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# The American Freeman

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By Joseph McCabe

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## Opinions and Observations

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

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### IMAGES

Images of historical figures and events—how clear are they, how are they formed or received, what actual material goes into the making of them? Here is a man, let us say, who has in his mind a vague image of somebody called Voltaire. Voltaire is only a name to him. He probably thinks of him as an "atheist." Loosely, he imagines Voltaire to have been some kind of wicked, malicious, dangerous fellow. Ask him to tell what Voltaire did, what he thought, what really his private life and character was, what was his significance with relation to his time—well, he is stumped. He doesn't know. He has never read ten really authentic and informing pages about Voltaire, although he may frequently have seen the name in print and heard it mentioned in sermons. It is a fact that many who condemn Voltaire could not tell what century nor what country he lived in. One speculates curiously, therefore, as to what sort of image such a man can have when the name of Voltaire occurs to him.

Or take a hero—George Washington. The average man knows very little about Washington. Perhaps half of what he does "know" is not true or is such a mixture of legend and truth as to be very inaccurate and misleading. When recently biographies of Washington were published, stating the simple human facts about the man, telling of his habits and beliefs, describing the kind of life he had lived, throwing light upon his character—the revelations immediately assumed the hue and proportions of a scandal. It was made perfectly clear that Americans had only the most sketchy and superficial knowledge of the Father of His Country. Out of all the eulogy of Washington, with all the emphasis laid upon this familiar deified name, there was only this faint blurred image of what Inge-

soil called "a steel engraving." I am not denying the greatness of Washington. I am not even casting criticism upon the popular image of the man. I simply wonder how men can insist so definitely and enthusiastically upon an image and characterization of Washington which, so far as they are concerned, is based only upon the merest shreds and scraps of adulterated knowledge.

Take most popular heroes, and there is the same scantiness of information to back up the image, and the image though unalterably fixed must indeed be vague. Columbus, popularly speaking, is a man who had a hard time getting started on his trip across the Atlantic, but who, once he got started, wouldn't stop—maybe because he thought it was just as safe to go ahead as to turn back. Lincoln was a tall, homely man, who told funny stories and had a good heart and spoke a piece at Gettysburg; that's the popular image. Grant smoked cigars, drank whiskey, and in some ungrasped way won a number of battles—how much more is generally known about him? Benedict Arnold was a traitor—and that's all, yet this plainly does not convey a satisfactory image of the man. Patrick Henry said "Give me Liberty or give me Death." But who was Patrick Henry? What sort of man was he when he wasn't publicly choosing between Liberty and Death? George the Third of England was the king who was too mean and cranky to let the American colonists have their decent rights. But how many persons can write ten words correctly about the character and behavior of old George?

Images no less sketchy serve as "history" concerning great periods. Thus in America the popular impression of our Civil War is that of a whole country aroused passionately, and almost exclusively over the slavery question. It is supposed that those who fought on the Union side had, one and all, a deep, sentimental, righteous, personal interest in the freedom of the Negroes. It is assumed that the Southerners fought definitely and above all to keep the chains of bondage fastened upon the black men. Other political and economic factors are slurred over. It is not correctly understood that the Civil War was a struggle, deeper than the question of slavery,

between two economic systems and a struggle as well for political power, between the two sections of the country. The image of the Negro dominates in the popular mind today, although it did not—or not so simply, so completely—dominate in the popular mind at the time. How many could write a fairly clear and comprehensive account of the causes leading to the Civil War, the issues involved and their relative importance, the psychology of North and South? One wonders. Vaguely imaged history cannot cover adequately any period.

Take, again, what the average man thinks or imagines about the Crusades. He has a picture of gallant knights riding forth in gay, gorgeous trappings for the holy, unselfish purpose of wresting the tomb of "the Savior" from the hands of the "infidels." He pictures a great urge and display of most noble, entrancing chivalry. The sordidness, the greed, the dirt and blood and hardships—these are left out of the picture. Perhaps the most sordid adventure, or series of adventures, in history, the Crusades are imagined as having been the most glorious adventures.

The Christian, of course, thinks of Christianity as having brought light and peace and beauty in a world lost and undone. Loosely he has the image of a wretched, dissolute, hopeless world—a world of poor character and culture—which is saved by the new religion (for he doesn't understand that the "new" religion was a hodge-podge of old religions). What are harsh, plain facts by the side of this proud image? If one points out, what is simply and positively known to be true, that the beginning of Christianity was the beginning of a dreadfully long period of darkness such as the world had never known since the dawn of history—that Christian Europe dwelt for centuries semi-barbarously and ignorantly and violently amid the ruins of a brilliant civilization—that picture is brushed impatiently aside. It is so much more flattering to say, "Christianity brought the light and hope of salvation into the world."

Pictures of history! Well, there is a great deal that is picturesque in history. It is right enough to have a dramatic sense in studying the stirring events of the past. It is interesting to read history as a

great story. But isolated, loose, false images do not constitute real history. Facts are important: a truism which it is always useful to repeat, since people so persistently disregard facts. One may have an imagination—one may have images—but what signifies most of all is the factual material which goes to the making of those images. Obviously, the images that are most popular have very little of such factual material to justify them. One percent, perhaps, is fact while ninety-nine percent is pure fancy. What might appear strange is that people so readily accept these fanciful images without curiosity. Evidently their interest in history is of a low kind and degree, casual and credulous.

No doubt all of us to some extent substitute such images for reality; but it is true that the more curious we are, the more we definitely read and know, the more firmly supported will our images be.

### THE HAND OF HOOVER

As things are, the hand of Herbert Hoover (his right hand), conventionally and in accordance with our governmental scheme, is important. It is needed to sign important papers, to draft plans of government, to make impressive official gestures, and to rest his troubling brow when he thinks too much. The hand, of course, is not important by itself. The peace of mind and good nature of President Hoover and his clear-headedness for "constructive statesmanship" depend to some extent upon his hand's being in good condition—at least, upon its not bothering him. And it may be agreed that his hand is better idle, at rest, than employed uselessly and subjected to a senseless strain. It is said that Satan finds mischief for idle hands, but that means, I take it, hands that are entirely unemployed and must, as is the nature of hands, find something good or bad to do. Hands that are for the most part respectably employed can safely have a rest now and then. Besides, the effect of a sore hand upon the mind is pretty certain to be worse than the effect of an idle hand.

These reflections are suggested by an editorial in the *New York World*, with which I unhesitatingly agree. The *World* says, in brief, that the old custom of presidential handshaking, as a periodical and gigan-

tic task, is silly and should be abandoned. The other day President Hoover went through the ordeal of shaking hands with nearly two thousand persons. What a meaningless performance! It cannot be pretended that these who shook the President's hand derived any real benefit therefrom. It is a mere absurdity to say that it has, practically, any democratic meaning. Actually, it makes a clownish object of public curiosity out of the President. And the result must be that the President is sore in hand, sore in mind, and sore on his job. He has to submit not only to the sustained physical effort of handshaking. But he must appear to do it graciously and that involves a mental strain. It would, I should imagine, put the President in anything but a liberal, statesmanlike frame of mind. Instead of making him more democratic, it would make him secretly hate the crowd. Its effect upon legislation and executive policy could not be anything but bad.

It is not an issue that I should care to spend much energy upon. I must say honestly that it is rather remote from my real, immediate concerns. I am not worried about President Hoover's comfort nor do I expect anything from his statesmanship. I do not suppose that this handshaking custom is so very vital one way or another. It simply impresses me, in passing, as showing how silly a custom can be and how it can hang on without the shadow of good use or reason. Some people may indeed regard it as a precious symbol of democracy—but that only shows how imaginative (to put it kindly) some people can be, and, too, what a poor sense of humor they have.

