

## Bunk--"O Lord!" --of History

By E. Haldeman-Julius

John Roach Straton, New York City Baptist preacher, is dead but W. A. Candler, Southern Methodist bishop, still lives. One would not say that Candler is more deservingly distinguished as a bunk-shooter than Straton was, but it is a fact that he is easily and without effort as bad as Straton was at his worst. Like Straton, Candler makes no concessions to reason. He is all bunk, without trying to make foolish things appear sensible. He opens his mouth and foolishness pours forth in undiluted, uninterpreted, unashamed form.

In demonstration of this claim on behalf of Candler are a few statements from an article by him in the Atlanta (Ga.) Journal. The title of the article (*Bethlehem's Babe, the Lord of History*) is alone sufficient to signalize the man as, one might venture to say, a genius born to bunk who, perhaps, even as a child "lisp[ed] in buncombe and the buncombe came." And in his opening paragraph Candler reveals a bold, even though far from a clever, bunkishness that no rival, however idiotically gifted, could hope to excel. Thus yodels the bishop: "The Incarnation, begun by the Advent of Jesus into the world at His birth in Bethlehem and perpetuated by His Resurrection from the dead and Ascension to the right hand of God on high, is the supreme event in human history." No compromise with common sense or the facts of nature or real history, you see—Candler just refers to this supernatural myth (which is, even so, not the *supreme* or not an *original* myth in history) as if it were an incontestably established fact, beyond the reach of suspicion or dispute.

That is excellently rotten bunk, but Bishop Candler enjoys his bunkish facility and uses it freely. He says: "All history is miraculous, whether it be present or past history. The hand of the Invisible and Eternal God is manifest throughout all the pages of it, and amidst it all walks one whose form is like the Son of God." Just how the hand of an invisible God can be manifest, and by what kind of optical magic Candler sees a "form like the Son of God" (both the form and the Son of God being likewise invisible), is an explanation that, of course, a heedlessly self-confident bunk-shooter such as Candler would not condescend to offer. He tells you, and what the hell? Take it deliciously or pass it by curiously. Curiously even so, one might ask why Candler is so uncertain as to speak of this mysterious form as being like the Son of God? Bunk-shooters, at any rate when they have reached Candler's masterful pinnacle, ought to know such things and the more they aren't so the better bunkistically speaking.

One admires, however, the temerity of irrationality, or the stupid courage of unconsidered values, or whatever it may be that prompts Candler to identify the finger of God in all history—in wars, and persecutions, and famines and plagues, and ignorance and persecution, and scheming and rapine, and the bloody attacks by rulers of Church and State upon the slowly emerging principles of civilization—all history is God-inspired, says Candler, which means that Candler's god is one hell of a god. But why worship such a god? Candler could tell, no doubt—he could tell anything, having a grandiloquently free sweep of statements unlimited by truth or sense. Even when he quotes, Candler will quote none but the very worst and wildest bunk-shooters, none save men worthy to be hooted at in the same breath. Thus he quotes a "learned Dr. Philip Schaff" as having said sometime and somewhere:

Jesus of Nazareth, without money and arms, conquered more millions than Alexander, Caesar, Mohammed and Napoleon; without science and learning, He shed more light on things human and divine than all the philosophers and scholars combined; without the eloquence of the school, He spoke words of life such as were never spoken before, nor since, and produced effects which lie beyond the reach of orator or poet; without writing a single line, He has set more pens in motion and furnished themes for more sermons, orations, discussions, works of art, learned volumes, and sweet songs of praise than the whole army of great men of ancient and modern times. Born in the manger and crucified as a malefactor, He now controls the destinies of the civilized world, and rules a spiritual empire which embraces one-third of the inhabitants of the globe.

Some one has said that liars, when they go in for lying, should lie boldly. And bunk-shooters of high and hypodermic degree recognize the tactical appeal of this maxim. This fellow Schaff, like Candler, "shoots the works," as the dicing boys say. The effects of the Christian Church (and the many Christian churches or sects) are uncritically ascribed to this obscure and unidentified Jesus, about whom

not Christians nor any others have agreed with clear positiveness. Jesus is only a figurehead of a myth—from the scheming, hypocritical Paul and from the Church theologians and politicians were derived the Christian doctrines chiefly, and by bloody force and obscene intrigue and treachery and vile hatred of freedom and culture was achieved the power of the Church. To speak of Jesus as a conqueror is to show that there is not even a consistent idea of him—for he is also spoken of as a preacher of humility and the very opposite of conquest. Why not be equally inconsistent and yet equally accurate and say that the name, the influence, or the well-known Christian Church that has used the name and influence so-called of Jesus has been responsible for more vicious bloodshed than all the Alexanders and Caesars and Napoleons put together?

Again, to be specific, upon what feature of human life did Jesus shed any light? The "divine light" has, we know, been a weird confusion of things human—has been darkness rather than light. Philosophers and scholars have had as one of their mainly necessary though unpleasant tasks the clearing away of crude, terrific, anti-human bunk preached in the name of Jesus; while from scholars and scientists we have learned all that we know—a great deal—about the nature of the universe, the origin and meaning of social ideas and institutions, the evolution, the structure, and the functions of life, a vast body of knowledge which Jesus never dreamed of.

As for having set pens and tongues in motion, the overwhelming result has been the most wretched effusion of bunk that ever staggered and corrupted the human mind; and the only intelligent things written about Jesus and Christianity have been written by debunkers, laboring to remove by civilized knowledge and reflection the influence of the Jesus-labeled curse of Christianity. Jesus, we may agree, inspired both Schaff and Candler—and just behold the result!

To say that Jesus "now controls the destinies of the civilized world" is not specific enough. Is Jesus responsible for modern science? Certainly not. Is Jesus responsible for modern culture in any of its sound, civilized aspects? Certainly not. On the other hand—for if our "destinies" are to be judged in a contemporary light, we must include the bad with the good—is Jesus responsible for the armies and navies of the world, for the jails and asylums, for the hate and greed and ignorance that still too conspicuously appear in society? No: Jesus is absolutely unimportant—that is to say, there is no central, positive, influential figure and significance of Jesus that really decides anything—but Christianity, with its bunk and hypocrisy and inconsistency, remains as it has always been an influence contrary to all civilized principles and purposes.

Christianity produces Candler. Civilization stands for everything which the Candler's oppose and cannot understand.

## O Gawd! After a Hundred Years of Thinking!

"New thought" as it spouts forth in dizzy declarations of faith, soulfulness, and psychic wind-and-water is easily recognizable as the old bunk dressed up in a style not so very different after all. Excuse the metaphorical jumble—but how could we help it after reading the flabbergasting item which, like the first shot out of a gun that no one knew was loaded, distinguishes the January issue of the *Nautilus* (Magazine of New Thought)? The item is popped off right before our eyes, prestidigitator-like, by Elizabeth Towne, co-editor of the *Nautilus*. Thus:

John R. Voorhis, Grand Sachem of Tammany, is 100 years old. He says that when he was barely able to talk his mother taught him to say his bedtime prayer, "Now I lay me down to sleep." For nearly 100 years he has been saying it just as his mother taught it to him, but on his 100th birthday Mr. Voorhis added two more lines to his prayer, and he intends to keep on saying it like this:

"Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep;  
If I should die before I wake  
I pray the Lord my soul to take.  
Should I live for other days,  
I pray the Lord to guide my ways."

John Voorhis, by his 100 years' use, and the new lines which he has added, proves that "Now I lay me" is a perfectly good TRUTH TREATMENT for health, happiness, prosperity and longevity. He says he could "never understand why the prayer never took into account the days that were to follow" the night on which the prayer was said. No doubt for all those years he has been adding the sentiment of those two last lines in his subconscious, but it took him 100 years to receive the thought in words that would fit it to the prayer. I commend

his prayer to be the first prayer of every baby. I know of no better one.

Paralyzed, we can only comment with rigid, halting brevity. A hundred years—ten decades—a century of praying, faithing, and thinking (subconscious thinking, very sub too) reaches its rampagous efflorescence in the brilliant lines:

Should I live for other days,  
I pray the Lord to guide my ways.  
No wonder Voorhis has been exalted to such a height as Grand Sachem of Tammany: all New York City Democrats should emulate his effulgent example and pray each night the dear old stereotyped supplication which equally reflects the periods of first and second childhood.

One point is just a bit confusing—if we can suggest comparisons of such a nature where all is so opaque and poor in meaning. We are told that Voorhis "could 'never understand why the prayer never took into account the days that were to follow' the night on which the prayer was said." But Voorhis, living through another day, would repeat the prayer; and sufficient unto the day, it would seem, should be the prayer thereof. If Voorhis didn't live through another day, he would be right smack under the eye of the Lord and such a prayer would no longer be needful, although, truth to tell, it would be just as and no more useless.

