

Editor
E. HALDEMAN-JULIUS
Contributing Editors
Joseph McCabe * Lloyd E. Smith
Harry E. Barnes * Isaac Goldberg
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The Love of a Priest and Nun

Joseph McCabe

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A pretexts little book was published a few years ago with the title "The True Story of Abelard and Heloise." It is, in fact, little more than an encyclopedia article on the famous pair and does not differ from any recent book on the subject. There is in modern times no "false story" to be refuted. The last libel of Abelard was published in 1863, in Cotter Morison's "Life of St. Bernard." Morison was a Positivist and had an entirely perverse admiration of St. Bernard and the medieval Church. On the strength of documents to which no historian of our time pays any attention he represents Abelard, as soon as he won fame as a teacher at Paris, indulging "a fierce, fiery thirst for pleasure, sensual and animal." We are told that he "drank deeply, wildly." But he then "grew fastidious and particular." He "required some delicacy of romance, some flavor of emotion, to remove the crudity of his lust. He seduced Heloise."

This is sheer melodramatic monkish gossip reproduced in the puritanic accounts of the Rationals of the Victorian age in England. Until Abelard met Heloise he had been strict in his life. He gives us that assurance at a time when he was as deeply religious and remorseful as any man in France, and no serious historian hesitates to accept it. But the recent little work to which I have referred, and in fact most of the popular allusions to Abelard and Heloise, are in a different way just as misleading. It speaks of "the love-letters of Abelard and Heloise" as the supreme representatives of amorous literature, the peerless gem of the collection, and so on. Hundreds of editions of the letters have appeared in various languages, and they never fail to be described as "love-letters." As they are published, they generally are love-letters. The translator has seen to that. Even the most romantic of translators has some difficulty in getting the faintest allusion to love into the letters of Abelard, which were written in ink from beginning to end, but they are so manipulated that they are brought broadly under the title. Israel Gollanz included them in "The Temple Classics," a pocket edition very neatly presented, but the version of Abelard's letters is as if

someone had rewritten the Lamentations of Jeremiah in the language of a Persian poet. Nearly all the versions are in one degree or other most misleading. Scott-Moncrieff a few years ago brought out a new version which I have not seen--at the British National Library they wanted me to go to read it in the special room in which they put us to read Havelock Ellis or the Arabian Nights and I snortingly declined--so I say nothing about it, but I know no version of the Letters which does not misrepresent them.

In the first place they are not love-letters and ought never to have been included in that type of literature. An amorous correspondence implies two lovers, whereas at the time when Abelard wrote these letters he had, by physical mutilation and years of deep suffering, lost even the feeblest capacity for emotion and looked back on his love of many years earlier with the utmost horror. His language would have chilled, if it did not convert, a maid of Andalusia. It is inhuman in its bleak attitude toward love and life. For a short time Heloise seems to have tried to rekindle in his heart some sort of chaste affection for her, but after her second letter she realized that his heart was quite dead and she abandoned the attempt. Of a hundred pages of correspondence between the two only four or five, in the letters of Heloise, are concerned with love, and the translation of these generally falsifies their significance. They are really amazing declarations for the Middle Ages, and on the part of the abbess of a strict nunnery, yet they are not love-letters in the ordinary sense. I should like to point out the surprising features of them, the remarkable light they throw on that rather obscure age; and I will translate directly and literally from the Latin the principal passages to which I refer.

Everybody knows something about the famous love-affair which so captivated the heart of France in a later age that they put the remains of the abbot and abbess in a common tomb in the chief cemetery of Paris, where young men and women still lay flowers in memory of their love. Who Heloise really was we do not know. We first meet her about the year 1117, when she was about eighteen years old, living in Paris with an uncle who was a Canon of the Paris cathedral. He was passionately fond and proud of her, and it was not usual for clerical dignitaries to have pretty nieces living with them. It is said that she had been educated at the nearby convent of Argenteuil, which was very fashionable and very lax. These are irresistible ingredients for a romance, and it was at all events

said in a later age, and may be perfectly true, that she was the daughter of Canon Fulbert and the Lady Abbess of Argenteuil. When her bones were transferred to Paris in the eighteenth century they were examined by a medical man, and he pronounced that she must have had a handsome and finely-proportioned figure. Abelard merely says that she "was not the least in beauty of face"; but that was in the days when he thought pretty faces were snares of the devil.

Let us imagine the young lady as a lovely maid of seventeen or eighteen living with her fond uncle in one of the old houses on the edge of the island in the middle of the Seine. It was the time when school life had been reestablished in France, and there was, in fact, quite a fever of intellectual work. There were a dozen schools at Paris, generally attached to the abbey, and probably several thousand pupils had been attracted from all parts of France and Europe. In provincial schools one learned the elements of knowledge: grammar (or Latin literature), rhetoric (or the art of disputing), music, and so on. At Paris and in the other cities some stuffy and safe old divine lectured every day on such points of theology as lay open to discussion and interpretation: such as--whether Mary felt pain or pleasure at her conception. But an element of gaiety had been introduced. Not only did the students of the various provinces and nations brawl and sing on the playing fields and in the numerous taverns of the green district which is now the squalid Latin Quarter of Paris, but a man could stand up to the master in the school and dispute his opinion. It was not so much an age of positive knowledge as of keen rhetoric, and bands of disorderly students roved from school to school, and even town to town, whenever a brilliant new master or opponent of a master was heard of.

Heloise took a keen interest in the school-life. It was in the first place the most conspicuous and unavoidable feature of the life of Paris at the beginning of the twelfth century. It had grown out of all proportion to the civic and commercial life of the city. But the worst age of the subjection of women had not yet been reached in Europe, and there were schools for women: not merely convent schools such as that in which Heloise had received her early education but schools of philosophy and literature in which lay women taught. Canon Fulbert also was something of a scholar, and he saw that his "niece" wrote good Latin and read the Latin classics. She already had quite a name for literary accomplishments in Paris.

The latest sensation of the school-world was that a brilliant Breton scholar named Peter Abelard, who had been tilting at the older masters for some years, had beaten his last and most learned opponent and won his place in the chief school, and he was attracting unprecedented crowds of students by his dazzling and daring lectures. No scholar could stand against him. At the age of thirty-seven he had driven out the most famous teachers of Christendom and he turned into ridicule any man who came to his school to oppose him. No woman could attend the school at Notre Dame, but it was close to the Canon's home on the island, and all Paris pointed out the figure of the gifted master when he came to and left the school. He was very handsome, too, and, according to Heloise, all the maids and matrons of Paris sighed as he passed indifferently amongst them. He was one of those cold intellectual machines whose vitality is entirely absorbed in study and ambition.

The next sensation of Paris was when the brilliant teacher became a lodger of Canon Fulbert and tutor of his accomplished niece: a dangerous approximation in an age which was just as truly the dawn of sentiment, of chivalry, as of intellect. Abelard confesses that he had already fallen in love with Heloise and had taken up residence in the Canon's house to be near her. The cleric was tempted by the offer of a large payment and private lessons to his niece; and he was disarmed by Abelard's reputation for indifference to women. But soon, says Abelard, there were "more kisses than lessons," and "my hands went more easily to her breasts than to the books." Soon, says Heloise in turn, "my name was sung in every street, my every house, of Paris." She means that, to the astonishment first and then the delight of the city, the great and merciless dialectician was composing lyrics of the most glowing description, and all Paris, which sang them in the open-air taverns, knew the inspiration.

Abelard tells the sequel in his first letter, "The Story of My Calamities." A dozen years later he found himself the abbot of a quaint body of monks on the coast of Brittany. Each monk had a wife and children, and all that they wanted of the new lord abbot was that he should use his famous gifts to get more meat and wine, which were scanty, for them and their families. When he began to lecture them on their wild and improper ways they put poison in "the blood of Christ" which he drank from the chalice in the mass. They hired a few cut-throats, and whenever the

abbot went about the country these men tried to ambush him. It was a horrid situation for one of the most brilliant scholars of Christendom. He had fled to the limit of France, to the wild shore of the Atlantic, because Paris and every other town seemed to be full of enemies and mockers. A synod of stupid clerics, led by bitter opponents and rivals, had condemned him as a heretic. He was being denounced all over France in the terms which Cotter Morison foolishly reproduces, yet his life was in danger in Brittany because he was an apostle of virtue. It was in these circumstances that he wrote the first of the series of letters, and it was certainly not a love-letter. It was an account of his sufferings written to some anonymous friend. The name Philintus, which appears in some versions as that of his friend, is as fictitious as a good deal of the letter.