### MISTAKES

Nowadays I hear an extraordinary amount of talk about criminals, as many around me have been swept by the wave of enthusiasm for detective stories. So, again, I hear the old saying: "A criminal always leaves something by which to detect him—the cleverest make mistakes." Undoubtedly. But why, with such an air of particular significance, ascribe this habit of making mistakes to criminals? One would think there were some mystic force at work, making impossible the perfect and undetectable crime. One would think that a special fatality

pursues criminals and, by some foreordained defect in the almost but not quite perfect crime, trips them up.

A moment's consideration is enough to see the fallacy of this idea, that is, of its special application to criminals. Probably they have less than the average liability to error. But let us say that they are about as inefficient and blundering as the rest of us—the difference is that, in their case, the consequences of error are tremendously more vital. The life of a criminal may be the price of a little mistake, such as many of us make and easily forget in the day's work; or many years of imprisonment may be the price. He has more reason to be careful and he suffers more extensively when his carefulness slips a trifle.

If the average man makes a blunder in calculation, or behaves foolishly, or mismanages his personal relations, he may be annoyed, he may feel foolish, he may even have some emotional suffering; but he is not punished for his missteps in anything like the degree that the criminal is.

Yet there are many, not criminals, who have to pay rather heavily for errors. Business men sometimes lose considerable sums of money through carelessness or incompetency. Generals have lost battles because they or someone blundered. Politicians have destroyed their careers through reckless speaking or almost absurd mistakes of policy. Artists have injured their work by oversight or false effort that seems incredible when compared with the general impression of their very real and great talent. Bad accidents happen daily because someone nods or hurriedly, slightly does his work—because someone, perhaps ordinarily quite efficient, is for a moment not at his best. Even preachers, I believe, speak more foolishly at times than they mean to, and doubtless are considerably chagrined when they are caught up by a vigilant critic.

So we shouldn't be too profoundly impressed by the reminder that criminals fall into error; being human, they could not do otherwise. As I say, they are (the really smart ones) above the average in carefulness, for there is a great deal more at stake.

And don't, please, tell me that criminals are not good reasoners;

that they are lacking in normal ability to consider ways and means and consequences, that there is something left out of their mechanism of control which condemns them to failure. To be sure, there are abnormal criminals; and there are morons who are incapable of clever planning; and then there are men and women, not at heart criminals, who commit sudden passionate crimes. But there are many who follow the business of crime for the soundest (albeit anti-social) reasons and who are exceedingly good at their trade.

It may be argued, of course, that a life of crime is not intelligent in the first place. It may be argued that safe, peaceful occupations are better, even with far less rewards. That, of course, is what I myself believe. Yet, setting this assumption momentarily aside and considering the criminal at his trade, it is certain that he is often a person of first-rate intelligence.

It will be readily understood that I am not speaking in defense of crime. I know, anyway, that no word of mine could persuade anyone to follow a life of crime, just as it would be futile in persuading a criminal to abandon his wicked ways. But our self-righteousness should not extend so far as to consider the criminal a natural-born blunderer while flattering ourselves that we are thoroughly, invariably competent, people.

### A NEW YORK CITY JURY

A jury in New York City declares that Texas Guinan, celebrated night club hostess, is not guilty of maintaining a nuisance in violation of the Volstead act. Thus we are reminded again that the law is dependent upon public opinion. There seems to have been no doubt about the evidence against this New York heroine of the bright lights. But the jury evidently felt that she should be freed with, perhaps, the friendly implication, "Go and sin some more." For there are many New Yorkers who do not regard a night club or any place where liquor is sold as a "nuisance." Prosecutors may technically call these obnoxious clubs and saloons by the name of "nuisances" but that doesn't make them really so in the eyes of thirsty, joy-seeking patrons; nor in the eyes of many more who, not perhaps very eager for night life and highballs,

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## Are Atheists Dogmatic?

Joseph McCabe

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It is Easter eve, and I am writing in the great city of London where a less proportion of the citizens go to church than in any other city of the world except Paris. Yesterday was good Friday, and of eight million Londoners certainly not more than one million heard the lugubrious chants over the death of Jesus, while, the day being exceptionally fine, the seven millions wrung out of it every moment of pleasure, legitimate and illegitimate that they could command. Yet when I open my radical daily paper this morning I find in the place of honor an article by a bishop entitled, "The Cross Leads Generations On." And, since nine-tenths of us here do not take bishops very seriously, the prelate begins with quotations from two Agnostics. He gives this from Lord (John) Morley: "The spiritual life of Europe has burned for nineteen centuries with the pure flame kindled by the sublime Mystic of the Galilean Hills," and this from Lecky: "The simple record of the three short years of the active life of Jesus has done more to regenerate and to soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists." Well, the bishop has made one convert, not quite in the way he intended. I cease to be an Agnostic and become an Atheist. Let that be my Easter offering at the tomb of our Risen Savior.

Seriously, this Agnostic-Atheist business has been irritating me for some years. Hilaire Belloc, the Roman Catholic writer, once asked me, as we drank beer together (at another man's expense), what was my real attitude toward his God. He knew that, out of my great regard for logic and the right word, I always described myself as an Agnostic, but I suppose he missed the qualification "reverent" which is so often joined to the word. I remember telling him, more than ten years ago, that the most faithful description I could give of my frame of mind was: "Logically I am an Agnostic but psychologically I am an Atheist. My logic and my psychology have been fighting it out ever since while I looked on with amused indifference. You see, my descrip-

tion of myself is rather too large for a handy label, and it would make me seem different from everybody else; and spiritual isolation has, of course, always seemed to me very painful. But what is a man to do when his logic wants one label and his psychology another?"

In the Little Blue Book, in which I showed God that he doesn't exist I chose the label Agnostic, but with the reserve that I by no means regarded it as an open question whether there is a God or not. I pointed out that there is not a particle even of serious suggestion that God exists, whereas "the case for Atheism is very strong," even if Atheism be taken as a denial of the existence of God. In short, I have always preferred to describe my frame of mind rather than label it. I am quite certain that there is no God, no "spiritual" reality of any description, and I have very definite grounds, which are entirely in accord with the laws of logic, for that certainty. But proving a negative proposition always seemed to me to have a faint savor of intellectual impropriety, and, as no one in the world misunderstood me when I called myself Agnostic—for no one ever suspected me of reverence—I preferred that title.

There was another reason. I knew folk who called themselves Atheists partly because it paid them better than calling themselves Agnostics. They were professional God-fighters, and the courage, the manliness, the reckless disregard of odium and persecution which calling oneself an Atheist is supposed to entail put them a few pegs up in the esteem of some. I have met many perfectly honest Atheists and perfectly honest Agnostics: men, on the one hand, who are, like myself, so sensitive to the evil and brutality of slow evolution that they emphatically deny that there is a God, and men who remain in the more restrained frame of mind of one who has merely turned down the evidence as unsatisfactory. But I have met also what I should be disposed to call dishonest Atheists and Agnostics: men who weigh the advantage to themselves of using one or the other label. There is at times a certain amount of swagger in the use of the name Atheist, and it confirmed me in my attitude to hear that these men called me timid or calculating. The religious world is totally indifferent to their existence, but it froths at the mention of my name and has done its best all my life to injure me in my professional work. I admit that it was largely

my disdain of the conduct of so many professional Atheists that kept me from wearing their badge.

Yet in some respects the lack of honesty on the part of Agnostics is more painful and has done infinitely more mischief. One has to make every allowance for the great Agnostics of the nineteenth century in England: Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, Lecky, Stephen, Clifford, Tyndall, Harrison, Lewis, Morley, and Mill. The fact that less than one-third of the British nation is today even claimed by the Churches is a monument to their work. Popular speakers like Bradlaugh, who prided themselves on their courage in calling themselves Atheists, had not a little of the influence of these men. And no doubt it is true that if they had been quite outspoken in every respect, if they had argued that if there ever was a Jesus we know nothing about him, or that it was at least doubtful if the imposition of Christianity on Europe had not suspended the progress of civilization, their influence would have been far less. We can therefore understand why most of them did not inquire too deeply into certain sections of history, but what we cannot forgive are the fulsome praises of Christ and Christianity which are still quoted from their pages in every work of Christian apologetics.