Yet it may be that Voorhis has hit upon a neat knee-saving idea for all his brethren in prayer. His prayer, with its additional two lines—two lines, mind you, that are the ripe bunkistic fruit of a full round century of subconscious thinking—need be said only once and then it will go on working its magic endlessly: at least it ought to run equally well with the "wonderful one-hoss shay which ran a hundred years to a day."

## "Protecting" Los Angeles Teachers From New Ideas

School teachers may teach (if they are careful) but they must not learn about the ideas and movements of the modern world—that seems to be the moral of the latest incident of suppression in that city of conglomerated bunk and blablah, Los Angeles. Although Dr. Frederick William Roman, American educator and lecturer, had been announced for an address before the Teachers' Institute in December, 1929, on conditions in England, Germany, Italy and Russia, the lecture was prevented by the influence of the women's branch of the Los Angeles Republican county central committee.

The Republican women appealed to the patriotic fear and horror, so to speak, of the District Congress of Parents and Teachers, and this organization in turn delivered a warning cry to the city board of education. It was said—oh, how awful—that Dr. Roman had "radical tendencies" and that he was "destructive and not constructive," particularly with reference to our American government of, by and for some of the people now and then but always for the politicians (Evidently the ideal is that a critic of the American government, or a critic of anything, should be "constructive" by saying only nice, polite, commendatory things.) The Los Angeles board of education influenced those in charge of the meeting of the Teachers' Institute, and Dr. Roman was asked to forbear shocking and corrupting the teachers by discussing important problems of government and sociology in our moving, changing world (with which, apparently, school teachers are supposed not to move).

The report is that the guardians of goggle-eyed conservatism in Los Angeles felt a special resentment toward what Dr. Roman might say about conditions in Russia.

Bunk thrives in Los Angeles. It is the home of a hectic medley of fantastic cults, which are successful in diverting the minds of thousands from a study of realities—or in so confusing those minds that they cannot distinguish between black and white and are of course hopelessly incapable of distinguishing any aspects of life which require a more critical consideration. And, in political and economic matters, an obstructive conservatism is carefully at work to "protect" minds from anything more revolutionary than a eulogy of southern California's climate.

It is, of course, of main ironical note that school teachers are kept from hearing a discussion of realities that have a vital bearing upon the truth and life of our contemporary world. But perhaps many of these Los Angeles school teachers, having been "protected" from that particular lecture, will be temerarious enough to seek enlightenment elsewhere. After all, curiosity, in its simplest working as a motive, inspires men and women with the desire to know about things—particularly things which they are told they shouldn't know about.

## "Holy" Graft In Zion City

But Voliva—Czar of Holy City—Must Fight Dowie's Widow

The widow of the crack-brained "prophet," John Alexander Dowie, is trying to get back Zion City, Ill.—the holy haven close to the jumping-off place for heaven, founded by her fanatic husband but for some years past under the very business-like control of Wilbur Glenn Voliva. The late Dowie was a dizzily successful bunk-shooter but not so good a bank-roller. Voliva is equally expert as a banker and a bunker.

It is a queer laboratory of human folly, this Zion City; virtually a law unto itself; a town of six-thousand-odd population (very odd indeed) controlled by religious fanaticism—which, however, under the shrewd management of Voliva for Voliva, pays dividends which are decidedly materialistic; a town in which no one can drink, smoke, or dance—in which neither hospitals nor doctors are permitted—in which women cannot have their hair bobbed—in which the bluest of blue laws obtain seven days in the week.

Voliva owns Zion City and is the dictator thereof. In 1928, however, a number of Zion City victims brought suit against Voliva, charging him with a misappropriation of funds amounting to \$10,000,000. That suit is not settled, but Voliva goes boldly on. He is said to be worth more than \$6,000,000; and he profited hugely from the sale of 2,000 acres of "holy land" which skyrocketed in price from \$5 to \$1,000 an acre; this real estate coup was what finally goaded a number of Voliva's "sheep" to rebellion. And now Mrs. Dowie has camped, figuratively speaking, right under Voliva's guns in Zion City and is preaching and calling for a new regime (or perhaps one should say the reestablishment of the old regime) in the name of her "sainted" but not same husband.

As a young man, a quarter of a century ago, Voliva joined the Dowie group of salvationists and quickly proved himself a money-raising artist: crude of course but, dealing with foolish people, very successful. He even journeyed to Australia and preached and collected cash for the Zion City evangelistic adventure. Old Dowie, who went over with a grand slam as a "prophet" and pulpiter of fanaticism, was shaky as a financier; besides, he was getting old; senility conquered all the more readily a mind that never had real defenses of sanity. Voliva was called back from Australia and, under the feeble and nominal leadership of Dowie, was made the deputy general overseer of Zion City. When Dowie died in 1907, with not the sign of a solitary angel to carry him straight up to "glory," Voliva took supreme command.

The poor management under Dowie had confused the affairs of Zion City; those affairs were thrown into court and placed under a receivership; Voliva—for a brief while—was powerless and penniless. He knew his graft, however, and he knew his victims. Preaching and collecting in his best style (he pitched his tent, literally, at the edge of Zion City), he was able within about a year to entrench himself once more financially in Zion City and it was not long before he owned this capital of eccentric holiness and graft. Steadily successful, enlarging his control over the town, at length he bought all that then remained out of his hands for the sum of \$950,000. He overlooked no device to make Zion City pay and pay; for example, he profited considerably by fining all motorists who drove through his city at a speed exceeding fifteen miles an hour.

And Voliva never neglected the bank that had built his fortune and his power. He continued—and continues today—preaching a brand of the most extreme, ridiculous piety and puritanism. One of his specially advertised attractions of bunk is his assertion that the earth is flat, that gravity is not a fact of nature, and that the sun is so close to Zion City that (who can tell!) Voliva may some day own it too. He has a standing offer of \$5,000 for any one who can prove to him that the earth is a sphere: which shows how business-like a bunk-shooter Voliva is: for no one could prove anything to him that he doesn't wish to admit and, apparently, he is under no embarrassing necessity of proving anything to his stupid followers.

Now the widow of poor old Dowie, with a small group hearkening to her words, is trying to outplay Voliva for the huge stake (of holiness or of graft?) in Zion City. The obvious advantage of Voliva is that, while Mrs. Dowie cannot hope to get ahead of him in bunking, he is already far ahead of her in banking.

When it is proved to Bill Bonehead that he is wrong, he will evade the proof by repeating that he was right in the first place.

It is not so unforgivably, so irreparably terrible to be mistaken: for we know that human observation and human reason are fallible. But why give our errors a precious, protected position of sacredness?

When President Hoover forebore to have young Communists picketing the White House thrown into jail, he may have felt that patriotic law-breakers should not be corrupted by association with unpatriotic persons.

A man may be good in the sense that he is not very bad and not very much of anything. Satan, to paraphrase the old saying, allows a negative virtue to idle minds and sluggish, incurious, unadventurous temperaments.

## Swindlers' Delight

Immediately after Christmas even those who had joined for some days in the customary idealistic prattle took another look at reality and reflected that the singing and the stuffing and the selling and the buying of Christmas time, good as far as it went maybe, was yet far less than the sentimentally vaunted significance of this season. The commercialism of Christmas is its chief feature, and obviously is a great deal more important than any Christian emphasis that is laid upon it: the two—commercialism and Christianity—are of course unctuously blended and of the two commercialism, wearily and cynically though one may regard it, is the better. Commercialism does have real advantages, while Christianity has none.

There is a darker side, which is portrayed in the *Better Business Bulletin* of Kansas City, Mo., under the sweetly sharp heading, "Harbingers of Christmas." We quote:

The approach of Christmas brings to us, in addition to useful and beautiful merchandise from every corner of the earth, an epidemic of petty fraud schemes and offers of junk merchandise through street vendors and fraudulent door-to-door peddlers.

In place of desirable merchandise a score of "bait" artists offer alleged expensive perfumes for 19 cents. For precious stones the public is offered a \$5 string of pearls for \$1, providing you "clip the coupon." But those who buy find later the pearls are inferior imitations.

In dark doorways and dim alleys street sharpers and sleight-of-hand swindlers bark their wares—wares which, when exposed to light, become cheap and tawdry. Working from door to door smooth-speaking strangers offer, in a mysterious manner, alleged "smuggled" rugs from the Orient; linens and laces direct from Ireland or Scotland or fur coats obtained at a bargain. Many buy, only to find later that their purchases are but "poor relations" of the real merchandise claimed.

Now the Christian might say that what these swindlers need is the "spirit of Jesus," whatever that is. But doubtless the majority if not all of these swindlers are Christians in the usual manner—i. e., they profess a belief in some part of the hodge-podge of hectic doctrines lumped as Christianity and they act from various practical motives. One doubts strongly that they rise to the mental level of atheism—a noble attitude toward life which is infinitely removed from the intellectual swindle of Christianity and other swindles. Again, the realistic remedy for this swindling is twofold: an improvement of business ethics and a more discriminating (i. e., a more realistic) standard of values by those who now are sadly victimized by every kind of intellectual, sentimental, political, moral and commercial swindle.