The only part of this that is interesting and significant, apart from its autobiographical material, is a very long passage in which he gives the arguments of Heloise against marriage. Fulbert had at last been convinced of the amorous relation and had dismissed Abelard from the house. They met secretly, and one day Heloise wrote him, not with the usual tears and trepidations but with "the greatest joy," that she was to become a mother. He took her, disguised as a nun, to his sister's house, near Nantes, where little Astrolabe was born. The romanticists who enthuse over the "immortal love" fight shy of the name of the child. It is the name of an astronomical instrument which the Moors had introduced into Europe! It was a highly intellectual business from beginning to end, even Heloise protesting all through that it was not "lust" she sought. Abelard was very concerned to keep his love and his career, and he went back to Paris to conciliate the Canon by offering a secret marriage. It is not clear that he was then a priest, and not certain that at that time he could not marry even if a priest, but marriage would certainly cut him off from higher advancement. Celibacy was being enforced from the top downward.

They came back and were secretly married in the presence of the Canon, but the remarkable thing is that Heloise was strongly opposed to the idea of marriage. She held that marriage would ruin his public life and be a calamity to him and the world. She urged him to see "what curses would fall on her, what tears of philosophers would be shed, what a loss it would be to the Church." She pointed out "how indecent, how lamentable, it would be if a man whom nature had

created for all should be linked to one woman." She reminds him of St. Paul's opinion of marriage, and then, if he will not listen to Paul, let him ponder what Theophrastus and Cicero and Seneca say about it. A great scholar like Abelard, she says, must be kept away from the crying of babies and the fuss of nurses and the unpleasant sights connected with babies. They would not be able to live in a big house where these things could be kept from him. She returns to the pagan philosophers, quotes Josephus on the ways of the Essenes and Nazareans, brings Jerome and Augustine to bear on the situation. Think of the fate of poor Socrates, she says; and she reminds him how when his wife Xantippe, after a violent tirade, emptied a certain vessel of a certain liquid over him, the poor philosopher could only say: "After so much thunder one expects rain." In fine, she asks him to see "how much sweeter it would be for her and better for me to call her friend than wife, so that affection, not the coercion of the bond of matrimony, should keep me to her"; and she predicted that her uncle would never be reconciled, so it was useless.

We shall see in a moment how Heloise amplifies this remarkable modernist note of her argument against marriage, but she was at least right about Fulbert. He began to boast that his niece was married to the great teacher, and, when people came to Heloise to ask, she swore on oath that it was false. From the rows which followed Abelard rescued his wife by placing her in the convent at Argenteuil, where she dressed as a nun though she did not take the vows, and, as it was a more than liberal convent, he had free access to her there. So Fulbert took his horrid revenge. He bribed Abelard's valet and, while he lay in bed, he was castrated. There was a terrific uproar in Paris, not so much at the nature of the mutilation, which was not uncommon in those pious days, but because Abelard was the idol of the city. Heloise would have us believe that the ladies shed streams of tears. The valet and the hired man were caught and lost their eyes and genitals; and Abelard, when he recovered a little, as he miraculously did--you will agree that it was a miracle if you know anything about surgery in the twelfth century, when men had no idea of the circulation of the blood--even demanded that "her" should be fined in the same way.

Here began the calamities of Peter Abelard. From the most brilliant teacher in Europe he became an object of pity and shame, cut off by his condition from all higher ecclesiastical preferment. He decided to become a monk at the royal abbey

of St. Denis, and the monks, not being psychologists, welcomed the accession of the gifted teacher and song-writer and especially the song-writer. It was, says Abelard, an abbey of "worldly and most disgraceful life." Abbot Adam was the gayest of them all, and, when Abelard, the new Abelard, began to chide them for the "abominable fifth" of their lives, they reflected that they had taken a serpent to their bosom. When the poor man went on to discover that St. Denis was not the man they thought, and was imprudent enough to say so, they boiled over with wrath. So he was hauled before a synod and condemned, and he looked with scorn on the crowd of stupid churchmen who filled the cathedral, and the Papal Legate who knew and cared no more about theology than the local barber, and the townsfolk who gathered to stone "the enunch of St. Denis." It is of this synod that legend tells an amusing story, but I doubt if I can put it in English. "Do you condemn?" asked the president. "We condemn," said a sonorous voice. Now in Latin it is "condemnamus," and the last part of that word "namus" means "we are swimming"; and the story is that most of the bishops and abbots, feeling drowsy with wine, caught only the "namus" and repeated it. They were all swimming. "Good Jesus, where wert thou?" Abelard asks, as he runs over the story. But how he began teaching once more and turned a wilderness into a town, and how the persecutor still raged and he fled to Brittany, do not belong here.

The touching story of his calamities was copied and circulated in France, and someone sent a copy to Heloise, who was now the prioress of the great nunnery at Argenteuil. Abelard had insisted that she should become a nun before he became a monk, and unfortunately she consented. It was the rule of the time that a man's wife must enter a nunnery if he wanted to enter a monastery. He sketches lightly the last scene, at which he must have been present; and I doubt if there was ever in history so strange a ceremony of profession. It seems too dramatic to be true, but Abelard was now a very prosy and strictly truthful man. Friends clung to Heloise in the chapel and begged her not to make the terrible sacrifice. They all wept and sobbed together. It seems incredible, but Abelard assures us that the girl-mother broke from them and recited aloud a few lines of the pagan poet Lucan that came to her memory:

O spouse most great!
Thou whose bed my merit could not share!
How hath an evil fortune wrought this wrong

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Opinions and Observations

What the Editor Has Been Thinking About
E. Haldeman-Julius

THE DEATH OF CHRISTIANITY

Preachers think to have the better of Voltaire, to show how poor was his judgment and how wrong his viewpoint, by quoting the prophecy that Christianity would be dead within a hundred years. It is implied that if Voltaire was a mistaken prophet he was therefore a mistaken and reckless thinker. Of course those two propositions do not logically belong together. A man may be critically a keen and expert analyst of ideas, a man of true well-guided powers of thought, yet be lame or doubtful in prophecy. He may understand the present and interpret the past without being able definitely to foresee the future. Prophecy is at best only a statement of tendencies.

But was Voltaire a careless prophet? Is his statement about the decline and death of Christianity, which he foresaw as the inevitable result of advancing civilization, actually discredited by the developments since his time? Decidedly not. The answer to that criticism of the preachers, which is offered as such a conclusive proof of Voltaire's fallibility and inadequate vision, is that Voltaire was decidedly right. Events have made good his prediction. Christianity is dead in the sense that Voltaire evidently meant: i. e., it has been discarded as the ruling force in the ideas of men, its intellectual standing has been destroyed, its dogmas and its moral code and its general attitude toward life are no longer accorded respect by thinking men. World culture today is not Christian. From Voltaire onward the tendency has been steadily, cumulatively anti-Christian. The scholarship of the world has been secularized and made independent of religious criteria, although some scholars are rather too polite to the lingering ineffectual shades of a religion which they no longer recognize as having real authority.

Think, however, what religion was in Voltaire's day and for a century afterward. It exercised an intolerant domination over the minds of men. It was a proud, triumphant, dogmatic force, its intellectual position disputed only by a few and its social and moral prestige apparently impregnable. The ideas and the ethics of Christianity, although they were not literally applied and never had been, were in the realm of opinion very much alive, very impressive and successful, very devotedly held by the greater part of our Western world as sacred. The account of Genesis, the inspiration of the Bible and Christianity, the divinity of Jesus, the Christian doctrines (variously interpreted by the sects), belief in the supernatural were all held as articles of peculiar and sublime truth.

Not simply among the masses but among the educated classes Christianity was intellectually believed and respected; it was eulogized almost without question as the great savior of civilization, the greatest uplifting influence, the repository of the most important "spiritual" truth of the race. Scientific circles, at the beginning of the notable struggle between Darwinism and the old theology, were preponderantly Christian. The majority of the scientists who listened to the memorable controversy between Huxley and Bishop Wilberforce on evolution still believed in the literal truth of Genesis.

Today the educated portion of the world has no belief in nor respect for that vast arrogant structure of religious dogma which was so authoritative in Voltaire's day. Genesis is generally recognized as a fairy tale. Religion is not accepted as a guide to life. The scientific view of things has displaced the old religious view. Piety is an anachronism. Christianity is dead, although as a sentimental attitude and a social institution it still has a large number of followers; although with these followers Christianity is not a definite, living, vital creed, forming the real basis of their philosophy and scheme of life: for them, too, Christianity is dead and its corpse is honored by a smug, traditional, indifferently formalism.