I have given two specimens and shown the use that is made of them. Whether Morley did say just what is attributed to him I cannot say, for these people who hold that honor will perish if they perish constantly touch up their quotations and never give references. But the passage from Lecky is correct, and I could fill a column with similar sentences from his *History of European Morals*: a work that contains facts enough to destroy every vestige of respect for Christianity, yet contains also an anthology of compliments to it that make one wonder why Lecky was not canonized, a work of prodigious learning and such prodigious cowardice that it is a tissue of contradictions. The passage, for instance, that is quoted by the bishop is on page 4 of the second volume of the cheap edition (published by the English Rationalist Press without a single note calling attention to the contradictions). It is just one sentence in a whole page of the most glowing and most fatuous praise of Christianity and its moral influence. And you have merely to turn over one page to learn that of the one hundred and nine Byzantine emperors [the half of Christendom that was never disturbed by barba-

rians] only thirty-four died in their beds, and at least forty were murdered, and, as regards Europe, that "few men who are not either priests or monks would not have preferred to live in the best days of the Athenian or of Roman republics, in the age of Augustus or in the age of the Antonines, rather than in any period that elapsed between the triumph of Christianity and the fourteenth century." It is maddening. I once debated for two nights with a Christian lecturer on the influence of his religion on civilization and he shot Lecky at me all the time.

Morley also was quite capable of saying what is attributed to him. He opened his literary career with a work which he called "On Compromise," and then he compromised for the rest of his life. I once had to handle his correspondence with Holyoake, and when I asked his permission to publish a letter in which he put John Stuart Mill intellectually and morally above Gladstone, he nearly went into hysterics. His friend Lord Oxford (Aquisth), who died recently, was an Agnostic, but even in his retirement refused to let it be known publicly. From statesmen, however, we expect compromise. What I resent is the literary tradition of Agnostics: the habit of making statements about the Christian religion which are historically false and statements about the universe which are mere concessions to superstition. British Rationalism has always been saturated with this kind of thing and it is at present in a state of surrender to it; and American historians, scientists, and literary men are constantly betraying the trait.

The name Agnostic has the further disadvantage of standing originally for a philosophy which is really a feeble compromise. Huxley, who coined the word, had a duality of mind that I have never quite been able to understand. No man did more to eliminate mystic elements like vital principles out of science yet while in one of his brilliant essays Huxley would fight for a purely mechanical conception of life he would in the next follow the skeptical philosophy of Hume and resolve the material universe into a group of "states of consciousness," in the psychological jargon of that day, beyond which we could not go. He would not go so far as Herbert Spencer, and write a volume about the Unknowable, but he agreed with him about limitations of the human mind which prevent us from saying either yes or no to the religious question. One would have thought this dog-

matism extinct, but it is too useful to perish. Sir E. Ray Lankester published an article a few years ago on "Science and the Limits of Belief" in which he talks a good deal about the "unknown factors" outside the range of our scientific knowledge and how, "if they could be known," they might "give a different complexion to what we can and do know." I need not add that Sir E. Ray Lankester is one of the Agnostic scientists who offer large bouquets to the Christian ethic and assure the world that there is no possible conflict between science and religion.

This kind of Agnosticism, which concludes that the proper attitude is one of reverent empty-mindedness, has always been very distasteful to me. I have had to waver between calculated respectability and calculated unrespectability. Many find an outlet in the contention that Atheism means merely a person who is without belief in God. Unfortunately the meaning of words is settled by general usage, and this is not what most people mean. They mean a man who disbelieves in God, who says that there is no God. The immediate occasion for my writing this article, for instance, is that I am invited to discuss whether the Atheist is "too much of a dogmatist in that he assumes a knowledge of the ultimate nature of the universe that he really doesn't possess." That puts the real issue very clearly between the Atheist and the Agnostic. The genuine Agnostic says that the mind is so limited that we cannot be sure that there is no reality corresponding to the idea of God. The genuine Atheist is the man who says that in point of fact he is sure there is no God, and that is what most people mean when they use the word. A German professor published a work a few years ago on Atheism in ancient Greece. He proved on historical evidence—and it was a very thorough piece of research—that there were not a dozen Atheists amongst the scores of Greek thinkers whose names at least are known to us. He meant by Atheist a disbeliever.

Let me first discuss these supposed limitations of the mind which are said to forbid a man to call himself either Theist or Atheist. I need not say that Huxley was completely without belief in God, in any sort of God, yet he sincerely held that it would be intellectually improper to call himself an Atheist. There was at the time a very select discussion society in London which was called the *Metaphysical Society*. It

expressly aimed at including representatives of every shade of philosophical opinion, but they had to be leading representatives, men of distinction and ability. Tennyson and Browning, Francis Newman and Cardinal Manning, James Martineau and Lord Selborne—in short, it was a quite unique society both in the ability of its members and the variety of their views. Even the clerics in it agreed that any member who felt so inclined should be free to deny the existence of God. But Huxley is wrong in one detail. He says that every man had his own 'ism and every 'ism was represented, so, dissenting from all their dogmatisms, he coined for himself the epithet Agnostic—the man who doesn't know. He is wrong in suggesting that Atheism was represented. Only Bradlaugh and a few other men of poor culture at that time called themselves Atheists, and they were by no means up to the intellectual standard of the society. This fact certainly influenced Huxley. Bradlaugh, in calling himself an Atheist, always explained that he did not deny that there is a God—his daughter admits that the general use of the word in England is such that he was always misrepresented—and therefore his position was really the same as that of Huxley. But Huxley, if he had accepted the name Atheist, would not merely have incurred odium—it is absurd when one remembers his splendid fighting to say that that was his chief reason—but would have been classed with a group of men of poor scholarship and often questionable taste. He laughed at odium but he was sensitive about his intellectual associations.

Moreover there was, as I said, a philosophical element in his Agnosticism. He followed Berkeley and Hume in their idealism. "Whether either mind or matter has a substance or not," he says, "is a problem which we are not competent to discuss." When the materialist affirms, he says again, that all phenomena are resolvable into matter and motion, the philosopher retorts that these are resolvable into states of consciousness; and he adds that if he were obliged to choose between materialism and idealism he would "feel compelled to accept the latter alternative." In adopting the word Agnostic he was just protesting that he was not obliged to choose between two dogmatisms each of which had serious difficulties. He knew well the practice of Scottish law-courts, which permit three verdicts: innocent, guilty, and not

proven. The word Agnostic seemed to him a perfectly legitimate, if not necessary, expression for the third verdict in the great nineteenth-century trial of Jehovah. Philosophy and psychology were at that time in this idealistic stage of development, and Huxley knew both very well. It was the Atheists who privately accused him of timidity who did not know the position of philosophers.

I like to defend Huxley, for he was a splendid fighter: a man of science who bravely and unceasingly came out from the study and the laboratory to smite every variety of superstition. He fought with great scholarship and a sense of humor. He it was who, when a student asked him after his lecture on physiology, why the Jews had to continue circumcising after hundreds of generations had been operated on, gravely replied: "There is a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will." In his very different way he did a work in England almost comparable with that of Voltaire in France. I believe, from his letters to me, that Jacques Loeb would have done the same in America if he had had Huxley's wonderful gifts as writer and speaker.