Ignorance, lack of discrimination, absence of the critical faculty, a readiness to accept almost any statement as authoritative, whether coming from a peddler of commercial junk or a peddler of religious (and, even so, commercial) bunk—it is this gullible state of mind which, always and everywhere, is the swindlers' delight.

General Jan Smuts, the South African political leader, reminds the world that the projected naval limitations conference in London seems likely to ignore a far more important modern war factor than ships and their guns—namely, armaments of the air. A trifle here and there may be done in limiting the expansion of (not actually reducing) unmoderated or not so important means of warfare; and all the while the means of warfare assume more gigantic, terrifying and unescapable forms. Nothing is worse than air warfare, since it involves whole populations directly in the perils and terrors of such world insanity.

It is a truism that men and women have never been reformed by law; on the contrary, the laws have always had to be reformed as men and women have grown more intelligent and humane.

Idols are for idle minds.

## Yielding to Eddy Bigots

Another striking instance of the Christian Science conspiracy to prevent reading of the Dakin biography of Mary Baker Eddy is reported from Pittsburgh, Pa. The story is told by Samuel Hardin Church, president of the Carnegie Institute of Pittsburgh and editor of *The Carnegie Magazine*. Curiously this confession of yielding in an indefensible measure to the effrontery of freedom-hating Eddyttes is told with an air of independence. Mr. Church told as follows in the November issue of *The Carnegie Magazine* what Christian Scientists in Pittsburgh demanded and, which is of course the more practically important point of the story, what they achieved:

When this book appeared, a group of members of the Christian Science Church called at the Carnegie Library with the request that it be excluded from the collections. Director Munn gave very careful consideration to the matter, but after conference he decided that, while consenting to keep the book out of the Monthly Notes and off the shelves that are open to visitors, his duty to the people of Pittsburgh obliged him to carry it in his circulation department, and since that time it has been one of the most sought-for of all present-day publications. It is not alone in Pittsburgh, but throughout this country, that the officials and publishing committees of the Christian Science Church have resorted to every form of pressure, up to the threat of a boycott, in their feverish efforts to suppress this masterful and illuminating book.

What a contradiction appears in the action taken by the Carnegie Library in Pittsburgh and the language in which Mr. Church reports that absurd, half-hearted compromise with the Christian Science bigots! Speaking in a tone of disapproval and resentment of the "feverish efforts" of the Eddyttes "to suppress this masterful and illuminating book," he yet admits that these efforts succeeded in no small degree in the present instance. He tells of Director Munn's "careful consideration" (of an insistence by bigots which should never have been considered at all) as if this "consideration" and the action which followed were characteristic of a fair, patient attitude of wisdom and justice.

What actually is plain, shamefully plain, is that the Carnegie Library in Pittsburgh connived at the Christian Science conspiracy to smother an important book. What justification was there for suppressing all mention in the Monthly Notes of the library that the Eddy book had been added to the library's collection? What excuse was there for keeping the Eddy book off the open, public shelves where it would be most readily accessible? Does the head of the Carnegie Library in Pittsburgh feel that this library owes no duty to any and all readers who may enter the library and that it owes no duty to the high conception of free literature, open to all that they may read and judge of the truth? And does this library perform its "duty to the people of Pittsburgh" when it suppresses mention of this book, hides this book, in actual fact and effect helps the Christian Science conspiracy to prevent this book from being known and read?

In this Pittsburgh incident we have another significant chapter in this amazing story of bigotry and of cowardly compromise with the bigots.

\*Mrs. Eddy: The Biography of a Virginal Mind By Edwin Pranden Dakin. Charles Scribner's Sons.

## Thanks to Books

BY STEFAN ZWEIF

Translated by Theodore Wesley Koch

There they are, waiting and silent. They neither urge, nor call, nor press their claims. Mutely they are ranged along the wall. They seem to be asleep, yet from each one a name looks at you like an open eye. If you look their way or reach a hand toward them they do not call out, nor are they insistent. They make no demands. They wait until advances are made to them; then for the first time they open up. First, when there is quiet about us, peace within us; then we are ready for them. Some evening on returning from a tiresome round of duties, some day when one is weary of his fellow men, or in the morning when clouded and heavy with dream-laden sleep—only then is one ready for books. You would like to hold a parley and yet be alone. You would like to dream, but in music. With the pleasurable presentment of a pleasant experiment you go to the bookcase: a hundred eyes, a hundred names silently and patiently meet your searching glances as the slave women of a seraglio look to their master, humbly awaiting the call and yet blissful to be chosen. And then, as the finger gropes about on the piano to find the key for a hidden melody, gently it yields to the hand, this dumb white thing, this closed violin—in it all the voices of greatness are locked up. You open up a book, you read a line, a verse; but it does not ring clear at the moment. Disappointed, you put it back almost roughly, until you find the right book for the moment. Then suddenly you are seized, you breathe rapidly and as you carry it away to the lamp, The Book the happily chosen volume glows, dazzles with an inner light. Magic has been done; from delicate clouds of dreams there stalks forth phantasmagoria. Broad vistas open up and your vanishing senses are lost in space.

Somewhere a clock ticks. But it does not penetrate in this self-enclosed time. Here the hours are measured by another unit. There are books which traveled through many centuries before their word came to our lips; there are new books, just born yesterday, just yesterday begotten out of the confusion and necessity of a beardless boy, but they speak magic languages and one like the other soothes and quickens our breathing. While they excite they also comfort; while they seduce they also soothe the open mind. Gradually you sink down into them; there come repose, vision and a calm suspense in their melody in a world beyond this world.

You leisure hours, carrying us away from the tumult of the day; you books, truest and most silent companions, how can we thank you

for your ever present readiness, for this eternal lifting, elevating influence of your presence! What have you not been in the darkest days of the soul's solitude, in military hospitals and army camps, in prisons and on beds of pain! You who have always been on the watch, have given dreams to men and a bit of tranquility in moments of unrest and torture.

Little fragments of eternity, quietly ranged along the plain wall, you stand there unpretentiously in our home. Yet when the hand frees you, when the heart touches you, you break through the everyday prosy surroundings; your words lead us as in a fiery chariot up from pettiness into the eternal.

It is easy to go through life without thinking—without really thinking. So many people do this and get along, it seems, fairly well. But how uninteresting is such a life to the man who has found the charm, the strength, and the brilliant, life-increasing intensity of thought! He who lives without thought has only one limited, commonplace life. He who develops thought in his life is the richer by living, as it were, many lives in one expanded, imaginative, reflective life.

"To hesitate to be lost"—that is sometimes true when action is required, though it is not always true, and it depends of course upon the immediacy of the need for action. But in thought it is the part of wisdom to hesitate, as it were—to weigh and consider, to doubt carefully, to seek for all the light that can be thrown upon an idea: to make up one's mind, as it is said, only when one is sure that one has the materials for a wise decision.

Is the free thinker a man without standards? That is a stupid assumption. The fact that he is a thinker signifies that he has standards. The difference between him and the average man is that the free thinker has standards that are wisely and realistically thought out for himself; he does not accept ready-made standards which other people try to force upon him.

Paradox: Some women think that a man should be jealous in order to prove his love. Some men think that a woman should be jealous in order to prove her love. So the proof of love, thus regarded, is uncertainty.

The best way to love your neighbor as yourself is to let your neighbor live as seems pleasing and intelligent to him.

To err is human and to damn men for their errors is—theologically speaking—divine.



## Around the Table

Chats Among the Editor and His Readers

By E. Haldeman-Julius

### WHERE GOD STILL HAS WHISKERS

Now comes most impressively a report from the holy southland of our United States, where God is still worshipped as a large, stern man with whiskers. The old bunk is still strongly in evidence, both orthodoxically and odoriferously, among the unenlightened hills and dales of Dixie. My own reading and observation confirms the report of W. G. Hylton (Roanoke, Va.) that the crudest theology still has a large following of urgent, uncritical believers. If I gave a contrary impression in the article to which Mr. Hylton refers, I am properly penitent—but the context was, I think, clear enough and the phrase which Mr. Hylton calls in question was a parenthetical phrase. I try always to be careful in recognizing with due proportion the advancement of culture and liberalism in our modern age and the existence, even so, of religion as a seriously evil influence which we must still fight with intelligent insistence. Now one, now the other, viewpoint is rather more specially emphasized; but there is an important body of truth in both viewpoints; and it would be a serious misunderstanding to neglect either viewpoint. As a reminder and as an aid to a balanced realistic view, Mr. Hylton's letter is very useful. He writes:

I find it necessary to take issue with you in your initial article introducing "Around the Table" corner, in the American Freeman of December 7, and to offer a criticism intended to be constructive. You state under the sub-heading, "Plain Speaking and Catholicism":

"...if religion in its guise of formal and absolute theology is nearly dead if not altogether dead..." (Readers will recall the connection and the context.)

