

the Smith family will not very long be the centre round which the modern world revolves, and that the Church has a far wider problem than how to get Smith to go to church. The Smiths have grown to dislike creeds and dogmas, and they have reason to, for the family in the past has made a pretty mess of them. But the *genus homo*, speaking generally, has a remarkable capacity for believing. Jones and Robinson are ready to believe that all things are possible; but it is a pretty severe test for their faith in the Church, so long as they see the Smiths there, still ensconced in the churchwarden's pew, with the air of conscious, though modest and restrained, power.

I am concerned about Jones and Robinson. Of course, I am also concerned about Smith, because I believe there are some surprises awaiting him in the next world. His remoter ancestors decided that Purgatory was a 'fond thing, vainly invented,' and his immediate forebears later proceeded, somewhat less wordily but just as effectively, to dispose of Heaven and Hell, so far as they personally were concerned. And now the cry goes up from the Smith family: 'There is a Smith overboard! Not that it matters to us much, for a Smith can take care of himself anywhere; but it puts the

ship in such a sorry plight. Really, we must get rid of some more useless ballast in the shape of creeds and dogmas, and perhaps our brother will consent to be rescued.'

One is tempted to think of Jonah. Yet it would be neither decent nor 'expedient at this time,' to heave the rest of the Smiths overboard. After all, they are nearer at hand than Jones and Robinson, and the Church must begin with them, if Jones and Robinson are ever to be reached. And I believe that they can be converted; and that the only possible way to begin their conversion, is to let them see themselves just as they are, and to refuse so far as possible to take their money for church support except under conditions that make it perfectly clear to Jones and Robinson that the Church is emerging from Smith domination.

For Jones and Robinson simply cannot be reached unless it becomes absolutely clear to them that the Smith family, as such, has ceased in any degree to control church policy. And this cannot become clear until the doctrine of the Church loses the ear-mark of Smith simplification, and until the ethics of the Church become downright materialistic, as they were when usury was a mortal sin, and when the theory of absolute private ownership of land was a heresy.

## SMITH AND THE CHURCH

BY AN OUTSIDER

SHOULD Smith go to Church? asks Mr. Meredith Nicholson in the *June Atlantic*. I think he should not. Now Smith, as described by Mr. Nicholson,

'is one of the best of fellows, — an average twentieth-century American, diligent in business, a kind husband and father, and in politics anxious to

vote for the best interests of the Country.' Smith was brought up in a Christian household, was taught to repeat the Apostles' Creed and the Ten Commandments and he learned his Catechism, so that he has the advantages of a Christian training. He has retained the kindness, the charity, and the goodwill that are taught in all religions, but without announcing it or even publicly admitting it, he has, in his heart, renounced Christian dogma. He feels a little mean, and just a bit ashamed of himself, to stand up and repeat the Apostles' Creed. He does not publish his thoughts about these things, but he knows his own mind.

Let us examine the processes of his mind a little more closely. If you take a child and repeat again and again, continually, certain statements, they are likely in time to assume the form of truth to him. The constant demand of the Roman Catholic Church that it be permitted to supervise the instruction of its children is witness of this. It knows very well that certain processes of thought may become fixed so that they abide in many well-ordered minds as final conclusions, and that it is then difficult to disturb them. It is, therefore, far easier and more profitable in results to make converts of children and hold them to this habit of thought than to persuade adults that any branch of organized Christianity is the True Faith. All ease of conversion falls away, however, if the adult has not been trained to consider certain dicta as true without the privilege of questioning, or if the automatic connection in his mind between ideas of dogma and truth have become loosened or atrophied. This automatic connection is the basis of faith, and when it is seriously disturbed, so that the whole subject is approached *de novo*, the question of the reasonableness of dogma is frequently con-

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sidered for the first time, and the dogma then appears as true or false. With Smith it does not appear to be true.

And yet, he is tied to the Church by ties innumerable. His father and mother were diligent in attendance and firm in the faith. It has touched him at all the vital points of life: as a child it gave him his name, as a youth he was welcomed into its fellowship, it joined him in wedlock to his wife, it baptized his children, it performed the last rites over the bodies of those nearest and dearest to him; it has been close to him at every intimate and tender point in such a way that it seems almost impossible that he should ever turn from it. Nothing could touch him so closely: at birth, in childhood, in youth, at his marriage, in the naming of his children, and, at the end of life, for him and his own.

The Church has laid fast hold of these things. They are the emotional points which religion claims. They are the times when we need help, and this very help is the benefit of clergy, the office of the priest. We can get along without him, but under stress of emotion we can not think very well, and we want someone with us. Surely the judge, the umpire in a court of law, has not the training for this, yet he is the only substitute we can call, — and he will not officiate at funerals.