Churches are still open. Bibles are still circulated, although they are very little read. Preachers continue to utter the old dogmas, the old phrases, that once had power over men but that sound so ludicrously out of tune with the larger, more significant interests and movements of the modern world. But Voltaire did not mean that within a hundred years there would be left no churches, no professing Christians, no signs or pretensions of Christianity. What he soundly and shrewdly meant was that within a century Christianity would be discredited and dethroned as an intellectual influence; that its dogmas would die; that the predominant and effective culture of the world would pass beyond the Christian or religious viewpoint.

And that prophecy of Voltaire's has been fulfilled. He did not mistake the tendencies of enlightenment. He was right. Science is the supreme motivating culture, both intellectually and practically, of the world today. Christianity is dead and Voltaire, as he lives in his ideas, is more vitally a part of the modern world than the preachers who ignorantly criticize him.

FUMBLING MINDS

So often I notice in statements by more or less leading citizens a kind of fumbling at truth, which is nevertheless spoiled by an incomplete grasp of the truth or an obscure, contradictory statement of part of the truth. At this moment I have before me two examples of this sort of fumbling. One cannot say that these statements are bunkettes, not overtly and intentionally; each contains a truth; yet neither is clear and satisfactory.

The first exhibit is a remark by George W. Wickersham, the head of President Hoover's recently appointed law enforcement commission. According to the press report, he expresses a regret that the clergy has lost the strong, guiding influence which it had in former times; that the "spiritual" leadership of the church has passed; that "the sacerdotal office can no longer impose or impress any but the unlettered or the intellectually indolent."

To recognize the fact that preachers are not our intellectual leaders and at the same time to regret it--

one wonders how Mr. Wickersham's mind works. It is very evident that they are unworthy of such leadership. If they had real wisdom to offer, if they had any significant part in modern thought, they would impress cultured, thinking minds. It is proof of their intellectual shallowness and incompetency that they cannot "impress any but the unlettered or the intellectually indolent." As they have a "message" only for the last-named classes, what a curious thing it is to lament that their "message" is rejected by the intelligent classes. This seems to be the expression of a wish that the intellectual standards of our age were lower. Seemingly here is an opinion that it is unfortunate that men should know better than to bow humbly before the false intellectual pretensions of the clergy.

It is a queer example of mental fumbling--the statement of regret for the loss of something that is not worth saving. It may fairly be said that if the clergy deserved or were able to assert real intellectual leadership, they would not be ignored as they are. The Truth is that they have been found out. The world has passed by them. They no longer serve (they never did serve progressively nor intelligently) and the forces of cultural, social progress will not stand and wait for them. Our regret should be that there is an "unlettered and intellectually indolent" audience sufficiently large to keep the preachers going. It would be better if their dismissal were complete and if our society were altogether and consistently raised above the intellectual level of the pulpit.

The other statement I have in mind is probably well meant and is just a careless use of words. Yet such carelessness helps to confirm a fundamental error. In an address to Kansas City high school graduates, Judge Merrill E. Otis is reported as saying: "The scholar is the only man in the modern world who is willing to sacrifice opportunities for wealth and power in order to pass on to coming generations a storehouse of knowledge which is more enduring than any material thing." What is wrong with that statement is obvious. The closing words--"which is more enduring

than any material thing"--should have been omitted. They suggest the fallacy of a "spiritual" as opposed to a material sense of values.

But what is knowledge if it is not material? It deals with the material realities of life. The knowledge which is here eulogized consists of our awareness and understanding of this real, material world. It is knowledge of real history, that materially happened; of real forms of life, that materially do exist; of real forces of nature, that are materially active; of the real appearance and behavior of the world we live in, which is certainly material; of human culture and organization, which is assuredly material in character and aim. And this "storehouse of knowledge" is material, in the shape of libraries, laboratories, colleges, while to understand it is the function of the material brain and to apply it is obviously a material business. Of all things, knowledge is the very sum and significance of materialism. It is the nature of knowledge that it is definite. It is the mark of mysticism, the very opposite of knowledge, to talk about a "spiritual" meaning.

These two examples of fumbling should remind us how important it is to think and speak clearly. This is the real use of knowledge and the real aim and justification of intellectual leadership.

PROPAGANDA AND THE PULITZER PRIZE

Upton Sinclair has challenged the attitude of the Pulitzer fiction prize jury in its 1928 award, withheld from Sinclair's novel, *Boston*, because of its "socialistic tone" of propaganda. In a leaflet Sinclair discusses the statements reported to have been made in lectures at the University of Minnesota by Dr. Richard Burton, who is chairman of the Pulitzer jury and who formerly was editor of *The Churchman*. Briefly, Dr. Burton acknowledged that *Boston* was one of the best novels of 1928, that it was given a high rating by the prize jury, that one member of the jury wished to award the prize to this book but that he was dissuaded by Dr. Burton, and that despite its literary excellence *Boston* was undeserving of the prize on account of its "special pleading." At the same time,

Dr. Burton "confidently" told one of his audiences that the 1928 award was to be given (evidently as the result of Dr. Burton's persuasion) to a novel entitled *Victim and Victor* and dealing with the clergy.

This novel, it seems, is merely a different kind of "special pleading" which appeals to the religious mind of Dr. Burton and is intended as a sort of reply to *Elmer Gantry*. Sinclair quotes from the author's preface to *Victim and Victor*: "Of late, authors of what is so often mis-called 'fiction' have shown a renewed interest in the clergy, not always, I fear, to the credit of the individual clergyman or to the greater glory of the God whom he is supposed to serve. I have tried, therefore, to write the history of one man's priesthood, a man who is neither an Elmer Gantry nor a Dr. Harding of Barchester Cathedral. For the truth about the clergy..." In short, the author of this chosen novel is frankly as much a propagandist as Upton Sinclair; and of course every propagandist claims to be only telling "the truth" about some controversial phase of life.

Two points are very effectively made by Sinclair: that the Pulitzer prize, according to its declared object, does not exclude but rather invites propaganda; and that the attitude of the prize jury in the 1928 award, as discussed by Dr. Burton, shows a prejudice not against propaganda in itself but particularly against socialistic propaganda. It is stated in Mr. Pulitzer's will that the prize shall be given "for the American novel published during the year which shall best present the wholesome atmosphere of American life and the highest standard of American manners and manhood." Obviously, then, the prize does not depend upon literary quality alone, which Dr. Burton says is marred in *Boston* by the socialistic propaganda of that novel; the prize terms demand a certain kind of theme--a "wholesome" theme--and a description of American life having an idealistic, uplifting tendency; according to these terms, propaganda cannot be offered as the true and logical reason for the rejection of a novel. It would appear, as Sinclair suggests, to be a question of discrimination among kinds of prop-

aganda. And, in view of the statements of Dr. Burton, socialistic propaganda does not seem to be a right or acceptable kind.

What else can one call this attitude but prejudice? It is apparently not a purely literary judgment. The chosen novel is propaganda, of a kind that better suits the predilections of the Pulitzer jury, especially the bias of the former editor of *The Churchman* who is chairman of the jury. He is willing to see merit in propaganda that is favorable to the clergy. Special pleading for preachers and the Christian viewpoint is excellent and not incompatible with a literary aim. But special pleading for the rights of workers and economic rebels and for the socialistic viewpoint--that spoils the literary tone.

It is not a consistent--one might question whether it is an honest--position for Dr. Burton to take. He is lacking in candor when he talks about literary quality, as if this were the real issue, when it seems that he is merely choosing between a tendency of propaganda that he dislikes and one that he favors. If he thinks that it is more important--even that it is more literary--to propagandize in behalf of the clergy than in behalf of economic rebels, it would be more honest for him plainly to say so and not pretend to be guided by other standards.

And Sinclair is right in questioning whether, in view of such an attitude of disingenuous yet poorly disguised bias, "independent writers can honorably accept" the Pulitzer prize. Sinclair Lewis did well when he refused the prize, pointing out that such inducements should have no place in the consideration of the true literary artist and that it is foolish to regard novel writing as a mere competition of this kind--a competition not merely in skill but in pleasing the taste and bias of a jury--somehow in the spirit of a newspaper contest for the best essay on "Americanism" or "The Constitution." Intelligent readers, those who have a sound and independent judgment of literature, are not affected by the disposition of the various prizes: a game which has reached absurd proportions of late years and which, after all, has chiefly a commercial significance.

City State.....