Now, I presume that by "formal and absolute theology" you mean the orthodox or fundamentalist brand of old-fashioned, standpat religion with its dogmas, its intolerance, its miracle worship and its superstitions, and that belief in and practice of such a religion have about passed in this country.

Don't ever think it! I am surprised that a man of your intelligence and achievements should entertain such a notion. It is just possible that your attitude toward orthodoxy is the result of your enviable environment. You live

among and your contacts, doubtless, are with highly intelligent, cultured, broad-minded, rational, free people; and the nature of your work is such as would naturally emphasize an optimistic outlook. I fear you have allowed this to foist upon you a false sense of security and lull you into the pleasant delusion that your old enemy has passed to its reward, if any. There is certainly another side to the picture, seen clearly by at least a few average citizens who perform, must live their lives in the atmosphere of this "formal and absolute theology."

Leave your business in the hands of your brilliant wife and capable assistants for a year and come South, in the guise of a mineral prospector or a (patent) medicine man, and study the people and their social and religious institutions, beliefs, practices, etc., first hand (as you could so well do) and you would learn more than you and your wife did at the trial of the Rev. Norris. You would find that orthodox religion is not dead in the South, not even in its cities; and of course there is no question about the back-country districts, where a modernist would be looked upon with holy scorn and where an atheist would find it necessary to invoke the protection of the game laws. Then you would fully realize how difficult it is for the average man to reach and maintain an intelligently skeptical position in fundamentalist society, and what sensible publications, like yours, mean to him. Seriously, it would be worth while.

I have seen the wealthy and cultured congregation of one of the largest downtown churches in my city, reverently kneeling and praying for rain, at a special service, in a recent parching summer. Here the Holy Rollers still roll, go into holy jerks and blubber in unknown tongues. Predestinarians rave rampant throughout the countryside, bawling their "election" to the echo of the hills. Methodists still fall from grace to rise again, Baptists are just as strong on immersion and close communion, and all of them fiercely defend their Hell while the lurid fires of the same shoot in flaming flashes from their eyes. Civil restraints alone hold them within bounds.

"Absolute theology" frequently rears its ugly head in places of power and authority. Witness the spectacle of a Superior Court of

North Carolina refusing to allow witnesses to testify in a criminal proceeding because, forsooth, they did not believe in the Jewish Jehovah. I might multiply such instances, but it is not necessary. Assuredly, you know about them. Let a miracle-worker, like the recent "Brother Isaiah" or an abusive maniac like Billy Sunday come to town and the mob will trample each other under foot to see and hear them. Such are surface indications of a deep-rooted orthodox religious public opinion and attitude of life held by the vast majority of people. And they will remain substantially the same for a long time to come. Orthodoxy will be flourishing in this country long after the eloquent protests of the ablest contemporary rationalists have been forgotten except by the intellectual few.

It is true that "absolute theology" as a ruling force has been largely pushed off the stage in most sections of this country for the present, in favor of a newer passing show; but even now it rages in the wings and gathers force while biding its time. Wait until a wave of reaction against science and evolution takes form, and there are signs that it is even now beginning, and intolerant, dogmatic orthodoxy will rise up in the land and take its place of leadership at the head of the advance. Then modern materialism will soon learn whether it is dead or not.

I know that it is well, in work like yours, to set a high standard of ideals and not talk down to the people, but I fear you are too far ahead of the times to reach many who ought to be, and who might be, reached by a less advanced policy. It is a serious mistake to assume that a large percent of the people of this country are atheists, or even skeptics. Few people ever reach a rationalist outlook on life except by reading and serious study of the best in literature, as a basis for their own personal reasoning and philosophy of life; even then it presupposes more than average intelligence and courage. Outside of college life and the intelligentsia such serious mental effort is negligible. My guess is that it is less than five percent of the adult population. Mingling with the mass of common people in their work, their society and their play, it is easy to get the superficial notion that religion means little to them. But touch them on the subject of dogma, the existence of Heaven and Hell, the virgin birth, the necessity of salvation, etc., and they are almost unanimous in their orthodoxy. This is true whether they belong to the church or not. In fact, it is hard to distinguish church and non-church people in everyday life. However effectively they may lay their religion away with their Sunday

clothes, they are as sound on doctrine as the grey-beards in the amen corner. Neither do their children have a chance to become liberals. They are fed on the same old superstitions at home, at day school, at Sunday school, and at church which usually gets them by adolescence. Also, among leaders in business and politics and among the highly educated, many hold strikingly similar views at heart, though they would possibly be ashamed to admit it outside of a meeting of the board of deacons. They conveniently forget their religion in business deals and in taking the maximum profits in trade, but they stand four-square on the faith of the fathers and promptly get hot at the mere mention of a rational idea.

While pursuing your splendid policy of the spread of genuine cultural knowledge and the popularization of the best in the world's literature, keep these things in mind that you may the more effectively combat them.

I am sure that we can accept every word of Mr. Hylton's letter as true, insofar as he describes the actual state of belief in the South. He knows his Dixie Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Holy Rollers and the like. For that matter, these liberal believers, who, one may say with grave truth, are intellectually outside the range of civilization, are not confined to the South. They are more strikingly numerous, more active and vociferous, more quickly and dangerously responsive to the fiery appeals of fanaticism in the South. In the Middle West, for example, although this part of the country is very religious in its way, we do not observe such crude, such threatening, such loud-yelling and obstreperous fanaticism as there is in the South. In the Middle West religion is mainly obnoxious as the inspiration, so to speak, or the justification of a narrow, confused attitude on social and moral questions. And of course the worst of religion anywhere, even in the South, is that it interferes or always threatens to interfere (is, indeed, by its very existence a potential interference) with sane, free, advanced living. I think I made this pretty clear—though, it seems, not clear enough after all—in the article which brought forward this fortunate, clarifying discussion. I shall quote fully the relevant paragraphs in my article in The American Freeman of December 7:

I do not think we or our children will see "a bloody religious war." Both Protestantism and Catholicism—all religion—will be defeated finally and completely by the progress of civilization. There will indeed be serious controversies in which we must bear our part; if religion in its guise of formal and absolute theology is nearly dead if not altogether dead, religion as an interference with and confusion of the social, political, personal, behavioristic issues of life is still a force, expressing itself in more than one way and not always openly, against which our libertarian vigilance is required. Our children—or perhaps our grandchildren—may see the struggle ended and religion merely a strange congeries of aberrations to be read about in history. That day is not yet.

When one speaks of one's conviction that modernism will go on to a final and complete triumph over every department of human life—when one expresses an optimistic evolutionary belief with regard to the future—and is assuming that those who believe profoundly in freedom and culture will continue to be active as the necessary human agents of social evolution. When we trace the evolution of liberal ideas in the past, we see how necessary to that progress was the labor of free thinkers and groups that were dedicated to liberty. Even so, our attitude today—our very interested and articulate attitude—must needs keep moving, as it were, the movement of modernism. We must live our thoughts. We must utter the words of truth and freedom unceasingly.

It seems to me that was written in a true spirit of fair, careful judgment and warning. We cannot, for example, treat slightly the progress which has been made toward a freer life. That progress is great and important. Religion is not as strong and successful, either as a body of doctrines or as a dictator of men's behavior, as it was fifty years ago. Intellectually, in its main, significant culture and in its scientific methods, in its free discussion of all things and in its bold, investigating, constructive attitude toward life, our modern civilization is not dominated by religion. Yet religion remains as a confusing influence; as an influence which, in various shapes of fundamentalism and middleboredness and modernism, is unfriendly to and even seriously hostile to the ideals of our modern civilization; as an influence which, in short, we must not disregard but must oppose consistently.

We live in a changing world of curious contrasts, compromises, doubts and sophistry, half-measures of enlightenment, dubious efforts to save something of the old bunk while accepting something of the new truth. There is every shade of religious belief or so-called religious feeling, from the intransigent "oldtime" religion, deep-dyed in doctrine, to the sentimental attitude of clinging to the name of religion while actually discarding every belief that can be called, with any glimmer of meaning, religious.

What is needed, obviously, is greater clearness. And for this reason I do not think The American Freeman and the other Haldeman-Julius publications uphold a too "high standard of ideals." I should rather say that we maintain a necessary, careful standard of realities. And it is a valuable contribution of realism which Mr. Hylton makes in his letter. We are rightly encouraged by the propaganda and the possibilities of free thought in our age; but we commit the worst of blunders—we most invidiously betray the hopes of civilization—when we lapse into indifference. I am sure that all readers of The American Freeman will thank Mr. Hylton for his timely reminder of the very real, very insistent evils of religion in the present day.

