bothered Mr. Poynter. It was solely its "oppressive governmental system." May we ask how long it took him (once an "ardent" member) to discover that there is no freedom of thought in the R.C.C.? He continues along the same line and contributes the following gem of sociologic observation:—

"Also, the general philosophy of Catholicism has—to put it at the lowest—much of value in these times."

To Freethinkers who have been battling religion throughout their lifetime, this is putting it "at the lowest" with a vengeance.

In conclusion, it would not be amiss to inquire of Mr. Poynter, who is now endeavouring to make Freethinkers understand that that philosophy of Catholicism has much of value in these days, precisely what these "values" consist of.—Yours, etc., "LUCIFER."

Brooklyn, U.S.A.

### OBITUARY

#### JOSEPH GLASSBROOK

It is with sincere regret we report the death of Joseph Glassbrook, President of the Blackburn Branch N.S.S. for many years.

A staunch Freethinker and worker for the movement, his membership in the N.S.S. covers many years. He was of the old school, seeking no publicity for himself, but always giving his best to the cause, for the cause. Death took place after a fairly long illness, and the cremation took place on April 24, at Carleton Crematorium, Blackpool. Our very sincere sympathy is with his widow and surviving members of the family in their great loss.

R.H.R.

### LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

#### LONDON—OUTDOOR

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Sunday, 12 noon: Mr. L. ENRY.

#### LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "The Psychological Study of Genius." Dr. J. C. FLUGEL, D.Sc.

#### COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Car Park, Broadway).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. H. DAY.

Burnley (Market).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Clarebridge.—Wednesday, May 5, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Colne.—Friday, April 30, 7-45 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

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

MAY DAY MEETING.—"Kameradschaft" — the famous International film. Speakers. Sunday, May 2, 7 p.m. (doors open 6-30 p.m.), at Denison House, Vauxhall Bridge Road, S.W.1 (1 minute Victoria Station). Tickets, 1s. 6d., from A.F.B., 59, Mallham Road, S.E. 23, or at door.

## THE AGE OF REASON

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## THE EARLY LIFE OF THOMAS PAINE

## III.

AFTER the Peace of Amiens was signed, Paine left for America, landing at Baltimore on October 30, 1802. His past services to the State seemed to have been forgotten, and he received little but persecution and ingratitude. He resided for a time on his farm at New Rochelle, and then at Greenwich, where he died on June 8, 1809, and was buried on his own estate, a plain headstone being placed on his grave. This was chipped away either by orthodox vandals or admiring visitors—the deed has been credited to both. In September, 1819, William Cobbett, the English Radical, first the vilifier and then the vindicator of Paine, dug up the coffin entire and brought it to England just as it was. Those who looked for a striking judgment on the vessel were sadly disappointed, and Cobbett with his strange freight landed at Liverpool on November 21, 1819. The enterprise "was met with mingled wrath and ridicule." Byron wrote:—

"In digging up your bones, Tom Paine,  
Will Cobbett has done well;  
You'll visit him on earth again,  
He'll visit you in hell."

The bones were stored away, and almost forgotten for years, although occasionally exhibited at Normandy Farm, near Guildford, where Cobbett died on June 18, 1835. James Paul Cobbett, his son, inscribed his own name on the skull and on the larger bones. He became insolvent, and George West, a neighbouring farmer, was appointed receiver. He kept the bones nine years, and in March, 1844, conveyed them to Benjamin Tilly, who had been Cobbett's factotum in London. Tilly died about 1860 in the house of a Mr. Ginn, a wood merchant, of Bethnal Green, and left a number of Cobbett's manuscripts and relics. In 1879, the Rev. George Reynolds had his attention called to these by Ginn's daughter, and he purchased the box of papers and relics. The box contained some of the brain and hair of Paine. Before Tilly's death the skull and right hand of Paine had gone on a career of their own. In 1853 or 1854 these were in possession of the Rev. Robert Ainslie, secretary of the London City Mission. The skull and hand came to Mr. Oliver Ainslie after his father's death, and during some alterations were taken away by a Mr. Penny, and cannot be traced further. The other remains of Paine's skeleton were not destroyed, for they were seen in 1873 by the Rev. Alexander Gordon, a Unitarian minister, and heard of by him in 1876. Dr. Conway says: "The correspondence that has passed between us leaves no doubt in my mind that he was led by his respect for Paine, despite divergences from that author's religion, to secure for the remains quiet burial—perhaps near his parents at Thetford." This, however, is a tradition that cannot be substantiated. There are now traceable a portion of Paine's brain and two locks of his hair. One of the latter was presented to Dr. Conway by Cobbett's biographer, Edward Smith. It is soft and dark, with a reddish tinge. The brain was sold to a second-hand bookseller by the Rev. Geo. Reynolds, and purchased for £5 by Dr. Conway.