Science vs. Religion As a Guide to Life

Harry Elmer Barnes

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[Concluded from last week]

IV

The writer believes that, if humanity and civilization are to be preserved, we must, perhaps, have collaboration between science and an advanced secular religion. He readily concedes that neither Bertrand Russell, John E. Watson, Clarence Darrow nor George Dorsey has any need for God or religion in order to behave in a seemly or intelligent fashion, but, with half of the American population falling below the intellectual level of the dull normal type, we certainly shall require some form of social control beyond the appeal to pure intelligence. Further, there are many capable persons whose affinities are more with esthetic considerations than with matters of cold intelligence. For these types of human beings a social institution which could exploit human emotions and place them behind just and decent causes will prove indispensable. Such a secular religion would, of course, obtain its factual guidance from science, natural and social, but would aid science in the social application and execution of such facts.

On taking up the relation of science and God, it is evident to any informed person that the very elements of modern science, together with even the rudiments of an understanding of biblical scholarship, completely undermine and dispose of the biblical God, Yahweh. This necessitates a complete reconstruction of our views of Jesus, who owed his uniqueness to the claim that he was the only begotten son of Yahweh. From now on, Jesus must be studied as purely a secular and human religious teacher, concerning whose existence there is but slight information and regarding whose doctrines we have but fragmentary and often conflicting evidence. No contemporaneously minded person could pretend that the views of Jesus on any subject related to modern life can carry any such authority as those of Dr. Fosdick, Dr. Holmes, Dr. Reiland, Bishop McConnell or Rabbi Wise. This is a fact which modernists have usually been loath to concede. They will admit the passing of Yahweh but cling to a view of Jesus that rests almost wholly on his alleged relationship to Yahweh.

As to whether a new conception of God may be constructed, the writer frankly admits that he does not believe it possible to arrive at any precise conception of the new cosmic God, if there be one. The whole search for a God is based on primitive human aspirations; the very facts of the physical universe, in terms of which the new cosmic God must be constructed, evade and baffle the limited human mind; we can only formulate notions of God in

terms of our own experiences and categories, which are obviously wholly unsuited as a framework for the picture of the cosmic Almighty; and the basic hypothesis involved, namely, that all things must have a maker and a purpose, may well be a geocentric human illusion. In searching for a "first cause," we must remember that both "first" and "cause" are human inventions and categories which may have no general cosmic validity whatever. Therefore, it would seem that the quest for God in the new perspective is likely to prove futile. Yet it is a noble quest, certainly far more lofty than the search for an additional million dollars or a higher political office, and we can cast no aspersions upon those who carry on the search. Manifestly, insofar as the quest for a new God helps on the abandonment of Yahweh it will be a great gain for humanity and civilization.

After all, what we most need is a new conception of religion and the God question is important only insofar as it affects the broader question of religious reconstruction. We may certainly maintain that it is possible to have a sensible and dynamic religion which does not rest upon the dogma of God's existence or upon any precise picture of God's nature.

The question of the adequacy and sanctity of the Ten Commandments and the beatitudes is inseparably related to the problem of Yahweh, Jesus and the Bible which we have just discussed. They have no sanctity other than that which may reside in their validity. Some of the Ten Commandments, like the taboo on swearing and on Sunday labor, are obviously primitive superstitions. Other sound ones, like the commandment against killing, are incomplete and need elaboration in an age which is so highly versatile in its talent for murdering. Moreover, the Ten Commandments were devised for a very simple economy. If ten commandments were essential for primitive Palestine, then we should need five hundred for adequate guidance in twentieth century New York City. In short, the Ten Commandments are a primitive collection of social usages, having no more sacredness about them than the social passages in the Code of Hammurabi. Many of the Commandments should be obeyed today, but not because they occur in the Bible. They should be followed, if at all, only because they square with the needs of life in our era. The same may be said regarding the beatitudes and other sayings ascribed to Jesus.

The new religion, if sound and practicable, must rest on a thoroughly secular basis, secure its facts from science and conceive its ideals in terms of sociology and esthetics. It must become accessory to the new queen of the science, mental hygiene.

V

It follows as a matter of course that such epoch-making changes as we have described above, with relation to the status of orthodox religion in the light of modern science and critical thought, make necessary a searching reexamination of the place and function of the church in modern society. In the first place, the new view of mat-

ters makes it very evident that the clergyman can no longer pretend to be a competent expert in the way of discovering the nature, will and operations of the new cosmic God. If undertaken and solved at all, this is a problem for the cooperative endeavors of the natural scientist and the cosmic philosopher of the Dewey vintage. At best the theologian can only be a competent second or third-hand interpreter of the facts and implications gathered about the cosmos and its laws by specialists in science and philosophy. In the old days, when it was thought that God might be reached and understood through prayer, sacrifice or revelation, the clergyman or theologian was indeed "the man of God," who could make clear the will of the Deity to believers. But now when God must be sought, if at all, by means of the test tube, the compound microscope, the interferometer, the radium tube and Einstein's equations, the conventional clergyman is rather hopelessly out of place in the premises. Therefore, it is apparent that the intelligent and educated theologians must surrender their age-long pretension to special, if not unique, competence in clearing up the problem of the nature of God and His laws. They can at best be little more than ringside spectators of the observatory and the laboratory, doing their best in the way of an amateurish appreciation of what is going on therein.

Next to the revelation of the nature of God and His ways, the most time-honored function of the so-called "man of God" has been to unravel God's will with respect to human conduct and to inculcate the absolute and inflexible principles which should control personal morality, in order that the soul of the individual might be assured of an ultimate refuge in the New Jerusalem. This was a perfectly rational and logical function for religion when it was commonly assumed to be axiomatic: (1) that the purpose of moral conduct was to insure the salvation of the soul, and (2) that the supreme and complete guide to moral living was to be discovered in Holy Scriptures. Neither of these fundamental postulates can be sustained today. There seems to be no ground whatever for the orthodox views of a bodily or spiritual immortality and the imminence of a literal heaven and hell. Hence, the basic objective of right living can no longer be regarded as the insurance of spiritual salvation. On the contrary, the fundamental purpose of the good life is to secure the maximum amount of happiness for the greatest possible number here upon this earth. We may agree with T. V. Smith and the secular modern philosophers that "there is no good but human desires and their satisfaction." Therefore, it is readily apparent that accurate guidance to the good life cannot be sought in ancient Scriptures or provided by specialists in Holy Writ. The moral code of the future must be supplied by the specialists in mundane happiness, namely: biologists, physiologists, psychiatrists, educators, social scientists and students and practitioners of esthetics.

Some who frankly admit the incompetence of the clergyman and the theologian in the way of pro-

viding original and conclusive guidance to moral conduct contend, nevertheless, that the church can exercise a very valuable service in interpreting and popularizing the findings of the specialists in human happiness. This may be true, to a certain extent, but many qualifications would have to be added. Many phases of guidance to complete human happiness would necessarily be a highly technical and individual matter, to be handled by medical and other experts in relation to individual cases and problems, and would scarcely be adapted to comprehensive general interpretation or exhortation.

Some writers, among them the scientific reconciler, Professor Mather, contend that religion is essential to ethics in that it enables us to be "something more than ourselves," while scientific ethics admittedly can only enable us to make the most of ourselves. No answer is needed for this contention beyond asking *what is implied in man's being more than man* and just how a scientifically minded person could conceive of such an achievement. We further submit that it is quite enough of a problem to enable man to make the most of himself, and we further suggest that thus far religion has mainly succeeded in making us much less than ourselves.

A much better case can be made for the service which may be rendered by religion in inculcating an interest in and respect for such large and scarcely debatable moral conceptions as justice, honesty, pacifism, cooperation, kindness, beauty, etc. Professor Kirsopp Lake has well stated the case for the desirability of having religion relinquish interest in sumptuary moral control and assume responsibility for the advancement of more profound and general moral principles:

One man may find much comfort in tobacco, while another may injure himself by smoking; one may err by playing too much, and another by never playing at all. I doubt whether the man of tomorrow will try to interfere with each other on these points, knowing that the thing which matters is ability to do good work, and that one man can do his best work in one way, another otherwise. Many of the things Puritans condemn are strictly indifferent. The religion of tomorrow will recognize this, it will give good advice to individuals, but not lay down general rules for universal observance.

On the other hand, it may have a stern sounding and industry and finance. It may insist more loudly that honesty applies to the spirit of business, not merely to its letter. It may even demand that men must be as trustworthy in advertisements, business announcements and journalistic reporting as they are in private affairs. For these are the questions of morals which are the issues of life and death for the future. They are not covered by the teaching of Jesus or of historic Christianity, for neither actual solutions nor problems which did not exist in their time. Some of the principles which have been laid down by them will play a part in the solution of these problems but probably others will also be needed. Certainly neither actual solutions nor problems which did not exist in their time. Some of the principles which have been laid down by them will play a part in the solution of these problems but probably others will also be needed.