But not only is there a permanent weakness in this Agnostic position—it has disclosed itself once more in our day in Julian Huxley, Wells, Joad, Lowes Dickinson, Ray Lankester, and other prominent English Rationalists—but there has been a material change in the considerations on which it was based. Even philosophers have come to resent the idealism of half a century ago, though they cannot agree upon any scheme of realism. Psychology has got far beyond the states-of-consciousness theory which seemed to justify Agnostics in talking about the limitations of the mind. To talk now about the "ultimate nature" of things, unless you mean the material substratum of matter as we know it, is to ask us to consider something for the existence of which we have no evidence. Ray Lankester's "unknown factors" or "x outside the scheme of the material universe" are as arbitrary fictions as Wells' "great captain" or Millikan's power behind the framework of things.

It is more than forty years since Huxley invented the name Agnostic, and the advance of thought has been such in the last four decades that we may very well reconsider the case. The conflict of idealism and realism that weighed for so much

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Opinions and Observations

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

Continued from page one are very tolerant toward that desire in others.

The mere passing of a law is not going to alter a man's idea of what constitutes crime. He is properly shocked at murder. He has no sympathy with the burglar. He is hot against the banker who betrays his trust. Actual, indisputable crimes that menace the public, that may conceivably strike at the security of the individual, find no favor.

But when issues of morality are confused with issues of crime, there is a different attitude. Some millions of Americans are perfectly convinced that it is all right to sell, buy, and drink intoxicants, no matter what the law says. This public opinion is more conspicuous in the large centers of population, like New York City. Texas Guinan would not be favorably regarded, I daresay, in a Middle West town of five or ten thousand people; but in New York City she is admired, she is gratefully accepted as a lively and entertaining public figure, and she is not admitted, by a jury of twelve good men and true, to be a criminal. For that matter, in all parts of the country juries have returned verdicts of "not guilty" in liquor cases, contrary to the evidence. It is one way of registering protest against a law which, even if there be a solid majority back of it, is far from unanimously popular.

Good citizens may object to juries taking the law into their own hands. Beyond question, it is dangerous. But then how often have judges taken the law into their own hands? It is, I believe, a rather common practice. Injunctions, contempt of court, interpretations of the law—in various ways, the judiciary legislates and wields an arbitrary power.

And if we are in duty bound to obey the law, or if generally as a matter of safe social policy the law should be obeyed, there are some demands of reason and fairness that we can make upon the law. One could conceive of any foolish, unjust kind of laws. It used to be illegal to sell cigarettes in Kansas; but good citizens without the slightest compunction connived at the breaking of the law; it was recognizable a silly outrage, so cigarette smokers paid no attention to it. Now it is again legal to sell and buy cigarettes in Kansas—but what actually is the moral difference? None whatever. If the law says it is a crime to sell certain books, we all cheerfully welcome the practice of bootlegging. We feel that we have a right to select our own reading, without thanks to any board of censors.

It seems to me that this feeling is sound and admirable. If the spirit of liberty dies out, then we are lost indeed. We are often told

that the law is based on common sense and justice. We see evidence constantly that it gets pretty far from that base, but it is just as well to assert our personal rights when it gets too far.

Nor is it sensible to argue that this will cultivate a reckless, dangerous disrespect for law and order. Opponents of Prohibition, as well as its supporters, use this fallacious argument. Yet because a man buys a drink of illegal liquor, without any injury to his conscience, it does not follow that he will be induced gradually to turn to burglary and then to murder and so on. His respect for socially necessary, fundamental law and order will not be a bit the less.

Anyway, argument is superfluous. We are considering facts. If enough people dislike a law, they will ignore it and beat it insofar as they are able. And summary laws, regulating the morals of the people, seem quite easily broken. It's quite a job to make one person behave. But when you lay down the law of behavior for a hundred and ten million people, the task is proportionately more difficult.

HOW MANY SKEPTICS? There is no doubt that skepticism, albeit modernly a great deal more familiar and respectable than ever before, is still not adequately represented by the number who avow their disbelief in religion. There are many who for public or business reasons affect an interest in or a friendliness toward religion which is not sincere.

Business men, particularly in small towns, dare not let it be known that they have suspicions of the "truth" as shouted from the pulpit. I don't say that many small town business men are sufficiently curious or emancipated to be skeptics; but surely there are some among them who are entertained privately by doubts, but it is policy to keep it to themselves.

Politicians, again, must be respectful toward Christianity. A politician would ruin his career if he were to proclaim himself an atheist. The common run of politicians are not, I believe, very intellectual. Their beliefs are not above the average of mental life among their constituents. One can easily believe that they take seriously, which does not mean piously nor profoundly, the more sweeping pretensions of religion. They are not at all soulful—oh, no—but they believe in God, in a future life, and all that. However, many of them pretend a feeling of respect for what is called the Christian life which at heart they do not feel.

Again, we know that professors in state schools have to be pretty discreet about their views on religion. An open profession of atheism would be the end of them professionally. Even though in the academic world they are known as having little enthusiasm for religion, their position must be carefully maintained. When they discuss religion in any really public way, they begin to trim: their sails to the popular breeze.

Journalists, again, count among their number a rather high proportion of freethinkers and cynics. But

this doesn't show in their work. So far as the public knows, they believe in all the sentimental and traditional ideas. They write beautifully and hew to about religion, not believing a word of it.

Even bootleggers, I believe, have to pretend a respect for religion though they have it not. Here, too, one must be realistic: I don't believe many bootleggers are irreligious in opinion. On the contrary, they are apt to believe as firmly in a God and in a future life as, let us say, the majority of their patrons. They will go so far as to object to the meddling of preachers in secular affairs. They think every preacher should tend his own bar, so to speak. Bootleggers, however, don't incline toward atheism. Perhaps they haven't time to study the question. They are a busy class of people.

The freest man of all, no doubt, is the skilled workman. If he satisfies his employer with his work, he can suit himself in his beliefs. He doesn't have to bow slavishly to public opinion. He isn't unfairly in the limelight. He doesn't have to attend church to maintain his social position or to help his business. He can be as atheistic as he will, and who cares?

Great material rewards may be had from the public, politically and professionally and commercially, but they must be paid for, in the case of the exceptional man, by the sacrifice of freedom.

A PATRIOTIC ILLUSION

Another patriotic illusion which is maintained in the face of steady evidence to the contrary is that Americans especially admire and delight in plain speaking. It is part, no doubt, of that other illusion that Americans are vowed to good sportsmanship, a belief in free speech, and the equal rights of men articulately and actively; doubtless it also owes something to Americans' pride in their practical nature—plain words with a plain meaning, that's the business-like way.

But is it true? Take the popular statements, say of politicians, which are intended supposedly to express that Americanism which appeals to the majority. More often than not these statements are clouded and obscure. They seem to say one thing, yet they may mean something else; frequently, it is possible to interpret them in several contradictory ways. It is notorious that politicians do not believe in and do not save through accident or sheer unwelcome necessity, resort to plain speaking. They are double-dealers in speech as in action. They are accustomed also to a vague general form of expression (apart from deliberate deception) in which words are used loosely and on the strength of most unwarranted assumptions. Recall, for example, how language was twisted or employed meaninglessly in promotion of the American war machinery in 1917-18: "making the world safe for democracy," "volunteering en masse," "our debt to France," and suchlike phrases were ironically devoid of honesty and reality. Every President, in his public addresses in traditional assertion of American idealism, so called, plays heavily with language

whose meaning is not clear perhaps even to himself.

The preachers do not customarily use plain (in the sense of direct, clear, precise) language. They indeed must, it seems, rely wholly upon almost empty, uncertain, slippery phrases. The average church member, after listening to a characteristic sermon from his favorite preacher, would be at a loss to explain clearly what he has heard, to make plain sense in plain language of the preacher's flight of rhetoric, tirade of abuse, or venture into vapid metaphysics. It has sounded good to him, he thinks, and he has an unreflective comforting feeling that it has all been very respectable and proper, but as far intellectual content or tangible, exact, applicable meaning—that, nine times out of ten, is simply not there.