Now, Christianity is the only religion that Smith really knows. There are the Jews, but they do not want him, and he is no more bound to the Old Testament than to the New. Then there are the Unitarians, — a few of them — but they seem very like the others, and there is so much in Christianity that appeals to him that he does not protest against it; he simply lets it pass, he does not want to stand in the way of any good that it may do. On every hand he finds Christian men

and women doing what he himself calls God's work. This consists in working in a thousand ways for human betterment, and in this Smith works with them, so long as it is not made propaganda for dogma. As soon as the Church is brought in, Smith drops out. Nevertheless, when he dies, his wife will call in the minister and he will have a Christian burial, in which his glorious resurrection will be assured because of the faith which he really did not have.

He does not believe in the virgin birth of Jesus, although it is better for him not to deny it; the consequences of offending the Church are sometimes serious. Moreover the order of things occasionally requires the offices of a priest or minister. He does not think that his soul is eternally damned, because he does not think that Christ, the Jesus of history, is one and the same with God, the Father Almighty, or that he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. His idea of the life everlasting is no idea at all; he does not profess to understand eternity, so he does not know whether he believes in it or not. He does not believe in the Holy Catholic Church, and as for the communion of saints, he hopes for it, if it means that he may meet his loved ones after death, but he is not animated by faith in it; he only hopes for it. And he does not believe in the resurrection of the body.

Well, once in a while, Smith goes to Church, and it is usually to his hurt. He hears a great deal of reasoning that seems strained to him, in which he is urged to believe many things to be true which in his heart he does not believe to be true. Now Smith tries to be honest. He does not confuse single facts with the whole truth. His ideas of the truth are in no wise pedantic, but he has a sense that the truth involves all the facts in their proper

relation on the one hand, and a mind capable of grasping and coördinating them on the other. He does not live up to this ideal, and he knows that he could not reach it if he tried. With the large example of his friends and neighbors, he does not try always to get all the facts about a subject into their true relation if this should operate to the disadvantage of his affairs. But he has no sense of a Larger Truth that is not so.

He also hears in church that without Christ all is as nothing, — and this has set him to thinking seriously to find out what his attitude really is in the matter. He has re-read his Bible, more especially the Sermon on the Mount, and even there he finds that the rule does not work with him. He finds, for instance, that he must resist evil, that he must take thought of the morrow, that he must not give without discrimination. These are not offered as indicating that Smith is right, they merely indicate his point of view. You see the automatic assent that whatever is in the Bible is true, and that whatever Jesus said is of necessity right, has gone out of him. The emotional glow has faded away from dogma. He not only feels free to think alone and independently, but this appeals to him as his duty. He is doing his best, and he feels that he must be honest whether he is right or not.

The unpleasant thought comes to him that the clergy are in the same boat as a lawyer conducting a case at court: that they have taken their retainer and are not free to present other than the one side. All the ethics of their profession inhibit them from the expression of views contrary to the dogma that they represent. Nevertheless, he recognizes that their teaching has righteousness in view, and so far as he may be of aid to them in helping

along the cause of righteousness, he is willing and glad to do so; but in matters of belief he wishes that they would let him alone. If others feel that they achieve merit by the faith that is in them, he has no objection; he neither argues against it, nor does he oppose them. In his heart he feels that it is better for him to work things out as best he may than to lie about what he does not believe. This is the substance of his resentment against the Church: that it urges him to affirm that which he does not believe to be true.

The pressure upon him, however is very strong, so he goes to church again, and hears the usual appeal, demanding how anyone can resist the marvelous example of the only life that ever was lived without stain or flaw. But he knows that the preacher, no matter how honest he be, can only give record of about three years of that life, and assumes the rest. Surely there is nothing new in this knowledge; he has always known what he knows now, and so has substantially the whole Christian world. The facts remain just what they were. The difference lies in the angle of Smith's vision, in the order in which it seems necessary to him to arrange the facts so as to get a vision of the truth; thus, although he does not enter into any dispute about it, what the preacher says does not go into him.

Again, he hears a tirade against divorce, with quotations from Scripture to support its prohibition, but he knows that divorce is occasionally a real human need, whether the clergy approve or not; and that marriage should sometimes be severed in spite of ecclesiastical condemnation. Ecclesiastical law does not appeal to him as based upon present needs.

Appeals for aid for foreign missions usually rouse his ire. He does not try to explain why; perhaps it is because

the missionaries are not his neighbors, and he can vent against them his impatience at the whole Christian establishment without incurring the ill-will of those of his neighbors who do not think as he. Smith is very human! He hears horrible tales of the perversity of the heathen, but since there is so large a fraction of organized Christianity to which he cannot subscribe, he thinks that there may well be a considerable fraction of heathen ways that are not so bad. He may not think well of the theory and practice of the Christian religion as he knows it, but he is sure he would defend it if some foreigner were to come to his home town and tell all the people that they were living in vileness; and he sympathizes with the foreigner who resents the American missionary. As for medical and social helpers, he would think more of them and have all praise for them if, being inspired with the need of their work in foreign fields, they were to go out from sheer love of it, and make their own way among the people they desire to help.