One can scarcely quarrel with Professor Lake on theoretical and logical grounds, but there is an important practical consideration, namely, that the modern social and economic order is based to no inconsiderable degree upon intrigue, shrewd business enterprise, relent-

less competition, unreasoning patriotism and class selfishness. It can scarcely be expected that the custodians of the modern order, who provide the chief pecuniary support for our religious institutions and organizations, will contribute with enthusiasms to a movement designed to cut at the root of many of the principles and practices which they hold most sacred and indispensable.

Before the church could achieve much in this field it would be necessary to organize and carry on a very definite propaganda of education in the principles of social ethics broadly conceived. Thus far, however, few clergymen so orientated and motivated have been able to maintain their position long enough to make much headway in this educating process. As far as the writer is aware, there has been no marked or organized effort to draft the services of Sherwood Eddy, Norman Thomas, Kirby Page, Bouck White, Harry Ward, Ralph Harlow, David D. Vaughan and others of their kind and induct them into the pastorate of great metropolitan churches.

The supervision of the church over recreation, which has in the past been exercised chiefly in the way of an arbitrary decision as to what are immoral and what are moral forms of recreation and in closely scrutinizing and controlling the activities of individuals in these fields, must now be sharply challenged. The orthodox religious criteria as to moral and immoral forms of recreation were not based upon physiological, psychological or social grounds, but upon theological considerations which have little or no validity in the light of modern knowledge. The church, having no competence in the matter of determining the nature of moral and immoral conduct in the light of modern secularism, obviously cannot apply its decisions in this field to the realm of recreation. Recreation, like morality, with which it has been so closely associated in the past, is a field for the secular expert and must be handed over to biologists, medical experts, psychologists and social scientists. The church at most could scarcely go further than to proclaim the general desirability of healthy and adequate exercise and the exhibition of a proper spirit of good sportsmanship.

Another function of the church in the past which has received much support relates to its esthetic services. It is held that the ritual, pageantry and liturgy of the church provide a relatively economical and highly valuable esthetic service to humanity. This is, of course, an argument which can be far better justified from the Catholic standpoint than from the Protestant, the Protestant churches having given up most of the splendor of the Catholic service. This argument boils down to the allegation that the church is in a position to "put on a better show" for the populace and at a lower cost than any other comparable secular organization. While there is much to be said in support of this view in regard to the services of the church in earlier periods, it would seem that this function may be, and indeed is, now achieved more adequately and cheaply by various secular enterprises, such as the grand opera, the theater, the movies and various types of public pa-

geantry. Further, many contend that the attitude of fear and awe generated by religious ritual and pageantry produces a fundamentally unhealthy state of mind which, to a large degree, offsets the esthetic services contributed thereby.

Therefore, it would seem pretty definitely established that the conventional functions of the church have well nigh completely evaporated in the light of contemporary knowledge and intellectual attitudes. It must be conceded that the theologian is no longer needed to chart out and control the supernatural world and supernatural powers, inasmuch as the existence of such entities can scarcely be established. It is equally apparent that the theologian cannot by himself locate, describe or interpret the new cosmic God believed by some to be implied in the discoveries of modern science. Neither can the theologian supply detailed moral guidance in the way of indicating how man must live in order to achieve the maximum degree of happiness here on earth. Nor can the church support its ancient pretensions to guiding and controlling recreation or in supplying popular pageantry. This raises the important question as to what the church can legitimately engage upon in harmony with the tenets of an open-minded and contemporaneous secular attitude.

It would seem that the most reasonable field for the functioning of religion in contemporary society is in the way of providing for the mass organization of the group sentiment of mankind in support of the larger principles of kindness, sympathy, right, justice, honesty and decency. Just what constitute the essentials of right and justice would have to be determined by the appropriate scientific and esthetic experts, but these experts have little potency in the way of arousing ardent popular support for their findings. Religion has thus far been the most powerful agency in arousing and directing the collective will of mankind. Therefore, we may probably content with safety that the function of a liberalized religion divested of its archaic supernaturalism, would be to serve as the public propaganda adjunct of social science and esthetics. The social sciences and esthetics would supply specific guidance as to what ought to be done, while religion would produce the motive power essential to the translation of abstract theory into practical action. There would, however, be ever present the problem of restraining this educational propaganda and keeping it in thorough conformity with the recommendations of science and art. The function of the church, then, would be to organize the mass mind and mass activities in such a fashion as to benefit secular society and not to please God, at least not as God has been understood and expounded in the orthodox religions of the past.

The writer is inclined to support this conception of the future and permanent function of the church, though there are some observers of high standing who declare that the secular lecture platform is more suitable and adequate, and that the public forum and the public schools must ultimately supplant the ecclesiastical edifice as the center of intelligent propaganda and the development of collective sentiment for social improvement.

It would appear to the writer that the problem is not so much one of the nobility or the validity of this function of religion or one of its value to society, but rather the question of whether or not the church can successfully carry out such a type of social service. The issue is primarily the one of whether an organization, hitherto almost exclusively devoted to the understanding, control and exploitation of the supernatural world, can be completely transformed into an organization for the purpose of increasing the secular happiness of mankind here on earth. Such a transformation would imply a complete revolution in the premises and activities of religion, and we have little or no evidence from the past to give us any definite assurance that so profound a transition is practicable or attainable. The issue is fundamentally whether organized religion can be held together and can operate without a sense of mystery and a fear of the unknown. The thrill from the mysterious has been the core of all past religion, and we have nothing to give any final assurance that religion can persist without this dominating element of mystery and fear. Certain writers contend that there will always remain a certain fringe of mystery, particularly in the way of unsolved scientific problems, as well as the general mystery inherent in the side of the universe. But, as Professor Shotwell has well indicated in his "Religious Revolution of Today," the mysteries of modern science are quite different in their premises, manifestations and psychic effects from the conventional religious mystery based upon an emotional reaction to a hypothetical supernatural world. The reaction to the mysteries of science does not promote that group-forming tendency which Ward, Hankins and others have shown to be so characteristic of an effect and accompaniment of supernatural religion. Abstruse scientific perplexities and the riddle of the universe may promote advanced forms of cerebral effect but they are not likely to evoke a sentimental thrill or to generate a crusading passion in human assemblages. Indeed, some leading social scientists contend that the divergence between the old supernaturalism and the new secular program is so great that no common ground can be found. Hence, they argue that we should not contaminate and confuse the new secular type of ethical enterprise by denominating it religion. This is a logical consideration which is entitled to serious thought.

It is held by many that the majority of mankind will always remain essentially superstitious and victims of supernaturalism. While not optimistic with respect to the possibilities of rapid intellectual emancipation on the part of the majority of men, nevertheless, the writer questions seriously whether or not we may assume the indefinite prolongation of the domination of man by superstition and gross supernaturalism. Even the most benighted southern Baptist of today is almost secular in his daily life and attitude as compared to the medieval peasant or the unconverted Indians of America, though he may formally adhere to a primitive cult.

THE PRESIDENT'S DAUGHTER

By Nan Britton

NEVER before has America produced a love tale that can be compared with this. Here the stirring tragedy of ancient Greek drama is mingled with realities and personalities of our time. This is a book proving that the mysteries of the human heart are eternal. It reveals that where there is the utmost ecstasy felt with the most pain, there is life!

SUPPRESS "The President's Daughter"? They tried to! Six burly men and Mr. John S. Sumner, of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, raided the printshop and seized the plates. But the case was contested and the raiders had to yield to the law, which permitted "The President's Daughter" to be published—unaltered in any way!

GORGEOUS is the only adjective adequate to describe the sumptuous appearance of this edition of "The President's Daughter." It is printed on velvety, watermarked, white woven paper. The binding is luxuriously patterned black cloth, specially made for this book, stamped back and front in gold scroll lettering. Illustrations are reproduced by a soft, artistic, lithographic process.

WHITE HOUSE shadows fall across the pages of this book. Over the whole work is thrown the glow of a poetic experience, and through it all is the glamour of official events centering around the White House at Washington. For the father of the illegitimate daughter of Nan Britton was Warren G. Harding, who became a President of the United States.

PLEAS for illegitimate children have been made before, but none can compare in sympathy and humanity with this compelling work written by a mother herself. It is a story of a clandestine amour; of social ostracism; of the terrible price one must pay for spiritual freedom. But this love, though secret, never faltered—no trial could change it.