In the summer of 1900, Dr. Conway wrote to Mr. F. H. Millington, Thetford, to inquire if any local traditions existed as to the whereabouts of Paine's bones. Dr. Conway then said: "I would be much gratified if I could say with certainty that they rest among his people. There would be something poetic in that, and my interest is limited to that." There was subsequently some correspondence among those interested in the question, and the Rev. Alexander Gordon, of the Memorial Hall, Manchester, who was for eleven years minister at the Octagon

Chapel, Norwich, in a letter to the writer, said: "I have visited Thetford more than once, and of two houses, each of which more than forty years ago was regarded as Paine's birthplace, I could never ascertain that there was in either case convincing evidence. In regard to Paine's bones, I can only say, as I said some years ago to Mr. M. D. Conway, that I hope they are finally at rest." This leaves the matter just where it was—at a tantalising point.

Some three miles from Thetford, in the county of Suffolk, is the pretty village of Euston, a place of much historic interest. Here in the sixteenth century dwelt the well-known family of Rookwoods, one of whom, Edward, entertained Queen Elizabeth on her visit there in 1578, but was subsequently imprisoned in Bury Gaol as a Recusant. He died in prison, and the estate was afterwards purchased by the Earl of Arlington, a member of the "Cabal" ministry, who rebuilt the hall, church, and bridges, and laid out the gardens, park and ornamental water, availing himself of the advice of John Evelyn, the diarist. During his ownership, Charles II was a not infrequent visitor, and after the King's death in 1691 his Queen lived for a time at the Hall. Her Confessor, Father Diaz, recording in his diary that "Her Majesty lives content here with her familie; the place is very pretty, and has all the conveniencies that wee can desire, except that there is no cows." In 1672 the only daughter of the Earl of Arlington was married to Henry Fitzroy, a natural son of King Charles II, she being twelve and he sixteen. He afterwards became the first Duke of Grafton, saw naval and military service, and was killed at the siege of Cork in 1690. The Duchess laid the foundation stone of the new church at Euston, which has the inscription: "Isabelle, Duchesse of Grafton and Countesse of Ewston, layed this stone, 21st day of April, 1676."

In this church Thomas Paine's parents were married, the entry in the register for the year 1734 reading: "June 20th. Joseph Paine and Frances Cocks were married." The Norfolk Paines, Pains, or Paynes—the spelling of surnames at that time was of the most uncertain character—were a good family, frequently referred to in the fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Thomas Paine, Gent., was appointed a trustee for the Lady Elizabeth (afterwards Queen) in 1553; Mary Paine, widow, was married at Great Dunham in 1576; and there was a Thomas Paine, of Itteringham, Gent., in 1571; and in Swaffham Church there is a memorial to Katherine, wife of William Steward of Ely, maternal grandmother of Oliver Cromwell, and one of the daughters and co-heiresses of Thomas Paine of Castleacre. His arms were: Azure, a fesse between three leopards' faces or, and crest: At the bottom of a dead tree, a broken spear in saltire. She died in 1590. William Paine, Gent., held a part of East Beckham in 1617, and in 1674 the manor of Morley was sold to Sir Joseph Paine, Kt., who was a Sheriff of Norwich in 1654 and Mayor in 1660, and is buried in St. Gregory's Church in that city. Which particular branch of the family Joseph Paine belonged to is not known. The Cocks were also a well-known family in Norwich and Norfolk, but there is no necessity to go outside Thetford for the ancestry of Thomas Paine's mother. In 1629 John Cocks was Deputy-Recorder of Thetford, and in 1638, Robert Cocks, M.A., had a licence from Richard, Bishop of Norwich, permitting him to teach the art of grammar within the village of Thetford.

Frances Cocks was born at Thetford in 1697, and was the daughter of the Thetford attorney. From the fact that her marriage took place at Euston, it may be inferred that she had been residing in that parish for some time previously. She was maliciously described by Oldys, probably with as little foundation as many other of his statements, as "a woman of a warm temper and an eccentric character." Dr. Conway has, however, noted that her son's writings "contain several affectionate allusions to his father, but none to his mother."

W. G. CLARKE

(To be continued)