Let us look at this illusion from another angle. Do the majority of Americans like plain speaking when it is the expression, clear and forcible, of a minority viewpoint? Of course they do not. They are indignant when anyone aims sharp, uncompromising criticism at their myths, their idols, their standardized activities and attitudes toward life. They are, in the first place, quite sensitive to criticism; but at least they demand that the critic shall use easy, polite language. It will not do, for example, to declare that a popular hero is a commonplace fellow without a single claim to greatness. Even if he is discussed critically, the hero must be discussed as if he were a Great Man. One may get away with the statement that the crowd is mistaken in this or that detail, or that it is a little bit mistaken, but to say that it is utterly fooled about a man or an issue is to use that plain speaking which Americans do not commonly relish.

No matter how strong a case the iconoclast may have: if he states that case plainly, in the simplest terms, having regard for the exact and economical use of words, he will find himself bitterly denounced. (Of course he expects this and it doesn't bother him much.) A gentle, evasive "iconoclasm" (contradiction in terms) is the only style that will be accepted with toleration, and that doubtfully. One must speak in a dignified, respectful way of popularly admired politicians. One must, even in criticism, refer reverently to religion. One must "beat about the bush," using large, indefinite, inoffensive words, when speaking of American phobias, illusions, and cherished customs.

And even then, if it is fairly clear that one is, in however nice a manner, attacking what is called "Americanism" there is likely to follow an outburst of resentment. It is not simply a matter of disagreement. It is not simply that Americans, popular spokesmen, are ever ready to defend American ideas of the vox populi brand. The fact that I emphasize is the quick and extreme ill nature with which critical ideas, minority views, are handled. The tone of real discussion is seldom heard. It is as if the critic had committed some sort of crime, and were fit only for abuse when actual punishment is not convenient.

Plain speaking (blunt, not necessarily accurate nor sensible, speaking) is popular enough when it expresses a popular point of view. Short and ugly words are quite commonly thrown at radicals, foreigners, atheists, at any whose "Americanism" is supposed not to be pure. But to say that plain speaking *per se* has a particular place in the tolerant regard of Americans is merely to repeat another patriotic illusion.

What we can see. It is not necessary to ponder deeply and hazily—it is only necessary to observe a little—in order to realize the bunkistic element in many popular ideas. Just plain, straight observation is the best of all debunking measures.

WHAT WE CAN SEE

Take, at a venture, the idea that a belief in religion is essential to morality. Now, that is not properly an abstract question. It relates to your neighbors. You can test it by looking about you, at the people you know, and by studying their behavior with respect to their professed faith or lack of faith in God, immortality, the Bible and all the rest. And you can easily ascertain that folks who attend church regularly are not more kindly, honest, decent than folks who never step inside a church. A man is not better to live with, either in agreeableness or trustworthiness, because he believes in a God. Atheism is not synonymous with immorality.

These are facts. They are not merely arguments. Yet with these facts in plain view for everybody to see the old claim is made that religion and morality are inseparably related as cause and effect.

Those who profess to have genuine faith in God as one who watches over them, attends to their wants, and can be relied upon specially in emergencies—these pathetically trusting one can settle the question by observing what happens to them and to their neighbors. Do the faithful have misfortunes? Are their petitions to "the throne of divine grace" obligingly noted and responded to in a real way? Does the religion or irreligion of their neighbors noticeably affect their work, their health, their prosperity, and the like?

It ought not to be hard to ascertain the correct answers. It isn't hard, but if a man is bound to keep his faith he will pay no attention to the answers; he will not even be so realistic as to ask the questions. And then his preacher will tell him, as "Sparkplug" Cadman told his readers the other day, that the essence of faith is to keep on having faith in spite of the fact that results do not materialize. True enough, that is the essence of faith. It's a dogmatic, one-sided, irrational bargain—this bargain of faith between the Christian and his God. God doesn't need to produce a single thing to reward this faith, but the believer, disappointed and cheated again and again, must persist in his humility and credulity. If he doubts—that is to say, if he observes and if he uses common sense—he is letting wickedness enter into his heart. If he goes so far as to deny God, then he is a "fool" of an atheist. Great is this sophistry; the man who observes facts that are

familiar and consistent all his life long and bases his opinion on them is a "fool": the man who ignores these same facts and hugs a belief that is utterly irreconcilable with the facts has the "wisdom" of a faith.

Take an idea in the domain of morals, which the Puritans who linger in our midst still confidently repeat: namely, that sex relations outside of marriage are degrading. Now, you doubtless are familiar with a number of instances of such illicit relations. What evidence have you observed of their degrading effect?

In just what way is a person of either sex actually worse for having such relations? Simply observe. That's better than any argument. Of course, what can you do with the Puritan who insists that unchastity is a *vis à vis* itself? He is only waiving the facts, shirking proof, and making an unsupported assertion. If he were to say that it is a sin in itself to remain awake after ten o'clock at night, his statement would have exactly the same value, no more and no less.

Again, there is the Catholic dogma that divorce is a sin (really, that there can be no such thing as genuine divorce) or that marriage is a religious sacrament or it is nothing. Upon what ground of observation are these dogmas based? You know divorced persons—does your observation reveal that they are morally done for and started upon the downward path by their action in breaking unhappy marriage ties? That is the only question: for divorce must be judged by its practical relation to life.

Or take, in the patriotic field, the notion that native Americans are superior to persons who have come here from foreign shores. It is not

difficult to test the validity of this notion. Look about you at the characters of the Italians, Germans, Bulgarians, Russians—at any foreigners—whom you know. You will certainly observe, according to the recency of their immigration, differences of speech and manner. But can you honestly say that they are inferior in character, in sense, in any human quality?

Again, consider the statement that a closed Sunday is a sacredly essential measure of morality or social orderliness. This statement, for example, is made and is believed by persons who live where amusements are wide open on Sundays. They can tell merely by looking over the ground whether the statement is true. But do they directly, honestly observe and thus decide, by the light of facts and facts only, whether a population that attends the theater and ball games on Sunday is morally the worse for this "desecration" of the Sabbath. Here, too, one realizes that dogma may come to the rescue. It may be asserted that the mere fact of attending the theater on Sunday is in itself a sign and proof of moral degeneracy. But of course with that style of "argument" one can do nothing. It's a case of believe it or not.

There is no end to the assumptions that they are recklessly made, which do not require what we ordinarily think of as argument, but which need only be checked by observation. The strongest debunking is a good healthy dose of the obvious. And it is precisely the obvious that many people refuse to see. There is the old saying, "Seeing is believing." Here we may change it to read: Believing is not-seeing.

Is Science Better Than Religion as a Guide to Life?

This important question is asked and answered by Dr. Harry Elmer Barnes, professor of Historical Sociology at Smith College. Every reader of The American Freeman is interested in this topic. The article—entitled "Science vs. Religion as a Guide to Life"—will be printed in an early issue.

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Are Atheists Dogmatic?

Joseph McCabe

Continued from page one

with Huxley himself is for most of us quite extinct. We do not care a cent what difficulties philosophers find in the nature of perception as it is related to external objects. Realism, what used to be called naive or crude realism, is proved by a most formidable "reduction to the absurd" of any denial of it. Unless we admit realism in the full sense of the word, not merely that there may be something outside the mind which causes and corresponds to our percepts, but something that we can know in detail we waste time in such research as that by which Dr. Shapley has measured the universe and determined its center. The more we seek precision and exact measurement in science the more strictly realistic we are. Science in every branch, history, even art and letters are not worth cultivating if we have any doubt about the objectivity of our knowledge.