OPINION has been freely expressed both for and against "The President's Daughter." H. L. Mencken: "The whole thing constitutes a superb contribution to the political history of the U. S." Harry Hansen: "An astonishing romance . . . the story of a woman's tremendous preoccupation with love and motherhood." E. W. Howe: "Nan Britton is a female Boswell and her book will live because of its story of naked human nature in village, city, palace, cottage, and White House. . . . All through the book Nan Britton makes Warren Harding as fine a lever as may be found in fiction."

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Haldeman-Julius Publications

Girard, Kansas

The Moving Finger Writes

Informal Comment on
Developments of the Week
Lloyd E. Smith

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MORE JUBILEE!

Along comes Clement Wood, who has been a Little Blue Book author for so long and so faithfully that he should be hoary, with a jubilant letter about the attainment of 1,500 different titles in the Little Blue Books. His letter is to the chief, E. M.-J., and has some enthusiastic commendations:

Dear Emanuel Haldeman-Julius: Let me congratulate you and America upon your reaching your 1500th title in the Little Blue Book series. No man is entitled to more credit from his countrymen, than the man who disinterestedly spreads before them the light of the world's knowledge and the world's literary beauty. I am only one of many who have come to the conclusion that the only hope for mankind is through self-education of the masses, by giving them access to the world's best thought.

You have spent your best years planning how to let this thought come to them, at a price so low that the element of self-gain is obviously eliminated. You open the world's treasures to your readers for 5c, where the merely commercial publishers charge from one dollar to five for the same thing. You are the Mussolini of the American publishing business.

As one who has written his sixty titles in the series, and has through your second million American readers, let me congratulate you, Clement Wood.

And from Maynard Shipley, President of the Science League of America, Inc., comes this glowing tribute:

I wish to congratulate you most heartily as the first educator since the discovery of the printing press to invent and to carry out a plan for bringing directly to Lincoln's "common people" the rich fruits of modern science and general enlightenment. For nearly a quarter of a century I had attempted

to bring to popular audiences from the public platform the message of modern science, but I could reach only a few thousands. Now, as a member of the science faculty of your "University in Print," I am able to reach hundreds of thousands of inquiring minds. Surely every man or woman who has the progress of the human race at heart owes you a debt of profound gratitude for the great work you are doing.—Maynard Shipley.

Mr. Shipley, incidentally, objects to his *Hypnotism Self Taught* (Little Blue Book No. 92) being classified in the catalog under "Entertainment." He states that "it deals entirely with the present status of therapeutic hypnotism, and belongs under 'Psychology' or 'Health.' It is unfair to both the prospective purchaser and to me to have it listed as if it were a description of how to put on an exhibition of hypnotic tricks! It really should be listed with William J. Fielding's books on auto-suggestion (Little Blue Books Nos. 447 and 449), which it supplements." We are glad to have this called to our attention, and to the notice of readers; future catalogs will remedy this listing.

ABELARD AND HELOISE

Joseph McCabe, in his article this week, presents the truth about the so-called "love letters" of Abelard and Heloise—of Abelard, who became a monk, and of Heloise, his mistress and later his wife, who became a nun. About four years ago, I edited for the Little Blue Books a more or less traditional translation of *The Love Letters of Abelard and Heloise* (Little Blue Book No. 871), which readers may wish to peruse in the light of McCabe's revelations. The letters of Heloise, I think, may stand as admirable examples of literature—even if not altogether the literature of love; and the letters of Abelard, cold as they are, serve as an excellent foil to the epistles of Heloise.

Again McCabe scores in his campaign against popular misconceptions and false traditions. He goes to the original Latin versions, and shows how they have been mistranslated, and stretched to simulate

"love letters." The passion of Heloise for Abelard was no less real; their love affair was no less passionate; but that there were ever any genuine love letters is evidently a fallacy!

TWO SIDES

Letters frequently come to us from writers or would-be writers, urging us to consider manuscripts presenting the "other" side of such subjects as evolution, religion, immortality, etc. We do not consider such manuscripts. Indeed, we apply to *The Debunker* the slogan: It prints one side of every question, that opposed to bunk!

People argue that a question must have two sides—for and against. If it is a question it may be said to have two answers. Yes and No. But there cannot be two sides to any topic which is established by logic based on facts. There are only the facts and—lies. Or, if you prefer the euphemism, facts and—fancies.

There are laws of evidence by which facts can be established. Documents can be determined as authentic or spurious. People who harp on "two sides," and "let's hear the other side," sometimes forget that one side is logical, authentic, substantiated, while the "other" side may be imaginary, unsubstantiated, and illogical.

Evolution cannot have two sides. Not, that is, if scientific evidence is accepted at its face value. Evolution is not a question—it is a fact. Men who know more than you and I have had time to learn assure us that it is a fact. These men outnumber, and surpass in eminence and authority, the opponents of evolution. They present their facts according to rules of logic and laws of evidence which any of us can learn and apply to their work. We can hardly refuse to accept their findings, if we follow the dictates of our intelligence.

Religion cannot have two sides, if you mean by religion (its dictionary definition) belief in super-

natural (sometimes called divine) control of this earth and its life. There is no evidence to show that such control exists. It is illogical to argue from one's wish or desire that such a control ought to exist. But if you argue that religion, though false, may be beneficial if believed in, as a child believes in Santa Claus, you *might* have a case—though to me the notion is fantastic. I do not think a child has to believe in Santa Claus to get a lot of fun out of Christmas. I have an idea—but that is out of place here.

To such topics the only two sides possible are—the truer and the less true. We choose to print, so far as we can, the truer.

There is a magazine which boasts of printing both sides of every question. That magazine is *The Forum*. It is a worth while, intelligently edited, highly stimulating monthly. But consider the topics it usually presents, and you will find that it is largely consistent with my attitude. Occasionally, *The Forum* has printed fantastic articles, to maintain (at all costs) its two-sided policy, as when it printed a reply to Clarence Darrow's *Myth of the Soul* (now Little Blue Book No. 1404).

Such questions as "Is Life Worth Living?" can have two sides, I admit. That is a matter of opinion. Even if very good arguments can be brought forward to show that life is not worth living, I can still think it is, from my point of view. Whether olives are good or disgusting is another question that has two sides; it depends on your taste. But the botanical nature of olives, their growth and culture, how they are preserved—these are facts. And one of these days the mechanical or chemical nature of life may be scientifically established, and then, even if I have my own opinion about the value of living, I can hardly, with any intelligence, hold any fantastic notions about the nature of that living.

Now and then, for purposes of discussion, it is helpful to present

the wrong side of a topic so that its answer may be intensified and made more convincing by being placed in juxtaposition with it. *The Debunker* will do this in its August issue, when the declarations of John Haynes Holmes, preacher, will be candidly answered by E. Haldeman-Julius, agnostic. Mr. Holmes' articles will be printed in full, and followed by E. M.-J.'s replies.

To present two sides of a question, then, is all right. But to attempt to find two sides for a fact is nonsensical.

MCCABE'S TITLES

Joseph McCabe has been contributing regularly—about every fortnight—a 7,500-word article to this weekly. This is to continue. A schedule of articles has already been arranged. Future titles are intriguing, to say the least.

During the next year Mr. McCabe will write 7,500 words about each of the following interesting topics:

Facing Death Fearlessly.
A Diagnosis of Prayer.
The Moral Code of an Agnostic.
What Is Blasphemy?
They Did Not Recant! (Documentary evidence that Paine, Ingalls, and their companions in agnosticism, did not recant.)
Anti-Evolution Absurdities.
Profanity: Past and Present.
Should Churches Be Taxed?
The Catholic Index.
Conan Doyle and His "Fairies."
Can We Change Our Heredity?
Nordics and the Nordic Myth.
Why Englishmen Think Americans Odd.
How Man Has Conquered Fear.
Is War Inevitable?
How Europe Is Governed.
What the British Empire Is.

If these subjects sound interesting to you, please be sure that your subscription is paid up—in advance.

THE DOVE

The Dove calls itself, and rightly, "a liberal journal of campus opinion." It is published at the University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kans., and I assure you that, from the copies I have seen, it is a gratifyingly open-minded little paper. A recent issue carried a delightful

discussed, signed by Philip Eyres, entitled "A School Faculty Meets God." I wish I had space to quote it in full. I offer selections:

God: Are these many prayers to be answered today?

Answer: There are just a few, father.

God: My son, we must put a little more miles appeal into these answers. Do you realize that immigration has fallen off badly?

Waiter: Look, father, there is the smallest soul I have ever seen admitted into heaven.

Jesus: At the university he teaches astronomy, but he also seeks to teach mankind that he can justify scientific phenomena with the Bible.

