

ESSAYS IN FURY

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Essays in Fury by Arthur D. Lewis

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ARTHUR D. LEWIS

ESSAYS IN FURY

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ESSAYS IN FURY

BY

ARTHUR D. LEWIS

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PREFACE

READER, try to give me a fair hearing. Should my manner in the body of the book ever offend you, it is possible that my summary, by providing a barer explanation of what I am aiming at, may help you to believe that I wrote only because I thought what I wrote to be true.

The two essays, "Men and Animals" and "A Letter to a Sunday-School Teacher," are not "in fury."

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AUTHOR'S SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INTENTIONS OF THE ESSAYS

ON WAR

THE main idea of this essay is that war decides which of two armies is the more efficient, not which represents the juster cause. If war be a good means of settling a dispute, ought we not to settle private disputes by combat also, and let the stronger man win? Neither any court of international arbitration nor law courts within a nation can be infallibly just, but they do make some attempt to decide causes according to reason and not according to brute force. War inflicts injury on people who do not know what the dispute is, and acts as though we imprisoned the relatives of a criminal, for it fights any Frenchman if there is a quarrel with a few governing Frenchmen. War encourages savagery.

AN ESSAY FOR LAZY PEOPLE

The main intention of this essay is to show that if our civilisation progresses we must discover that the *supernatural* sanction for morality is worthless and that there is a more certain basis for right conduct because, more and more as society progresses, the happiness of all is necessary for the happiness of one. You will note that I say "the *supernatural* sanction," although in the essay I have been compelled to chiefly attack the Bible religions only.

The *Prelude* explains briefly the various steps of the argument and that the title is meant to suggest that the whole essay contains nothing original, but in a compressed form gathers together many arguments all leading to one conclusion.

I. In this section all the miracles in the gospels are examined, and it is shown that they are based on ideas similar to those which can be found in many other places. It is inferred that to simpler and more undeveloped minds life offers fewer possibilities than it does to us, and that the

same ideas occur all over the world to minds in the same stage of development. Dr Johnson declared that he did not care to read about savages because they were all alike. As gradually an idea of order in nature is arrived at by accumulation of experience, the older idea that every phenomenon is due to the action of a consciousness like that within ourselves is considered false, but the older ideas are transferred from ordinary everyday statements to exceptional miracles in the lives of heroes. A myth is a traditional account which has been distorted by being handed down through many narrators; the distortions are characterised by the culture of the age in which it is so handed down.

The immaculate conception is briefly compared with tales told in China and Peru; the guiding power of the star which appeared to the wise men is explained by early belief that stars are alive and guard specific people; the baptism of Jesus is compared with similar ceremonies from many parts; the "opening of heaven" suggests a first consideration of ancient Jewish conceptions of the form of the universe.

The "fasting in the wilderness" is then shown to be a universal custom for the very purpose of obtaining inspiration; the whole nature of subjective visions, such as dreams, having been long misunderstood by mankind.

Several less important matters are then touched on: the number 40 in the Bible, the development of the angels, the resemblance between the old Persian religion and modern Judaism.

Next, the principle is explained that after the conquest of one religion by another the deposed god (or gods) cannot be obliterated from men's minds, but become demons, devils, superstitions, or mixed with subordinate powers, such as fairies. The devil has now got Pan's shape.

This leads to "devils as the cause of diseases," and healing by holiness or power. It is next suggested that the holy and unclean of the Bible are much the same thing—only, while the holy belongs to the dominant religion, the unclean belongs to the conquered religions. In short, that this is another example of a principle already explained. (Fantastic as this idea will appear to those who have never heard it before, I am convinced that it is true.)

The raisings from the dead and the quieting of the