And this objective world which we perceive is a material world. Every reality of which we have a direct and positive knowledge is a measurable reality, something with dimensions. Superficial writers raise the question whether ether or whatever fills space between the heavenly bodies is material, yet it has just as obviously time and space relations as the stars themselves. If Einstein's curved space and finite but unlimited universe is preferred, it is still something essentially measurable and material. Some again think materialism discredited because when an electron travels at about 170,000 miles a second it changes its mass; and it is precisely by measurement that we discover the change. If we adopt the new use of the word energy and say that matter and

energy are interchangeable, even if we go so far as to say with Professor Ostwald that the one ultimate reality is energy, we are still dealing with a measurable and therefore material reality. At all events, we are certainly not dealing with a spiritual reality, for there never was a philosopher or theologian who did not claim that spirit has "no parts and no magnitude," nothing that is measurable, no time and space relations.

Next, how many psychologists are there who now think that man may have a "faculty" or "power" of directly perceiving other than material realities? They are as negligible as the novelists who talk about woman's intuition. The whole idea of faculties is as dead as the idea of instincts. What the psychologist analyzes is thought, and he finds no elements of it that were not derived ultimately from our impressions or perceptions of material objects. Naturally he finds ideas of spiritual objects in the mind, but the very idea of spirit is formed by abstraction, by removing from matter its material attributes and leaving only "substance"; and he finds that any definite claim of the existence of such spiritual realities takes the form of an inference from the material things we do perceive. We do not today admit gods that are intuited or subjective feelings that the mind must be spiritual. These things may be admitted in philosophy, which in proportion as it clings to such things makes no progress and adds no uncontroversial elements to our knowledge. The method of science alone gives us statements on which all thinking people can agree, because ultimately those statements are based upon observations which any normal man may verify.

Human knowledge has expanded immensely in the last fifty years, and not one item of this vast new knowledge has been attained by any other than the scientific method, the study of measurable realities. Every mystic method of acquiring or purporting to acquire knowledge has been discredited by three thousand years

of experience, while the scientific method has been accredited by the accumulation in one century of a mighty body of truths unanimously agreed upon and proved by practical application in industry. In science from this viewpoint I include history, which is a study and interpretation of measurable realities: documents and monuments. This therefore is the only sense in which we can now speak of limitations of human knowledge: I mean limitations in principle, or from the structure of the mind, not the limitations of our actual knowledge where research has not yet proceeded far enough.

And I say very deliberately that Agnostics who suggest that there is or may be something which is not approachable by this mechanical method of investigation, as we may call science, are creating their own little mystery, and that when it is scientific men who use this language they are abandoning every canon of thought which they use in their really profitable scientific research. I have selected Sir E. Ray Lankester as an example because, though he is now very old, he is regarded as the dean of British science and he is one of the few who have recently written on the subject. He talks, as I said, about "external factors" which may be of a different kind from our time-space realities, about an x of "unknown and unknowable possibilities."

At one point, to give the reader an impression that there is really something definite in this vague language, he says of the mechanism of nature: "As to whence or how it came about, or whither it is going, as to what it and what our consciousness of it really are, and why it is and why we are here, modern science has no answer." This, of course, is to rebuke the Atheist and Materialist who fancies that the scientific method will in time answer all questions; and it is merely an illustration of the way in which scientific men reason loosely when they see a spiritual policeman in the offing. There are no such questions as "whence or how it came

about," and so on, for the simple reason that we have not the least reason to suppose that it ever did "come about." If any one of the bits of verbal jugglery by which some have attempted to prove that the universe had a beginning were put before Ray Lankester he would toss it aside with more than his usual disdain of metaphysics. Until someone proves that nature is not eternal—it is not our business to prove that it is—the questions whence and how and whither are not insoluble problems but imaginary problems.

As to the totally different questions "what it (nature) is and what our consciousness of it really is," they do indicate very real problems but no man has a right to suggest that they will not be solved by scientific research. "Science has no answer" says the distinguished scientist; so, of course, it can't conflict with the religious answer. It is Agnostic. But let us talk plain English. If you ask the physicist—Ray Lankester is a biologist—what matter, or the electron, or electricity, or ether, or energy if you like, is, he replies that he does not fully know yet but he is advancing very satisfactorily in the direction of the answer. There may be one form of material reality filling the universe or there may be two or more forms. We don't know yet. But this is exactly what science regards as one of the greatest questions lying within its own province. To suggest an "ultimate essence" of nature that is not even approachable by the scientific method is just as arbitrary as to raise questions about whence and whither. The problems are fictitious. So in regard to consciousness. It is quite true that we do not know what it is—yet. But it is a scientific problem, and we are advancing toward the answer. The scientific method has made infinitely more progress in explaining mind in fifty years than the philosophical method made in two millennia, and the greater part of this progress was made by research on the lines of anatomy and

physiology. It is simply playing the game of the Churches to tell people that science has no answer when half your problems are fictitious and the other half are in process of solution by science.

Let me next take Dr. Robert Millikan, a kind of Agnostic-Theist, a distinguished scientist who believes in God but admits that his conception is "vague and indefinite." It is not merely vague and indefinite, but it betrays an intellectual shallowness and confusion which show that Millikan does not use the same brain to study electrons and to think about religion. That invariably happens with these religious scientists, and it is quite natural. The intellectual processes they use in the laboratory are the outcome of thirty or forty years' training and intense experience. The remarks about religion which they drop to interviewers are casual reflections with neither knowledge nor training behind them. It is astonishing that these scientific men do not realize that prolonged study and a special equipment are needed. Instead of realizing that he has neither, Millikan smoothly assures the world that it "pains" him to hear "crudely Atheistic views expressed by men who have never known the deeper side of existence," that materialism is "utterly absurd and altogether irrational," and that he has "never known a thinking man who did not believe in God." This is the sort of man who will tolerate your existence if you are a reverent Agnostic but dab himself with an antiseptic if you say you are an Atheist.

When one reads his attempts to give some coherent account of his own knowledge of "the deeper side of existence" one has to smile at his conceit. We are surrounded by mysteries and obscurities. The map of science is still a great blank sheet with a few small regions charted. "The more we investigate the more we see how far we are from any real comprehension of it all." Note the word "real." These little words (deep, real, ultimate, etc.)

help out the argument very nicely. Anyway we all admit that our knowledge of nature is extremely imperfect and full of obscurities. We more superficial people find this natural enough. For two or three thousand years the thinkers of the race have followed entirely wrong methods. We have been on the right track only for a century or

two, and we smile at anybody who has emotions because there are still obscurities. But where in the name of all that is scientific is the logic, the intellectual coherence, of this conclusion which Millikan draws from the actual limitation of our knowledge: "The more we investigate, the clearer we see that in the very admission of our ignorance and

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finite we recognize the existence of a Something, a Power, a Being, in whom and because of whom we live and move and have our being—a Creator by whatever name we may call Him."

This is worse than Ray Lankester. We feel the atmosphere of Point Lema rather than of the laboratory. Why the something in which we finite humans have our being is adorned with a capital S, why it becomes in the next breath a Power (a word which his fellow-physicist and mystic, Oliver Lodge, warns his readers never to use if they want to think clearly), and in the next breath a Creator (who makes things out of nothing) of the masculine gender—well, if that is the way "profound" thinkers think I am glad I am merely superficial. To be quite fair, however, Millikan throws some further light on his mental process. Spirit, personality, love, duty, and beauty are for us, he says, "as real as the physical things we handle."

By spirit and personality he means consciousness, and the little play on words carries him a long way. Obviously there is spirit (mind) in nature, so you cannot "sythesize" nature and leave it out, and so just as obviously the materialist, who does leave it out, is an utter ass. This sort of thing is really childish. Millikan is no more equipped to investigate whether the mind is spiritual than I am to ascertain the diameter of an electron. He assumes that there is a dollar in his pocket and tells us what damned fools we are not to recognize it. Very deep.