God: The Bible—hm, that's the book of perversions that your earthly fathers assert I inspired. And he believes in that?

Jesus: But he is a scientist.

God: My son, your earthly visits are beginning to affect your mind. How can a man be a scientist and hold

such loose ideas? To have a man assert that he inspired the writing of the Bible is bad enough, but to have that man posing as a scientist as well is horrible. I'll not even talk with him. Cast him out into the farthermost reaches. . . .

God: That small soul carrying the candle. Who is she? And the candle?

Jesus: They call her the secretary of the Y. W. C. A. And the burning candle represents your spirits and the girls' spirit all united in one. God: Well, I'll be damned! No, I couldn't be. That's impossible. But such brass.

SHOP TALK

The new 1929 illustrated catalogue of Little Blue Books—1,466 different titles listed—is now ready for distribution. If you ask for it, you can get a copy!

Fred C. Rodewald, an artist in

Staten Island, N. Y., has been asked to design a special two-color cover for the Jubilee Catalogue we are planning, to celebrate 1,500 different Little Blue Books.

It has arrived: the first copy of the clothbound edition of Joseph McCabe's *Story of Religious Controversy*. The tome (it is such a good-sized book that no other appellation will serve) is a \$5 book, but such value for five dollars as you never saw before! Here you are not paying excessive advertising costs or heavy profits to the publisher. Handsomely bound in red, leather-grained cloth, stamped in gold, 641 pages, printed on a fine grade of eggshell paper—really this is a splendid piece of bookmanship.

And there is a special price to H.-J. readers (\$4.85 postpaid).

Can you think of any finer gift than a copy of Joseph McCabe's *Story of Religious Controversy* in this new clothbound edition? Get a copy. When you see your copy you will realize the thrill your friends will get if they receive a copy as a gift. And for "missionary" work in the interest of optimistic, free-minded agnosticism, there is no better or more authoritative work available.

We pay the postage is an oft repeated, byword of the mail order business. H.-J. Publications are making it thorough. Starting today (June 10), all catalogs and circulars mailed by us contain a return envelope which requires no stamp.

That is, it is a Business Reply Envelope, and may be mailed by the customer without affixing any stamp (if it is mailed in the U. S., of course). We pay the postage when the letter is delivered to us. This innovation is for customers' convenience: it is often a nuisance to have to buy a stamp. Now you can mail your letter to us anywhere, any time, without bothering about a stamp.

The Well of Loneliness, by Radclyffe Hall, recently suppressed on a charge of obscenity, can now be supplied in the original version (\$5.25 postpaid). This book was praised by such men in England as Havelock Ellis for its courageous presentation, in artistic form, of a little known and little understood aspect of human emotional life.

THE DEBUNKER

[Haldeman-Julius Monthly]

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We still have a small supply of bound volumes of *The Debunker* (Haldeman-Julius Monthly), at \$2 each postpaid. The following are available, bound for permanent library use:

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The Love of a Priest and Nun

Joseph McCabe

Continued from page one

On thy dear head? Why, hapless, did I wed. . . .

So, with Lucan on her lips instead of Paul, her eyes streaming with tears, she walked to the altar, took the black veil from it, and wrapped her life in it. What a woman she would have been if she had lived in our day! And this was only the first of her calamities. The gay Abbot Adam at St. Denis died and was replaced by the severe Abbot Sager, and the new abbot discovered, he says, "the foul enormity" of the life of the nuns at Argenteuil, and he got them evicted and annexed the building and estates to St. Denis. Abelard then had the building and estate he had created by his teaching in the country, before he went to Brittany, transferred to Heloise, and there for the rest of her years she was the highly respected abbess of a reasonably strict nunnery with the austere and devitalized Abelard as spiritual director.

Abbess Heloise in her distant convent of the Paraclete gets a copy of Abelard's letter. He had not only sent it to her, but he had, she complains, not written a line to her since he had parted from her in the conventual chapel more than ten years earlier. One sees from this the utter absurdity of "translations" of the letters which make Abelard say in his first letter.

Ah, Philintus, does not the love of Heloise yet burn in my heart? I have not yet triumphed over that unhappy passion. In the midst of my retirement I sigh, I weep, I pine, I speak the dear name of Heloise and delight to hear the sound.

It is exactly the opposite of what Abelard says about his "sin." But Heloise does not seem to have realized how completely transformed he was, and she sent off a letter to him in distant Brittany. This is the letter which Pope professes to give in English verse, but one ought rather to say that his poem is founded on certain passages of the letter of Heloise. It is probable that Pope never saw the Latin originals of the letters, and in his time every library had one or more of the supposed translations. The passages in question are certainly remarkable and I will translate them directly from the Latin, but I would give a word of warning. It was an age of rhetoric, and the letters of Heloise are often, not spontaneous outpourings in the language she spoke every hour, but rhetorical compositions in Latin. She knew the language perfectly. She writes, in my opinion, a better Latin than Abelard and most other writers of his time. That her heart spoke also you will not doubt for a moment when I reproduce the more emotional passages, but, although men like Pope and the French writers of the eighteenth century could easily take every word literally, no one who reads the original will fail to perceive that Heloise is compiling an elegant Latin letter to send to a great scholar; and the way in which her real sentiments break out at times through the formal composition is very interesting.

She complains that Abelard writes to others and not to her. She became a nun only in obedience to him; to prove that she was his, body and soul. She thought of nothing in the world but him. When she married him she did not seek a dowry or even pleasure. She wanted, not marriage, but him:

"And though the name of wife seems holier and more approved, yet the name of friend—nay, if it angers you not, of concubine or whore—was always sweeter to me. Thus in humiliating myself the more for you I should find greater favor in your sight and should do less harm to the glory of your reputation."

This is the language which enables the romanticists to turn the whole letter into an erotic epistle, yet over and over again Heloise protests that it is not "lust," as she calls it, or the sexual pleasure itself, which she sought. She rarely used even the word "love." She is not at all

consistent, as we shall see, but in the main she insists that it is union with the brilliant and famous Abelard that she prizes above all things.

To me the significant and interesting thing is just that she is not a passionate woman defying the law of the Church in her thirst for sexual pleasure but a woman who, while cordially accepting sex and love as part of the union, and even at times recalling their "joy" with obvious delight—but a woman who very deliberately would control her own life without regard for received canons of conduct. She takes up at once the long passage in his letter in which he tells his friend how she argued against marriage and wanted to remain his mistress. Does the lady abbess of thirty, the friend of pious bishops and guardian of the virtue of a community of nuns, blush to read of her early wickedness? Not in the least. Abelard, she says, has not given her arguments in full:

"You have omitted some in which I preferred love to marriage. Liberty to a chain. I call God to witness that if Augustus, the emperor of the whole world, were to offer me marriage and a promise that I should rule the world forever, I should find it dearer and nobler to be your mistress than his empress. For a man is not the better because he is strong or rich: that is a matter of fortune, not virtue."

She reminds him how proud she was that the great master belonged to her, and his songs made men speak of her everywhere. All the women of Paris were eager for him, but he chose her. And it was she, not her body merely, that he sought. People had said: "It was desire, not friendship, that linked you to me and ardor of lust, not love." She denies it and wants him to write and deny it. Is it true that when he could no longer have carnal pleasure with her he deserted her? That, she says, is not merely an idea that occurs to her. It is what people are saying. She is quite clearly trying to get a love-letter from him. Remember, she says, that "it was no sentiment of religion but merely your command that compelled me to embrace the rigor of the monastic life." She expects no reward from God, as she "did not do it to please him." She reminds him, too, how he hurt her feelings by insisting that she should make the vows before he did, as if he could not trust her. Why, she exclaims, "I would not hesitate a moment to go before you or after you to hell if you bade me!" Her soul is entirely with him or "it is nowhere." Let him remember the fiery love-songs and letters he wrote when he wanted pleasure with her, and let him now write to her and try to make her more religious.

This rebellious and extraordinary letter—the passages I have quoted were afterwards solemnly condemned by the doctors of Paris—clearly embarrassed Abelard. His reply was very bloodless and nervous. He had not written to her, he explained, because he was unaware that she needed spiritual consolation and exhortation. He thought that she was quite happy in her religious world. She must give him some idea of the way in which he can counsel her. The letter is a string of platitudes and quotations from Scripture. Not a line of it is worth quoting. There is not a single syllable in it of the stuff which some of the supposed translations give instead of it. Abelard has not the least desire to keep up communication with his wife, and he does not say a single word about their love. In the end, it is true, he says that if his monks succeed in killing him, as they are still trying to do, he trusts that Heloise will see that his body is brought to the Paraclete and buried in her cemetery; but even here he is careful to explain that it is because the spot, his old school, is dear to him, not that his body may be near to her, as the romanticists say.