### A HAPPY ACCIDENT

Accidents, a philosopher might say, make us what we are: the natural chancefulness of man's life—the unforeseen, unplanned grouping of circumstances—much happiness, much unhappiness; much adventure, much growth, all at one time or another turn upon impressively hidden cards in the game of life. One comes, accidentally, under the influence of an individual or a group; and that influence may be narrowing or broadening, cheapening or refining; it may be a sudden, clearly welcomed influence or a subtle one. Books, ideas, events have their accidental side (i. e., there is no certain planfulness nor purpose that they shall affect certain individuals in this way or that), and, indeed, from birth to death we are profoundly affected by things which seem little but which are bigger than we think.

This dash of philosophy is inspired, so to speak, by a letter from Monte J. Adams, a young man of Forest Park, Ill., who was the beneficiary of a happy accident—such a simple accident, too—he found a book that another man had read and left on a train seat. Mr. Adams tells his story briefly:

I have just recently become acquainted with your great movement of enlightenment through an accident while riding on the elevated train yesterday. A gentleman got off the train and left a copy of your *Free Speech and Free Thought in America* [Big Blue Book No. B-37] on his seat. I picked it up out of idle curiosity and after reading the first chapter could not restrain myself from completing the book before I did another thing.

Now Mr. Adams says he is eager to read other Haldeman-Julius publications. He has suddenly, and as it were accidentally, been gripped by a new interest in life—an interest than which none is finer, that

of self-culture and of thoughtful, developing curiosity about life. One envies him the thrill of beginning his intellectual adventure. And I am glad that it was a book of mine which served as the happy accident in his case. For what is better than to stimulate the minds of one's fellows? To point out new roads? To bring new light and real light? Not to think for them indeed—but to start them thinking more surely, more eagerly, more hopefully for themselves. I sincerely trust that young Adams will take no man's thought uncritically, no matter how right or how impressive it may seem. Thought must be made one's own and one must be sure of it intimately, with genuine self-conviction, in one's own mind.

I confess to a slight curiosity about the gentleman who left the book in the train. Perhaps he thought it was an awfully bad book and wondered "why such things are printed." Maybe the book was so successful in making him think that he forgot the book and carried away simply the ideas it contained or, more importantly to himself, the ideas which it set to spinning in his own mind. Or he may have left the book behind him from a nice impulse of fellow-feeling, hoping that another would read it—on which last assumption, Mr. Adams' discovery was only half an accident, but not the less happy.

### AND SIMILARLY IDAHO

From Idaho comes the news of another happy accident, and such a letter as gives me a very warm, friendly appetite for lunch (a sordid reference which is excused, dear readers, by the imminence of the lunch hour). It is Dr. Owen T. Stratton (Salmon, Idaho) who writes as follows:

I have just finished reading (for the third time) *The Story of Religious Controversy* by McCabe and I am impelled to express my opinion that it is the most remarkable book that I have ever read. I will say further that while I have reached the chloroform age and there is no possibility of either occurring, I would rather possess the ability to write a book like that than be President of the United States. It was a mere accident that I purchased the book and it strikes me that an intensive advertising campaign should make it one of the best sellers. At least my judgment is that most of the best sellers are merely piffle in comparison.

Moral: It is never too late to make the acquaintance of a great book.

UPTON SINCLAIR—A TIRELESS WORKER  
I lift my hat in admiration to the tireless and brilliant literary labors of Upton Sinclair. His novel, *Oil!* was a tremendous achievement. His novel, *Boston*, was a significant and challenging work. Both those novels were, on the whole, artistic triumphs too. I suppose I could never agree entirely with Upton on questions of art; but I recognize, certainly, that he is an artist and that he is a very important one. Now comes a note from this tireless worker, telling of his latest novel, written but not yet published. Friend Upton writes me:

I suppose I don't need to tell you that I am always interested in your reaction to my work. I have no complete proofs of the telepathy book as yet, because there are about three hundred illustrations which it has taken a long time to get into place correctly. But I have a set of proofs of my new novel, *Mountain City*, which deals with Denver, and big business and the stock market, and I would love to know what you think of it if conceivably you have the time and the interest. Don't hesitate to say no if you are too busy.

Upton knows Denver and its industrial, financial background. An earlier novel, *King Coal*, is a story and a study of the Colorado mining industry. *Mountain City* should be very good and of course I shall watch for it with special interest.

### Education—Real and Ideal

Thomas Huxley in *A Liberal Education* (*Little Blue Book No. 7*). That man, I think, has had a liberal education who has been so trained in youth that his body is the ready servant of his will, and does with ease and pleasure all the work that, as a mechanism, it is capable of; whose intellect is a clear, cold, logic engine, with all its parts of equal strength, and in smooth working order; ready, like a steam engine, to be turned to any kind of work, and spin the gossamers as well as force the anchors of the mind; whose mind is stored with a knowledge of the great and fundamental truths of nature and of the laws of her operations; one who, no stunted ascetic, is full of life and fire, but whose passions are trained to come to heel by a vigorous will, the servant of a tender conscience; who has learned to love all beauty, whether of nature or of art, to hate all villainy, and to respect others as himself.

Always remember that in great books great men speak greatly about life.

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## The Twilight of Christianity

[Below we conclude Mr. Dietrich's summary of Harry Elmer Barnes' sweeping attack upon Christianity. It is a very able exposition, spirited and fine, of the case against Christianity and, as thoroughgoing realists we should add, the case against religion entire. On one point both Mr. Barnes and Mr. Dietrich still cling to tradition, when they insist that there must be a "religion" of the future. This is regarded by The American Freeman as an unnecessary confusion, a sign of incomplete freedom from the emotionalism of religion. We therefore discuss this point specially in an editorial which follows this second and last installment of Mr. Dietrich's "sermon" against the sermonizers.]

By John H. Dietrich

In the next chapter entitled "Blasting at the Rock of Ages," the author shows how this whole scheme is demolished by the proven facts of science. Astronomy has given us an altogether different picture of the physical universe, reducing the earth from its place of importance to one of insignificance, and showing that instead of being divinely created as a home for man it originated billions of years ago probably as the result of a trivial cosmic accident. Geology has presented us with a scientific conception of the evolution of earth's structure entirely out of line with the Christian conception. Biology has elucidated the principles of evolution and traces for us the development of organic life, thus upsetting the doctrine of perfect creation of living matter. Physiology and chemistry have made clear the enormous complexity of the processes of life, out of line with the simple theological interpretation. Physics has destroyed the old theory of causation and upset entirely the old idea of God based on causality, law, and order. Psychology has provided a naturalistic explanation of human behavior and completely discredits the hypothesis of a soul and arbitrary free will. Anthropology has traced the evolution of human types and cultures in contradiction to the orthodox theory of their development. History has given us a secularized story of the growth of religious systems and beliefs, destroying the hypothesis of divine revelation or the unique validity of religion. The social sciences have indicated the nature and development of morality and institutions, thus providing a realistic secular explanation of what had been assigned to supernatural investigation. Finally, critical scholarship has discredited forever the orthodox view of the Bible as the inspired word of God.

It is a fascinating story that we read in this chapter, as the author unfolds the staggering conceptions of the universe and of human life revealed by the various branches of modern science; and not only does the orthodox view melt away like an iceberg in a tropical sea, but it becomes preposterous and childish, and one wonders how any man acquainted with these facts and in his right senses can continue to accept it. Not only does the author show conclusively that the modern picture of the universe wipes out the biblical notions of God, but he points out how difficult it is to form any conception of God at all; and how useless it is, because the real problem of man is not to adjust himself to the cosmos—a meaningless proposition—but rather to adjust himself to his physical environment, material culture, and his fellow men. This chapter is particularly interesting in its treatment of morality. Having this new conception of man as a highly developed animal, living temporarily upon an insignificant planet, the whole idea of morality changes. The type of behavior and institutions best suited to advance the happiness of such a creature are entirely different from those designed to help a specially created angel who had fallen and needed to be redeemed that he might again claim his sonship to God. Guidance to the achievement of the good life must be sought in the sciences of nature and of man and not in supernatural revelation or theological dogmas. If we would know what is good for physical man we must turn, not to the Bible, but to physiology and biology, which indicate the processes and requirements of his physical nature. We must study psychology and psychiatry to comprehend the processes involved in man's behavior. The social sciences must be appealed to in order to understand the nature of the social institutions that condition the individual behavior. And so on and so on. There is practically no end to the new and inspiring conceptions, suggested in this chapter. It goes on to deal with the soul and free will and sin and spiritual life and death.