Occasionally an effort is made to stem the tide of Sabbath-breaking. He does not protest. He is wholly willing to avoid interference with those who find it to their souls' good to devote the day to services and meditation. As for him, he knows that he is better off for an outing, and at the expense of his reputation among the pious, he goes fishing, plays golf or tennis, — in short, he lives his life as his experience shows him is best. He is not disturbed over the idea that he is exercising an influence for evil in doing so; he is very democratic, and is of opinion that people in humble circumstances may have as good minds as he, and may have the same way of looking at things; and he thinks that they should not be hindered from enjoying themselves, either. In short,

strangely enough, his attitude toward the Church is distinctly the Christian one of non-resistance. His unbelief is condemned, and his way of life is held to be evil, the while it is the best that he can do; and to all this he makes no reply. The Church condemns while the unbelieving sinner forgives.

Smith is a man capable of prayer. He yearns, as do so many sincere men, for a way unto God. Of course he could say that he believes all that the Church requires of him. That would be a lie, even though it consisted only in acknowledging his belief that Jesus Christ is his salvation, and that the Bible is the inspired word of God, the father of us all. It would be the easiest way, because all the brethren and sisters would encourage him in the idea that he was doing that which is right. Still, he refuses to be other than severely honest in this matter, and so he holds his peace. Evil report is upon him if he makes known his unbelief in the dogmas that oppose his way unto God. So he goes his way without offending, wishing for a light unto his spirit, but neither asking nor receiving from those who condemn.

Lately I had a talk with a very earnest and efficient officer of the Young Womens' Christian Association. We

discussed their objects and work, and I could not but admire their large and comprehensive helpfulness. Finally I asked her if she could see the time ahead when they would work together with Unitarians, Catholics, and Jews.

'I have a vision of it,' she said; 'although I shall probably not live to see it.'

'What do you need to bring it about?' I asked.

'Only some funerals,' she answered.

I believe the time is coming when the fence of dogma will be broken down, and no one will be asked to lie, and none will be condemned for his vision of the truth. It may not be, perhaps, until Paul and Peter and John have ceased to speak with authority, until the Torah and the Talmud are laid aside, and the bishops and prelates and dignitaries and presbyters have gone their way into a forgotten past, that the day will dawn when the Church shall cease to curse and shall live by love alone. Until then it is better to leave Smith in peace, so long as he is a good man. He is thinking, and none of us knows the way yet. Some day we may all be able to go to church together, being neither Catholic nor Protestant nor Jew, but all praising God.

## ENTOMOLOGICAL

BY ROBERT M. GAY

I CANNOT understand the dislike of most people for creeping and crawling things, and shall never consider a love of nature anything but a sham that does not embrace the lowliest worm. From childhood I have cherished a fondness — perverted, if you choose — for the little people underground.

One day, when I was a very little boy, I turned over a flat stone in the garden and uncovered three black beetles and a slug. I was in an earth-gazing and earth-smelling mood, when the grass and the ground allured. The smell of the warm soil thrilled me, I have no doubt, even then; a perfume of sweetness springing out of decay, touchingly familiar as the air of a room we have long lived in; a persuasive odor, enticing one to exploration. I feel yet my interest as the flat stone turned over and the nervous beetles and the phlegmatic slug were disclosed. They were creatures that I had never seen before. In my innocence I caught one of the beetles and, by some secret process of his own, he ejected upon my hand an overpowering perfume, — I speak euphemistically; for, truly, as the poet says of the saint who had a battle with the devil, 'Oh, my! how he did smell!' My first acquaintance with the under-world, you see, was unfortunate; yet, so strong was the fascination of the new and strange, I bore the black beetle no grudge, but merely decided not to keep him or take him home to mother. I turned my attention to the slug, and found him soft and cold and slimy, and probably of a

low order of intellect; for, when I poked him with a straw, he merely shrank and exuded soapsuds.

I do not hope to carry very many of my readers with me when I say that the discovery of these humble friends was an event in my life. Yet somewhere beneath the sun, if I may credit my fluttering heart-strings, there is some one who will understand. As for the rest, it is useless for me to enter into the psychology of the occasion. During the following week, I passed my time between meals turning over the other stones in the garden, and the sticks and the logs and the dead leaves. Everywhere I made new friends, an imposing catalogue, — wood-lice, centipedes, earthworms and wire-worms, ants, a toad, a garter-snake, beetles, snails, slugs, and grubs. Among these, the Coleoptera were my first loves. I felt no fear, but handled them all, when I could catch them; and the pockets of my rompers, or whatever primitive apparel I wore, from that day were usually full of beetles of assorted sizes and makes, which I loved to produce in the presence of visiting ladies, scornful of their consternation. My family were aghast, for they did not share my passion; but they soon saw that I knew how to handle my treasures without getting bitten, and forebore to rebel. You remember that Lavengro won his other Romany name, Sapengro, from his skill while yet a child in handling vipers. He was for vipers, and I for beetles. There was something about a beetle that clutched at my heart.