Heloise was just as obviously disappointed, but she made one more effort. He had written to his "beloved sister." She replies to "the one beloved after Christ," and scolds him for marking the letter "to Heloise from Abelard," thus putting her name before his. As to the words about his death and burial: "Oh dearest, how could you conceive such a thing, how say it?" She prays the Lord that he will take her from the world first. She is "the most miserable and unfortunate of all women," and she is hopelessly puzzled by the fact that they were so happy when they were sinful and smitten

by the hand of the Lord only when they entered upon a respectable marriage:

"As long as we enjoyed the pleasure of our love—if I may use a more expressive but shameful word, of our fornication—the divine severity spared us. But when we turned the illicit into licit, when we covered the shame of fornication with the decent veil of marriage, the anger of the Lord made his hand heavy against us: he would not endure the stainless bed though he had so long tolerated the polluted. What other men suffer for adultery you suffered for marriage: what adulterous women do for their fornicators, this thy own wife did for thee."

In fact, he alone has really suffered, and she writes a little essay, in the usual pessimist vein, on all the evils that women have brought upon men. But if he thinks that she is fully repentant over her misdeeds he is mistaken:

"The pleasures of love which we enjoyed together were so sweet to me that I am quite unable to feel remorse or banish them from my memory. Whichever I turn they confront me ever with the desires they inspire. They spare me not their illusions ever when I sleep. Even during the solemn ceremony of the mass, when our prayers ought to be purest, the obscene images of those pleasures so captivate the whole of my unhappy soul that I yield myself to their turpitude rather than to prayer. When I ought to be lamenting what I did I am sighing for what I have lost. Not only what we did, but the very times and places in which we did them are so fixed in my mind that I do everything over again with you and resist not even when I sleep. At times the movements of my body reveal my thoughts and I break into imprudent words."

He, she reminds him, has been spared all this by his wound, but she suffers terribly. "The ardor of youth and my experience of those sweet pleasures excite in me all the more those movements of the flesh and impulses of lust." People call her chaste only because they do not know her hypocrisy. She abstains in body but not in soul. She thinks of nothing but Abelard. "God knows that in every act of my life I fear to offend thee rather than him: I desire to please thee rather than him." If Abelard imagines that she is happy and submissive he does not know her. She is a hypocrite. He must not talk about her goodness and virtue, for it would be a lie. And not so much talk, please, about a heavenly crown. "I don't want the crown of victory," she exclaims: "in whatever corner of heaven God puts me I shall be content."

So wrote the pious abbess of thirty to the austere abbot of forty in the thirteenth century; and it is impossible for any romanticist to improve on such a passage as this. I have said that the heart of the poor woman breaks at times through the formal rhetoric, and we certainly recognize it here. It is difficult to understand her mind: perhaps impossible for us of a very different age to understand it. But the romantic versions of the letters are wrong in their way. They just represent Heloise as one of the loose abbesses of the time who yields to her sentiments and flies to the confessional to avoid the unpleasant consequences. Heloise remembers in her most rebellious moments what the law of the Church is. To understand her one has to remember the terrific pressure of belief in her age. One feels at times that her mind is not far from a sentiment of general skepticism about religion. "Oh, if I dared but call God cruel to me," she says; and again, "How can I appease God when I am always accusing him of the deepest cruelty for this affliction?" Such language would be quite impossible to a mind that believed without wavering. Yet in a world where not a single man or woman ever entertained the slightest doubt about the truth of religion it was impossible for her to go further.

On the other hand, the romantic view of her is wrong in the sense that, at least when she found how little Abelard now cared about her, she would, if they correctly represent her, not have checked her desires at all. She had been quite familiar all her life with irregularities in nunneries. Lax convents, the writers of the time say, were then more numerous than strict convents. Bayle and other French writers are

so impressed by the violence and freedom of the language that they do not believe her own assurance that she is chaste at least in body, but that is clearly a false interpretation. The woman who thus bares her soul so boldly is not the kind of woman who would, at the very time when she is accusing herself of hypocrisy of spirit, go out of her way to claim chastity of body if it were not true. In fact, no writer of the time, though the enemies of Abelard would soon have accused her, charges her or her convent with irregular conduct. The Abbot of Cluny, a strict prelate, corresponded most respectfully with her, and even the arch-puritan St. Bernard wrote her. We may take it that they never read the volcanic passages of her letters. It was not until a century later that they were made public.

In fact, Abelard's reply to her second letter seems to have caused her, in resignation or despair, to have crushed the feelings of her heart. "To the spouse of Christ from the servant of God" is the superscription; and the letter is a frigid dialectical attempt to change her mind. He justifies pedantically the title of his last letter, and at great length, and morbidly, he proves that it was quite proper for him to talk to her about his death and burial. Thirdly, he says, we come to our "old and perpetual quarrel." He gives her cold logic for her heart-cries against providence. Why were they rewarded with happiness when they lived in sin and punished when, after marriage, they were innocent? It is quite easy. They were not innocent. Does she not remember that occasion when he visited her at Argenteuil and what they did in the corner of the refectory of the convent? They defiled the holy house. And, when he took her away to his sister's house in the disguise of a nun he desecrated holy things.

He goes from bad to worse; and and it is a curious fact that one of the heresies found in his work at his second trial was that he found the conjugal relations of married folk not quite free from the taint of sin. They have not been "punished" at all, he says. They have been rescued from the "vile and obscene pleasures" of matrimony, the "mud and mire" of conjugal relations. That wound of his which she deplores as a chastisement was intended only "to remove the root of all vice and sordidness from me and make me fitter for the service of the altar." He almost warns to his argument, the romanticists, to regard him still as a lover, however chastened and repentant—they make him say that he is still "fighting against my excessive tenderness for thee"—have to destroy the entire sense of such dreary passages as this.

"I had deserved death, and I received life. Do thou, then, unite with me in thanksgiving, my inseparable companion, who hast shared both my sin and my reward." For if thou hast not been joined to me in matrimony, it might easily have happened that thou wouldst have remained in the world. Oh how dread a loss, how lamentable an evil it had been, if in the seeking of carnal pleasure thou hadst borne a few children in pain to the world, whereas thou now bearest so great a progeny with joy to heaven.

Christ is thy true lover, not I: all that I sought in thee was the satisfaction of my miserable pleasure."

This ended the love-letters of Heloise. There was as much chance of squeezing blood out of one of the stones of her convent as out of the heart of Abelard. Mutilation, persecution, treachery, and misery had made him almost inhuman. Heloise resigned herself to the world into which she had been born. Not a word of love or of suppressed passion appears in her next letter. She cannot change his nature, she says, but "just as one nail is driven out by another, so it is with thoughts." She is going to occupy herself with other matters. Will Abelard tell her, for instance, what was the origin and early history of monasticism? Will he write a new rule of life for her and her sisters? She knows the rule of St. Benedict, but it is masculine. In fact, she does not want too ascetic a rule: a point which she supports from the pagan authorities which she has always at hand. They are to be allowed meat and wine: on the strength of the supposed opinion of Aristotle she proves that wine does not sexually

stimulate women as it does men. What about their dress, their beads, their visitors? She is not at all sure that the place is made safe by excluding men. "Certainly in seducing a woman the blandishment of a woman is the most effective instrument."

But there is no need to quote from this letter. The phrases which are put into it in some versions—"grace has opened my eyes" and "I have torn you from my heart"—have nothing whatever corresponding to them in the original. She never mentions any change. But, within limits, she is now going to play the game and be a real nun—since there is no alternative. Abelard composed a rule for her and her sisters, and to some extent it took into account her wishes about being moderate in asceticism, or rather in avoiding asceticism. We have the manuscript of Abelard's rule, and at the end of it some other hand has written a shorter and more temperate rule. Probably this was done by Heloise. Later again she sent a list of forty-two "problems" which occurred to her in connection with the scriptures and religion. She had by no means entirely abandoned her skeptical tendency. And this is the last we hear of her. Abelard returned to the teaching world, and St. Bernard began the final attack and condemnation which broke his spirit. He died in a priory of the great and strict abbey of Cluny, in an atmosphere of profound piety; and the abbot of Cluny found, when Heloise asked him for the worn body, that the monks of this priory were so sternly bent on keeping the holy relics, that he had to steal it by night and send it to Heloise. She died twenty-one years later; and legend has it that when they laid her body beside the bones of her husband, the skeleton miraculously opened its arms to receive her.

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