I pass the next chapter hastily because it deals with the conflict between science and religion, with which you are all more or less familiar. It is a fine analysis of the controversy and shows that many religious liberals, who accept the outstanding discoveries of the physical and biological sciences maintain an attitude toward religion which is as incompatible with the social sciences as the theology of the Fundamentalists. It is here that he makes a distinction between Devout Modernists and Advanced Modernists. Among the former he classes the liberal orthodox such as William

Adams Brown, Henry N. Wieman, and Harry Emerson Fosdick and among the latter the Unitarian Humanists and some advanced Jewish Rabbis. The former are still trying to read scientific meanings into the theological formulas, while the latter have accepted the scientific point of view. He says that your minister teaches a conception of religion which no reasonable scientist could criticize, and quotes several pages to prove this statement.

The next chapter has to do with what he calls the "Jesus Stereotype." He says the Jesus question is by all odds the most important phase of modern religious controversy, because Christianity stands or falls on the uniqueness of Jesus as a religious teacher, to which all except a few of the advanced Unitarian Humanists cling as tenaciously as any Fundamentalist. He treats this subject from two important angles. First he deals with the historicity of Jesus, showing how the actual knowledge which we possess about Jesus is practically nil, and that all the lives of Jesus from Renan down to Bruce Barton are but products of the imagination, idealized portraits, unconscious portrayals of the personality and aspirations of the authors rather than of the character of Jesus. Next he deals with the ministry of Jesus in modern perspective, showing quite conclusively the inadequacy of his ethics for this modern time. How could this young Jewish peasant living in a remote corner of the world in primitive times comprehend and give rules of conduct for this complex industrial civilization of the twentieth century? After examining candidly the actual teachings of Jesus, insofar as we know them, he concludes that they are not only archaic, but even destructive of any advanced civilization. How then is it possible that so many comparatively advanced thinkers still cling to the uniqueness of Jesus' person and the authority of his teaching? He explains it by what Walter Lipmann calls "stereotype thinking." In this connection the word "stereotype" means a mental image of a person or thing which we substitute for the reality. We are told about a person or thing before we see it; and those preconceptions govern deeply our whole process of thinking. We retain this stereotype unless we are forced by some unusual circumstance to abandon the old imagery and approach the matter in a direct and realistic manner, thus making our view of it approximate the actuality. Now most of our thinking is done in terms of these stereotypes, and this is especially true of religious thinkers in relation to Jesus. These men have a mental image of Jesus which was deeply impressed upon them in their childhood, and all their thinking in regard to him is controlled by this image rather than by the facts. He gives many illustrations from the teachings of these Devout Modernists, as for instance, in regard to Kirby Page, an outstanding opponent of war and militarism. Perhaps no one knows more about the problems of peace than Mr. Page, or has done more work in its promotion; and yet Mr. Page founds his pacifist program on the alleged teachings of Jesus, which in this field are unusually fragmentary and contradictory. If Mr. Page were able to divest himself of the Jesus stereotype, he would realize that he himself and dozens of others can offer more reliable information on questions of war and peace in one hour than the most industrious student could discover in the entire Bible. And thus does our author seek to break through the Jesus stereotype to the actual person, if there was such a person, and recognize the meagerness and the unauthoritativeness of the knowledge we have about him and his teachings. And here, as I have frequently shown you, with the destruction of the uniqueness of Jesus' teaching, comes the end of Christianity.

Well, what would Prof. Barnes put in its place? He answers this question in the final chapter called "Religion in a Secular Age." Many scientists hold that in the future there will be no need of religion, that science will be able to supply all the insight and controls essential to human beings. That may be true, but the writer concedes that a secularized social religion like Unitarian Humanism may be of great value in the future in organizing group sentiment in support of decent and just causes. He believes that man's emotions as well as his intellect should be used in the service of social control, and religion is better adapted to performing this function than science. The main thing to emphasize, however, is that the new religion will not itself attempt to supply the information and guidance essential to human happiness, but will derive this knowledge from the best science and aesthetics of the age. He then tells us what religion must abandon if it would command the respect and enlist the interests of those who actually live, intellectually speaking, in the twentieth century. He enumerates a number of things such as the idea of God, the uniqueness of Jesus, considerations of the infinite and the absolute, all idealistic philosophies which attempt to establish truths and values independent of human factors and situations, all assumptions of a supernatural world beyond the scope and methods of

science; and the outstanding "theological fossils" such as the conceptions of the soul, immortality, sin, the spirit world, prayer, and the sense of sanctity and the sacred. He speaks also of the many functions which the church and the ministry must surrender to more potent agencies. He does not attempt to lay down in detail the essentials of a practicable religion, because his task has been to clear the ground so that a rational and serviceable religion can be formulated and applied. Here I must quote what should be of interest to you: "If anyone is, however, seriously interested in the opinions of the writer in this field, he would say that he believes that Unitarian Humanism will serve admirably as the basis for the religion of the future. In expressing himself in this manner the writer must disclaim any intention whatever of serving as a propagandist for the specific religious development which has been the outgrowth of the activities of Dr. Dietrich and others who share these same views. It simply appears to the writer to be beyond all comparison, the most sincere, intelligent, consistent, and promising effort thus far achieved in the way of harmonizing an earnest religious impulse with the outstanding facts and attitudes produced by modern knowledge." Then he reproduces the essential principles of Humanism as set forth in one of my published addresses, with which, of course, you are all familiar.

### III

I am very interested to see how the defendants of Christianity will answer this book. Of course, only the more ignorant and daring will have the courage to reply. The intelligent clergy know that Professor Barnes has all the facts on his side. And we can anticipate the replies by the recent attempts of certain ministers to meet the author in public debates. Their defense, of course, has been the age-long cry that the book is purely destructive. If Professor Barnes would destroy religion, what will he put in its place, as if when a man told you that a certain coin which you possess was counterfeit he was obliged to give you a good coin in its place. He has no right, says a minister, to dismiss Christianity with an ironic gesture. But Professor Barnes does put something in its place. He suggests that we all get acquainted with Humanism which meets man's religious needs as well as satisfies his intelligence. Another says that Professor Barnes may have a clear intellect, but he is lacking in emotion, and because of this lack treats what is real and sacred to others as illusion; and that "what we need is not to do away with our present conception of God and religion, but to experience them more fully; and this experience cannot come through intellectual analysis of the God-idea, but rather through an active, wholehearted, self-sacrificing cooperation with Him in carrying out his purposes in the world." But, let me ask, how can we cooperate in carrying out His purposes unless we know what those purposes are; and who in this expanded universe and maze of human life has the temerity to pronounce what God's purposes are? Still another suggests that the author has attempted to sharpen his intellect in order to quiet his conscience, that his defense of birth control, his desire for freer divorce, his abolition of sin, and his real objection to the Christian God are not scientific at all, but principally moral. What he really wants is an easy-going God who will not care whether a man commits moral and spiritual suicide by choosing the lower life of self-indulgence when he ought to prefer the higher life of fellowship with the creator. Need I say that none of these touch the validity of the author's arguments? They are merely rationalizations and defense mechanisms manufactured to confuse the issue. To my mind the author's position is invulnerable and his arguments unanswerable.

At the end let me say that Professor Barnes is not opposed to religion. He makes this perfectly plain. He is opposed only to a religion that is built upon the insecure foundation of scientific and historical error. He believes that if humanity and civilization are to be served, we must have collaboration between science and a dynamic religion. He says we shall certainly require some form of social control beyond the appeal to pure intelligence. Many people are more sensitive to esthetic considerations than to matters of cold fact. So he advocates a religion which can appeal to human emotions and enlist them in support of all human values. But such a religion must obtain its factual guidance from science—natural and social; and it would aid science in the application of such facts. In short, the new religion, if sound and practicable, must rest upon a thoroughly secular basis, must secure its facts from science, and must conceive its ideals in terms of the enrichment of life here and now.

Religion must abandon its hopeless efforts to adapt ancient categories and concepts to new knowledge of entirely different nature and meaning. Rather it must base its reconstruction upon the facts of the cosmos, of the world, and of man as we now know them, and then determine what valid religious concepts and practices can be worked out in harmony with the new knowledge and perspective. In short, the

future of religion depends upon making it harmonize with reality. There can be no good religion based upon bad—that is, unreliable or misleading—foundations. For this reason it behooves all honest and informed friends of religion to construct the framework of their religion upon a tenable substructure. The author believes that this cannot be effectively done by gradually surrendering one thing after another, deserting one sinking craft for another that is floundering also; but to go the whole way in an honest, logical, and courageous fashion and then calmly and intelligently see just what can be done about it when religion plants its feet solidly upon the rock of historical and scientific facts. If religion cannot be saved by squaring it with truth, then indeed its future is precarious.

In surveying the whole field of religion and its attempted reconstruction, it is Professor Barnes' opinion that the best and most successful attempt at this thoroughgoing reconstruction is being made by the Unitarian Humanists, and that the most effective of these in organized form is to be found in Minneapolis. May we so continue our work as to fulfill the prophecy and hopes of the author.