I could take other specimens of this power-behind-the-universe or mystery-of-existence school, but it is surely enough to take two of the most distinguished men of science of America and England. And I am not going to apologize for my rudeness. Just because I respect the high ability of these men in matters of science I say that they ought to be ashamed ever to print these confused reflections on a subject with which they are unfamiliar, and still more ashamed of their arrogant remarks on the dogmatism of the Atheist. Neither they nor any other writer on the subject have given us any serious reason to think that there are problems which cannot be solved by scientific research, and they ought to know better than any that scientific research has only begun. Like the flabbiest of mystics they talk about deep and ultimate and mystery, and so bring an emotional mist into the minds of their readers. Unless the immaterial, or God, can be inferred from something observed within the scheme of nature it is waste of time to talk about it.

Some years before Millikan wrote this that I have quoted Professor Roy Wood Sellars had published an admirable book, *The Next Step in Religion*, with which I quarrel only because I think the title ought to be "the next step out of religion." God is politely ushered out of the ethical as well as the philosophical world—so, of course, Dr. Sellars is not "a thinking man"—and we are told that "romantic spiritualism must give way to a humanistic naturalism." But the chief point in it to which I would draw attention is the chapter on "The limits of personal agency." Dr. Sellars insists that any personal agency we admit must be known to us through experience. Such a personality is known to us—"that incarnated intelligence which organisms possess." And he closes his severely reasoned chapter with the words: "But experience gives us no hint of a transcendent agent for whom the earth is as a footstool and who whirls stars and planets through space to their appointed orbits."

That is my first point in reconsidering the use of the name Atheist; though, of course, Dr. Sellars would probably not be with me in this further conclusion. Fifty years ago the inquiry was still in progress. The Theistic attitude was that within our experience of nature we found things from which we legitimately deduced the existence of God. But science was beginning to show that our experience only suggested a supernatural because it was a superficial or inaccurate experience. We were every year correcting and filling out our experience by a more profound search into nature as it is and especially by discovering the long past which sheds so much light on the present. A great physicist was saying at that time that the atoms of matter were clearly "manufactured articles," but the progress of physics has sent his argument into oblivion. Others built on the obscurity of biological processes. The great issue was, taking it broadly, is the whole of reality mechanical and approachable by scientific methods or have we reason to believe, have we experiences which compel us to believe, that there are immaterial realities?

of facts which were half a century ago supposed to point to spiritual realities or cosmic intelligences have been covered by a purely scientific explanation. Apply this to the question of the existence of God in particular. Not one new fact has turned up in science or history or any other department of thought which favors the idea of his existence, in either personal or impersonal form, while the Theistic interpretation of myriads of facts within our experience—of the whole universe, in fact—has been so discredited by the scientific interpretation of those facts that a scientist or a philosopher who now sees evidence of God in the order and beauty of the universe or the phenomena of conscience is very rare. They now look for God in the shadows of the universe. They leave the sunlight areas to science.

Simultaneously with this tremendous shattering of the old arguments for God, which would of itself justify us in using more confident language than men did fifty years ago, there has been another very significant development. Half a century ago Theists were still using the amusing old argument that God must exist because all the savages in the world believed in a God. This argument has, with the advance of anthropology and the science of comparative religion, been turned back with appalling force upon those who used it. We now see that belief in God is not in the least a man's natural reaction to his surroundings or his experience. He is almost born with the idea, and he converts or perverts his experience into "proofs" in favor of it. In the living laboratory of savage life we can observe the fabrication of the belief. We have a few peoples without even a belief in spirit, and from that level onward we can trace the evolution of the idea of God as plainly as the idea of the boat or the plow. We see that the belief in God has such a weight of tradition behind it that the man who holds it will have to explain very carefully that he has personal grounds to hold it.

In particular we see that it began in and remained for ages a sheer superstition born of ignorance. Why primitive tribes believe in spirits is not intellectually respectable: why civilized men took over their beliefs is still less respectable, for the maintenance was due in large part to the collusion of kings and priests. We see how in every age of real intellectual vitality and comparative freedom men have moved in the direction of Atheism. We see how, when they were coerced, as most of the Greek thinkers were, they either, like the Epicureans, simply said that no doubt there were gods in some remote abyss of space, or, like Plato and Aristotle and Pythagoras, invented reasons for the belief which no thinker entertains any longer. In short the historical perspective of Theistic belief completely discredits it. It shows us that God was a fiction from beginning to end. We need no longer reverently wonder whether there is such a being. He was always a mere idea and we now know its whole story.

The last phase of this development has a significance of its own. Fifty years ago you spoke hesitatingly if you rejected the supposed evidence for God because at that time the majority of even learned and thoughtful men believed in God. In England as late as the middle of the last century there were judges who would not let a man appear in court, whether he was willing to take an oath or not, if he did not believe in God. You were a marked man in any profession. My main point is, however, that a man who in these days ceased to believe in God might very well retain some reserve or misgiving, something like humility, in his own mind when he found himself opposed, not merely to the conventional ideas, but to the sincere convictions, of the great majority of the able men. He need be humble and reserved no longer. The majority are on his side.

I am here merely sketching lightly a series of considerations which should give us more confidence, almost a title to be dogmatic, in our time. Next year I take up this subject and deal with it very thoroughly in a series of volumes, when each of the points I make here will be exhaustively proved. But to conclude here this sort of preliminary sketch of part of the work I propose to do, I will just outline a fourth argument. It is familiar and need not be elaborated; but it is in a sense the most important of all.

The genuine Agnostic is the man who sees some evidence on both sides and prefers a verdict of not-proven to either guilty or innocent. Through the whole of the last three thousand years of civilization, ever since man got some liberty to think, the evidence against the hypothesis of God has been, not merely perceived, but acutely felt. Thousands of theologians have tried to reconcile troubled religious minds to the evil and suffering in life. It was always doubtfully successful, but as long as there was understood to be ample evidence that an omniscient, omnipotent, and infinitely good power ruled and had created the universe, it was possible to speak plausibly about the hidden designs of God, the punishment of sin, the trial of the soul, the arrogance of the human mind in trying to penetrate every mystery, and so on.

the last fifty years, as far as my present subject is concerned, is that the scales which once seemed to be fairly balanced have come down with a crash on the side of Atheism. The affirmative evidence has been so thoroughly destroyed that even theologians repeat the dreary verbiage of Millikan or take refuge in what they call the spiritual sense or religious instinct. For most of us the evidence is now all on one side and excludes the idea of a God. The theory of a God of finite power, which appeared to John Stuart Mill and is favored by Sir Oliver Lodge, is too violent an innovation. One would have to imagine God shedding tears over all the waste and blundering and perversity of the cosmic machine he is supposed to be running. But the theory of a God of infinite power, wisdom, and benevolence may now be confidently rejected. There is no serious evidence for it; there is a mass of evidence against it.

Here again the advance of science during the last fifty years has made matters infinitely worse for the Theist. The poor believer had always been tortured by the haphazard course of life, the triumph of robust brutality and unscrupulous cunning, the acreage of squalor and misery, the ravages of disease, the death of the young, the general lowness of character, the sufferings of animals which have no character to be improved by suffering, and so on. Well, the believer sighed, most of it would be put right in heaven; and then came the discovery of the evolution of man which leaves no serious ground for believing him to be immortal. And with this discovery came also the realization that this "grander method of creation," as evolution was first described, meant that the uglier features of life—cruelty, bloodshed, death, starvation, the suffering of the weak—had not only lasted tens of millions of years before any creature came who might hope to be rewarded in heaven, but was precisely the machinery of evolution. Finally, as if to bring the scale down even more heavily on the side of Atheism, we discover that the cruder, more brutal, more bloody phase of evolution, even since consciousness was developed in animals, has occupied, not fifty million, but several hundred million years: that man himself spent some tens of millions of aimless and meaningless years—unless the aim was to steep his nature in animal brutality—in a state of unprogressive savagery; that from first to last the man of science can see in the story of evolution only an inexorable action of forces of nature and reaction of the sensitive living organism. Every pretty phrase that theologians and their mystic friends in the scientific world invented was discredited by some fresh advance of science almost before it was framed in the sanctuary; and religious scientific men, instead of courageously facing all these facts, go poking in the obscure corners of the universe for the missing spooks and blandly tell the world that they are much wiser and deeper than the rest of us.