### Who Needs Religion? And What Religion?

One point in Mr. John H. Dietrich's address on Mr. Harry Elmer Barnes' *The Twilight of Christianity* we cannot pass by without a word of corrective rationalism; namely, the statement that men—presumably, average men and, indeed, presumably men who are rather weak in character and not free, not clear in mind—need religion; further, the statement that there must and will be a scientific religion of the future, which in this instance is identified by both Mr. Dietrich and Mr. Barnes as the sum of ideas preached by the former in his First Unitarian Society in Minneapolis. Mr. Barnes has thrown overboard the impedimenta of orthodox religion, but it is an obvious sign of his incomplete emancipation that he clings fondly to the term "religion." Emotionally, it seems that Mr. Barnes still has a tenderness toward religion as a name, toward some sentimentalism which seems to him associated with that name, although he has certainly denied the validity and the importance of every idea that has been advocated by religion. This is one explanation of Mr. Barnes' retention of "religion" as a term to signalize his philosophy of life. It is so often true of persons who find it intellectually impossible to retain the ideas of religion, yet who imagine there is something more appealing, something more dignified, or something more beautiful in the most unreligious, realistic philosophy of life when it is called "religion."

But Mr. Barnes, as Mr. Dietrich says (and as he implicitly approves), is convinced that men in general need a religion—or need the name and psychological influence of religion—to inspire them to right conduct and hold them closely to morality and a social conscience. Let us analyze this argument. Neither Mr. Barnes nor Mr. Dietrich, we may safely assume, needs any encouragement of this kind; nor, we may also assume, do the members of Unitarian or humanist groups who have discarded all the ideas of religion—who retain only the name of religion and who believe in a human idealism which has no essential relation to religion—need to be kept morally or emotionally or anyhow inspired by the terminology of a "religion" minus all religious features. Surely Mr. Barnes, Mr. Dietrich and all who are really free-thinkers, persons who have broken away from all that is definitely, historically, and ideologically to be called religion, are in character and intellect advanced enough to say with candid clarity, undisimayed and unconfused: "We recognize no need of a new religion. We are beyond all religion—i. e., beyond all ideas of worshipping a god or believing in spirits or trying to explain life in 'spiritual,' supernatural terms. We are simply humanists, realists, modern men and women with a philosophy of life that belongs to this earth and that concerns itself with man's relations, not with any gods." In other words, anyone who is sufficiently intelligent to discard all the ideas of religion is, or should be, sufficiently strong and sensible to let the name of "religion" and all its sentimental (and, for the average man, confusing) connotations go with the rest.

Who, then, need religion? For whose moral benefit does Mr. Barnes propose to retain the name while discarding the thing itself? Well, it seems the only possible conclusion that he is thinking of precisely the kind of men and women who are not prepared intellectually to accept Mr. Barnes' absolutely non-religious definition of "religion." To the average hosts of earth, whom Mr. Barnes seems solicitously to regard in retaining the name of "religion," this very name of religion means certain beliefs and a certain attitude toward life which Mr. Barnes does not mean. Popularly, religion is taken as a belief in and worship of gods and as a belief in spirits (in the "soul" of man particularly) and in a future life. If this is not popularly believed, then religion becomes unimportant in any way. That is to say, if the "religion of the

future" which Mr. Barnes and Mr. Dietrich propose and predict should become popular, it would logically remove any plea of use or necessity in retaining the terminology or the sentimentalism of religion. Mr. Barnes' argument is poor reasoning, because when men advance to the point he establishes as the ideal "religion" minus religion they cannot, even by sophistry, be represented as needing moral support from the name "religion" but they are indeed capable of facing life clearly as humanist philosophers—of thinking in terms of a philosophy of life rather than in terms of a religion. The masses who still believe more or less (and confusedly and changingly, we may add) in religion conceive it in no such meaningless guise of word-sentimentality as Mr. Barnes does and as he would have them do. If Mr. Barnes wants to help these masses with any kind of religion, he will have to advocate for them a religion of bunk, of sophistry, of uncandid, unclear thinking or feeling about life. If these masses want or need religion, then it is not a "scientific religion." When they are fully prepared to recognize the realities of life and to be scientific in their outlook, they will be beyond all religion—and that, as we are convinced, is indeed to be the future without religion. Mr. Barnes' dilemma of contradictory logic is that if the masses need religion, they do not need and will not have the dereligionized "religion" that he offers them; and that, on the other hand, if they are intellectually at the level of his dereligionized "religion" they simply have no religion and the name of "religion" is meaningless.

In emphasizing the need of religion in maintaining moral values, or inspiring morality and a social conscience, Mr. Barnes is effectually (however unintentionally) supporting the old argument of the preachers whose orthodoxy he condemns. These preachers have tiresomely dinned into our ears the unscientific statement that religion is the support and the inspiration of morality—and Mr. Barnes knows enough, surely, about history and science to see through this hoary fallacy. Secular social progress—the development of education, of materialism (a full, active, solidly and closely interrelated life), of science—in short, the development of a humanism consisting of better material conditions, better social organization, and better intellectual outlook—has plainly been responsible for the improvement of men's manners and morals. Far from inspiring men to be moral or to have a social conscience, religion has been directly

responsible for some of the most ghastly immoralities, some of the most deadly anti-social manifestations, while at its best (which is bad enough) it has only confused men's ideas and behavior.

It is a queer slant of sophistry—and a queer yielding to sentimentalism—that discards everything of religion but the name yet holds earnestly to this name out of which all content of tradition and meaning has been emptied. To speak of the religion of the future or a scientific religion is to us as absurdly incongruous—and, indeed, as unjustifiable a trifling with true terms and realities—as it would be to speak of the scientific witchcraft of the future or the scientific astrology of the future or the scientific spiritualism of the future, etc.

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## In the World of Books

Weekly Reviews and Other Literary Ruminations  
Isaac Goldberg

ALL NOISY ON THE EASTERN FRONT  
For the moment, an important battle is being fought at Boston and over the line in Cambridge, the seat of Harvard College.

The Censorship imbroglio, with all its puerility, its psychopathology, its asininity, has come to a head. In the legislature a new bill is pending, according to which a book shall have to be considered, not as isolated texts, but as an organic whole. Meantime, the Watch and Ward Society, the name by which the Comstocks of Massachusetts are known, has got into hot water and public opinion, happily, has been for the nonce alienated from this Sublimated Snapping Society.

It happened this way: an agent of this Mind-Everybody-Else's-Business Corporation entered the Dunster Bookshop, which caters to the intellectuals of the Harvard district, and asked for a copy of Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. He was told that it was not in stock. He insisted that he desired a copy, and asked that one be ordered. So doing, he gave a false name. (This is, of course, in itself a criminal offense. But the cause was "righteous," and the end justified the means. At least, so reasoned this Psychic Peeking Society.)

The book was duly received, duly delivered to the False Name, and the clerk and owner of the bookshop were duly arrested and duly tried. The novel—one of Lawrence's best, and, despite its plain speech and plainer action, a book essentially sound, with a new high sense of dignity—was denounced as nasty. The presiding judge meted out a fine and an imprisonment; not so cruelly as he might have done under the law. But there was an appeal.

You see, some of the Harvard faculty had bought that book. This news is encouraging. There is at least a modicum of intellectual curiosity and good taste around Harvard Square. Not this alone; Harvard itself, in a subtle way, was implicated. And the Lord knows how closely the Harvard student must be watched over for his morals. He came to the college lily-white, you understand, and a single page from a naughty book would just lay him low.

And not this alone, either. The public, already sick of the manner in which some of the Prohibition agents get their evidence, was further sickened by the cheap, nasty manner in which this Holier-Than-Thou Society had gone about to procure its evidence.

The Watch and Ward Society, in order to prove a broken law, itself first broke the law. Not only did its agent give a false name; he urged the bookseller to procure for him a book that was not in stock.

That agent became an accomplice in the crime. And that agent, as his testimony in court brought out, considered himself justified. Have we one law for the Watch and Ward, and another for less favored citizens? Is the State, or any Society that has acquired powers equivalent to those of the State, above and outside the jurisdiction of its own statutes?

As a result of popular indignation we had the amazing spectacle, in court, of a prosecuting attorney denouncing the very organization that had brought the alleged criminals before the bar of justice. It became evident, all at once, that it was not these booksellers who were really on trial, but the Watch and Ward Society. The newspapers carried outspoken condemnation of the Associated Paul Prys.

The case has helped to clear the air. The Watch and Ward Smut-hounds pretend to be unaffected by all this damaging publicity, but they have been officially promised a hot time in the old court if they are again caught resorting to such methods as these to procure arrest and conviction.

The Watch and Ward stands self-condemned for cheap, mean, sneaky tactics. How can it now claim that it is an agency for the suppression of vice, when its own agents encourage vice—what they call vice—in order to trap the victims? The Watch and Ward is as guilty, in this instance, as are the booksellers. And it is, morally, on a lower plane. Meantime the sellers of the book are carrying the case to the highest court of the State.