These are only some of the chief considerations or changes which give us a very different attitude toward the God-hypothesis than that which it might be natural to adopt fifty years ago. We have reconstructed the history of the world and introduced scientific method into the study of history, and the chief effect has been to discredit every claim of supernatural action in the course of the human struggle. We have reconstructed ethics, and the result is that we have not the least need any longer of a cosmic policeman. We have taken over on human and secular principles the running of this planet, and the result is that at once it has entered upon a really progressive development that promises to make an end of most of its evils. We have constructed a large conception, not merely of man's place on this earth, but of the earth's place in the universe, and, without any premature dogmatism, we already feel that we are part of a mechanical whole which has no relation whatever to cosmic intelligences and super-personalities. Science has conducted God to its frontiers, and it is even beginning to doubt whether it has to thank him for any provisional services.

But I am, as I said, merely indicating chapter-headings here. In my forthcoming work, I will deal thoroughly with the whole question in every aspect. We reject the idea of God as a figment which early priesthoods constructed from the superstitions of the savage, which early philosophers (under religious pressure) turned into an interpretation of the universe, and which science, in revealing the true nature of the universe, has wholly discredited. To substitute for this older idea that of an "impersonal power" is a poetical expression of no practical value to anybody. To say that there are problems which science will never solve and regions of reality which it will never enter is as gratuitous as saying that the mountains of the moon consist of solid platinum. The last ground for serious hesitation has gone. The last reason for a reverential attitude has disappeared. The world as we know it and the process which led up to its present state not only do not imply the idea of God, but exclude it. We are compelled to reject the very idea of God. We are Atheists.

# We Have Found It!

FOR FORTY YEARS, WE HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR JUST SUCH AN OPPORTUNITY AS THIS ONE.

At last the BIG OPPORTUNITY has arrived but we are scarcely able to grasp it securely without a little assistance.

Our Two Hundred Thousand Dollars is hardly enough. We really need Five Hundred Thousand Dollars. How are we to get it? There are many ways to get it.

We could issue bonds or preferred stock which would be just about equivalent to borrowing the money. We could probably manage to pick along and earn our capital as we go; or in other words, start small and gradually grow. There are other ways to raise the additional \$300,000.00.

It was suggested by prominent business men and bankers and by a great many of our friends that we form a company or corporation and offer some stock for sale.

It has been pointed out to us that we have a very remarkable "proposition" to offer to our friends and to the general public, and that if people could be induced to INVESTIGATE carefully, our financing problem would be quickly solved.

But how are we to get people interested enough to Investigate carefully? You say, "why not advertise?" Advertising is all right, but how are people to know whether we are successful men and reliable, or just dreamers, with a case of too much optimism, or else, dishonest or incompetent?

## Have You Any Ideas or Suggestions?

IF YOU HAD ONE OF THE GREATEST OPPORTUNITIES EVER HEARD OF FOR REACHING SUCCESS WITH A BIG S, AND IF YOU WANTED TO INTEREST CAPITAL, HOW WOULD YOU GO ABOUT IT?

We want to put this matter up to you frankly, and get your advice and counsel, and we are anxious to pay a few hundred dollars for a good idea along this line—say \$250 to \$750 for a real good idea or suggestion.

Now, let us explain a few things briefly: This is not the first time opportunity has knocked on our door. Many opportunities have come our way and received a royal welcome by us. But this is, we feel sure, the biggest opportunity that ever came our way.

We are not poor men and we are not young men. We are men of means, and we are men forty, fifty and sixty years old. We know what success is, and we have enjoyed a good measure of success for many, many years.

We are mostly mining men of long experience, twenty and thirty and forty years' experience. We are not poor and needy. We have a lot of property and we are interested in many highly successful mining enterprises, as well as other enterprises.

But like most people, all our worldly wealth is not in actual cash. You may be worth five thousand or ten thousand or twenty thousand dollars, but your earthly possessions may consist mostly of various stocks and bonds and various kinds of property, including real estate, etc., etc. Although you may be in pretty comfortable financial circumstances and worth five thousand to twenty-five thousand dollars or more, yet you may not actually have as much as \$500.00 in real cash on hand.

## A Very Great Opportunity

This is our case exactly: About two hundred thousand dollars is about all the ready cash that we can spare at this time. A few months later, we may be able to turn some of our property into cash, and we may be able to raise as much as three hundred or four hundred thousand dollars among the three of us.

HERE IS, WITHOUT ANY DOUBT IN MY MIND AT ALL, THE SUPREME OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU TO JOIN US ON EXACTLY EQUAL TERMS WITH OURSELVES AND FURNISH SOME OF THIS ADDITIONAL CAPITAL, AND REAP A VERY GREAT HARVEST.

I never was so sure of any future event in all my life, as I am sure that this is a very great opportunity for you. The profits should be out of all proportion to the risk. As far as I can see, there is really no risk worth mentioning, at all, and the profits should be so great within a year or two, or such a matter, as to be almost unbelievable.

I would not like to say how great I think the profits will be within a year or two, or such a matter, for fear that those who do not know me would think I am drawing the "long bow."

## Why Advertise?

Our only object in advertising is to get people to look into this—Investigate it—INVESTIGATE. Surely, if you had known me for thirty years, as others have known me for thirty years, you would know that I am about as excitable as a wooden Indian. You would know that I am not given to exaggeration or over optimism.

However, you don't know me—you don't know any of us. Then what? Why not investigate? Let's get acquainted. I have started several enterprises during the last thirty years. Many people have joined me in these enterprises. As far as I know, these people are all well pleased and they will take stock in this enterprise to the extent of their ability.

Suppose you investigate. This is no petty scheme to get a few people's names and build up a so-called "sucker" list. We have no mailing lists or "sucker" lists. The only way we ever get hold of any man's name in all our lives was by advertising, or through the favorable advertising our friends have given us.

If you write to us, we will write to you, ONCE. And only ONCE. If we never hear from you again, you will never hear from us again. We certainly will not put your name on any mailing list unless you join us by becoming one of our stockholders.

If you become one of our stockholders or send us money to apply on stock, then your name goes on our mailing list, and we will certainly endeavor to keep you well informed, because, when you buy stock, you become a partner in the business and you are entitled to know all there is to know.

## INVESTIGATE!

However, we do not want you to join us until you have investigated very carefully and thoroughly. The best way to investigate is to come out here and investigate in person, right where we have lived a long, long time. If you will investigate thoroughly, you will be amazed, I am sure.

ASK ANY QUESTION, OR ANY NUMBER OF QUESTIONS. THEY WILL BE ANSWERED FRANKLY AND TO THE POINT, AND THERE WILL BE NO "BEATING THE DEVIL AROUND THE BUSH."

The Mayflower Mines Corporation,  
246 Main St.,  
Park City, Utah.

MR. CHAS. MOORE,  
246 Main St., Park City, Utah.

Dear Sir:

I have just read your advertisement in The American Freeman, and I am curious to know what you have to say. I have some money to invest or speculate with, occasionally, in a real, A-number-one proposition. Of course, I want to "be shown," but I have an open mind and I think I am fair minded. It is understood that you have no mailing lists, and that you are only to write to me or send me your booklet, at any time, upon request from me.

Name .....  
Address .....