It has ceased to be a question of Lawrence's book.

The real question is this: May a private society, in the pursuit of its fanatic purpose, with impunity break the law while procuring evidence, and use that evidence to punish the law-breaking victim whom it has induced to break the law?

MORE CHASED THAN CHASTE  
*Diana*. A novel in two volumes. By Emil Ludwig. Translated from the German by Eden and Cedar Paul. New York Viking Press. Boxed, \$5.

Ludwig has several alibis. In the first place, this novel—it was two novels in the original—was written about a dozen years ago. In the second, who can deny that it will make a good, conventional chase-her-all-over-the-universe movie?

The truth of the matter is that *Diana* is a little bit dull. That is, to the practiced reader. The average gum-chewing specialist in fiction will find it "fascinating." It is written self-consciously, with melodramatic fervor and a due regard for the clichés of the international romance. There is plenty of love interest; plenty of gabbling; lots of scenery; and acres of plot.

As far as I am concerned, Ludwig is an overestimated writer. He has done some notable compilations, but I fail to discover in him an original mind or a significant personality. He is an excellent source of information, but he has done little more than build upon the foundations laid by others.

I doubt, for that matter, whether

he could write today a much better novel than the *Diana* of yesterday. The man lacks a certain fundamental selfhood. He is, in a good sense of the word, a literary showman. He chooses his subject not through some inner necessity, but through opportunism as much as for any other reason.

Amusement and fictional interest are to be found aplenty in *Diana*. Only conscientious artistry is lacking.

### MARGINALIA

Mr. Benjamin Brawley has just issued, through Duffield, at \$2, the third edition, revised and enlarged, of his *Negro in Literature and Art*. A remarkable change has come over the country during the eleven years that have passed since the book first appeared. We have become appreciative of the peculiar artistry of the Negro; he has been taken up by the intellectual faddists of New York; he has been put into song and story not by his fellow blacks alone, but by his white companions, who are no longer ashamed of acknowledging the comradeship. Today everybody knows what a spiritual is; everybody knows that the origin of our popular songs is, in generous proportion, black. If you listen to the words of those songs, indeed, you will discover that it was the black who taught the whites how to express their crude, uncouth and too self-conscious lusts and loves.

The book should be owned, as a pioneer work, by all who are interested in Negro culture and in its influence upon the American white.

## A Window on Europe

A Weekly Letter from an Englishman About Europe  
John Langdon-Davies

RAMSAY MACDONALD'S PROBLEM  
I suppose that it is of vital importance what government shall be in power in England to carry out the Naval Conference and yet it is a very uncertain matter as to whether or not it will be the present Labor Government. Only last night (Dec. 19) Ramsay MacDonald's government escaped defeat by eight votes. If five members out of over six hundred voted differently he would have had to resign and for all anyone can tell a group of conservatives would have been the negotiators.

This is an example of one of the great differences between our methods of government and yours: you work by the calendar, we by the majority vote of the moment. Never before in history has the power of the Prime Minister been so uncertain since his party, though the biggest in parliament, has no absolute majority over Liberals and Conservatives. The little band of Liberals could at any moment defeat him by voting against him solidly with the Conservatives. Probably the only reason why MacDonald escaped defeat last night is that Turkey and Plum-pudding and not Elections are the British traditional Christmas fare; and any party who gave us an election at this moment would be taught how to behave by an angry holiday electorate!

The political situation is very interesting and can be best understood by Americans if instead of their thinking that there are three parties, Liberals, conservatives and labor in English politics they should think of six groups. The Labor party is a coalition between Marxian Socialists and Socialist-radical-ex-liberals. The Liberal party is still Lloyd Georgian and Asquithian in uneasy combination; the Conservatives are a coalition between the die-hard damme-sir-let's-make-'em-behave feudalists and the Tory democrats of Disraeli's younger days. The Conservatives are split about Russia, tariffs and unemployment. The Liberals have no corporate mind at all and are always to be found voting against one another. Labor is trying to prove that it is respectable and revolutionary at the same time and finding it very difficult.

The probable future is that these groups will reshuffle and we may even have a coalition government between two-thirds of the Labor party, the Liberals and a sixth of the Conservatives. The presence of Mr. Lloyd George makes this difficult because even those Labor party members who would think twice of a coalition will not think once of Lloyd George.

There is no getting away from the fact that the present Labor government is far to the right of the opinions of most of its supporters. Its only excuse for slowness is that by "roaring as gently as any sucking dove" it may get some good administrative reforms through in spite of its minority in Parliament and also calm the middle-class electors into a feeling that if they vote labor they will not have a soviet or the abolition of marriage, thrust down their throats. If MacDonald's cabinet can do nothing serious long enough to calm the fears of the bourgeoisie without at the same time infuriating the more revolutionary of the proletariat, then they can hope for a great success at the next election, a majority in parliament and the chance of something a little bit more like Socialism in our time. Meanwhile there are one million three hundred thousand people un-

employed and many families this Christmas will sit on packing cases round a fireplace with nothing but crinkled paper in it, because all the furniture has been sold and coal cannot be bought. The papers announce, however, that a good supply of the best Russian caviare will be available and diamonds are fashionable for Christmas presents.

I believe that in any other country but England communism would draw blood before the winter is over. Yet the communist party in this country has continued to lose its members; those who still pay dues are apt to be expelled by heresy hunters and there are not above two thousand five hundred left. Russia is very kindly supplying them with the money to produce a daily paper and at the same time is scolding them for not being active enough in leading the workers of Great Britain to the world revolution. "What America wants," it was pointed out by a famous man, "is a good five-cent cigar" and in the same spirit we may say that what the British worker wants is no bloody revolution but a good football match on Christmas day. And this in spite of being very well educated and starving at the same time. British communism and British fascism are neither of them a success; yet one often wonders what would happen if some turn of international trade took away even the half loaves and left no bread. We are not very far off real famine and real famine can turn a man into a savage beast of prey quicker than reading Marx or Lenin. It is not safe to bank on the "innate conservatism" of the British working man; hunger is the great propagandist.

Of course it is quite absurd to say that because the MacDonald government has done so little it has betrayed the workers. Very few, if any, of the present labor leaders are crooks and their inaction is due to economic conditions; whether or not their supporters will continue to believe this forever is another matter altogether.

### Merriest Christmas

[The following poem, received by E. Haldeman-Julius, has the spirit of realism and pagan joy in earth and its delights.]

We lift, above the carolled glees,  
Our Yuletide greeting, to entreat  
Your one and several presences  
At our new-purchased countryside:  
A rolling woody Eden, meet  
For all who long to take their fill  
Of sunny wind and wintry sleet—  
Come play with us at Bozenkill!

In icy winter, we can please  
The Polar bear, the stout athlete.  
A universe of Christmas trees  
Glow green above their rooted feet;  
And trees hill-high with bitter  
sweet  
And snowdrifts wind-flung in the  
chill.

And the glassed lake with skaters  
fleet—  
Come play with us at Bozenkill!

Come summer, with its pandering  
bees  
Droning through fields of white  
buckwheat.

The waterfalls' cool harmonies,  
The meadows where plump lamb-  
kins bleat,  
Lobelia and starred marguerite,  
And sport in pool and glade and  
hill

Elysian, and yet discreet—  
Come play with us at Bozenkill!

Come one, come all, in cold or heat!  
We guarantee no spurious thrill.  
It's truth, and poetry. We repeat,  
Come play with us at Bozenkill!

GLORIA GODDARD,  
CLEMENT WOOD.

After June, 1930—  
At Bozenkill Farm,  
Delanson, New York.

A traditional word—like duty, for example—has very treacherous possibilities of misuse. Duty to the State, for instance, may actually be a harsh form of slavery. Duty to the gods or to preachers—to religion in any sense (or in any of its non-sense)—is a surrender of the individual's right of critical judgment. Duty to what is called good form, or to conventionality, is apt to become the dulling of one's personality and an insidious surrender to popular standards of belief and conduct which are inconsistent with intelligent freedom. Even duty to oneself is often construed as being what someone else thinks one should morally or mentally or socially be. We should not take a traditional word, nor a traditional emotion, nor a traditional association of ideas and feelings, for granted; but we should question all these in the continually defining light of realism.

We sometimes expect things which are unreasonable, or which a little reflection should show to be improbable, or which a little observation would show to be impossible; and then we say that we are disappointed. To be honest with ourselves, we should admit that we were merely the victims of poor observation and poor judgment.

A Wichita, Kans., violator of a traffic regulation has been sentenced to spend four and a half hours in jail (from 2 until 6:30 in the afternoon) each day for seven days. It is a foolish question—but if he should be rushed and afraid of arriving late some afternoon, would he be violating or obeying the law in driving beyond the speed limit?

Men rise courageously and clearly to the truth only as they throw off the burdens of fear.

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