

Coming--A Debate on Theism--E. Haldeman-Julius vs. Rev. Burriss Jenkins

Atheism in the pulpit—doesn't that sound interesting? To be accurate, atheism will have one side of the pulpit and theism will stand in its accustomed place at the other side when E. Haldeman-Julius and Rev. Burriss Jenkins, Kansas City, Mo., debate on the question: "Resolved, That Theism is a Logical Philosophy." The debate will occur on Sunday evening, April 18, a couple of

days after this issue of The American Freeman is prepared for the press. The affirmative, as you need scarcely be told, will be maintained by Rev. Jenkins. It will be a contest of logic. Rev. Jenkins will present his arguments—the best in his repertoire, so to speak—on behalf of the gods of God. Mr. Haldeman-Julius will present carefully and in its main lines the anti-theistic point

of view. Rev. Jenkins is one of the leading exponents of theism in the middle west—specifically its ablest defender in Kansas City—and has a national reputation. It may be assumed that he will present the best arguments (or the best assumptions) in support of the God idea. A report of the debate will appear in next week's issue of The American Freeman.

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"Foolish Prophets, Their Words to Scorn Are Scattered"

Casually and carelessly, as is his unconsidered habit in these days of his dotage, Arthur Brisbane jots down a few remarks about clergymen and the mystery of life. He says that a hundred preachers asked that he put his mind to these (for preachers) major questions: "How can church advertising be made successful? How can church publications be made interesting?" The admission seems to have been made by these clergymen that life offers many effective rival attractions that rather throw the church in the shade and that church publications are anything but interesting. Brisbane intimates that such a condition oughtn't to exist, while at the same time he suggests his awareness that there is plenty of reason in modern life—in a life that is so invitingly definite and realistic—for indifference to the church. We think, however, that he leaves the problem of the preachers unsolved and unelucidated. To be sure, we shouldn't expect Brisbane, in his hit and mostly miss journalism, to solve any problem. His erratic remarks, which we generously assume to have been written in haste, are as follows:

The clergyman's task in advertising, publishing and preaching is difficult and ungrateful. He offers the people what is GOOD FOR THEM in competition with those that offer them what they LIKE whether good for them or not. In old days families walked long distances on muddy roads, losing rubbers, on the way to the country meeting house. Now good roads and automobiles bring neighbors close together. Telephones unite them, moving pictures invite them, radio brings dance music, songs, plays, operas, even prayer. To advertise churches successfully is not easy.

Henry Ward Beecher had a good idea when he sold a good-looking mulatto slave girl at auction in his Brooklyn church. That would draw crowds even now. Old Puritans preached on hell, making it so real that every man shuddered, and would not have gone to a movie, even had it been available. Modernism has weakened faith, and fear. It should, however, be possible to interest even the modern mind on what is to come, after the coffin lid is fastened down, and the family goes about its business, leaving you there. Something is going to happen, or nothing. Everybody admits that. If nothing is going to happen, then nothing amounts to anything here, and we are all the victims of a cosmic joke. If something is going to happen, even the dullest jazz mind should want to know what it is. The clergyman might attract attention by advertising, "Come to my church and learn what will happen to you when your jazz days are over."

You will note **Good For Us?** that Brisbane speaks very **arbitrarily**—and, even so, quite **vaguely**—on behalf of the preachers: i. e., he says that the preachers offer the people what is "GOOD FOR THEM." This, of course, is the very assumption that is denied so widely in the present age. The millions who do not attend church, who do not turn to the preachers for enlightenment nor for entertainment, obviously have a little bit to say about what is good for them. We haven't been reliably informed that Brisbane or any preacher has the omniscient and infallible authority to tell people what is "GOOD FOR THEM." As a matter of easily observed fact, the

preachers offer nothing that is real and important. They don't offer knowledge. They don't offer intelligent culture. They don't offer beauty of thought nor realistic wisdom about life. They don't offer even a *show* that people of good sense can conceivably find entertaining, save in an occasional mood of chuckling inwardly at the nonsense of the pulpit—and even then a little goes a long way and only distance makes the stuff tolerable. We can laugh now and then at a silly statement by a preacher, which we read in the press, but how terrible it would be to sit through a whole sermon! The modern tendency to pass by the churches definitely on the way to somewhere else is explained by the expanded knowledge and interests of actual life. Religious bunk is less appealing or less plausible or less frightening—*from whichever angle it is viewed*—in a world of daylight and pleasure and activity than in a world of darkness and dull, cramped routine. There is more life today—and so people are busy living rather than hearing preachers jabber about "the life to come." There is more knowledge today—and people don't get this knowledge from the preachers. It is a far brighter and more intelligent and more progressively visioned world that we live in; and this better life has been won, not by listening to preachers, but by studying life and following the real leadership of science.

At the worst, **Nothing From** preachers have been bigots **Nothing** swinging a club (or a bundle of **Nothing** faggots); next to the worst, they are harmful agents of prejudice and obscurantism; in moderation, they are annoying buzzers and blabbers, distracting attention from serious utterances and interests with their absurd cries; and at their very best, preachers are utterly useless. It is significant that from the clergy there has come no knowledge, no original thinking,

no aid to progress, no enlightenment nor inspiration whatever in the life of mankind. And of course this poor record of the clergy is readily understood: they haven't studied life nor dealt realistically with life, but have chattered about a lot of unreal assumptions and dogmas. Rather inconsistently with his defense of the preachers, Brisbane refers to one of the great contributions the clergy have made to the human race—namely, **fear**. Whether accidentally or intentionally, poor old Arthur hit it right when he connected faith and fear as close corollaries. The world is better for their combined subsidence. Little attention **What They Do** need be given to the **Not Know** woolly old line: "If nothing is **going to happen** [after we are dead], then nothing amounts to anything here, and we are all the victims of a cosmic joke." In a way, *we are the victims of a cosmic joke and the biggest and grimmest or (as one may happen to feel) the most whimsical joke of all is that there is nobody but us to appreciate the joke*—there is, no Cosmic Joker, although one wonders why that title (Cosmic Joker) isn't substituted for the title of God: it wouldn't really mean any more, but it would be a literary improvement. It is not very clear nor impressive logic to argue that "nothing amounts to anything here" because there will be nothing hereafter. It used to be predominantly the Christian argument, that "nothing amounts to anything here" because life is only a brief trial and temptation on the brink of the really important eternity of Heaven and Hell. When we know that life—this life which we see and know and are vitally a part of—is all, then we have a greater appreciation of the importance, the human and worldly importance, of life. We live—and naturally, intelligently, we want to make the best

of it. The fact that death ends all only serves to intensify and clarify the value of life. A man doesn't consider work and love and play and the adventure of living unimportant today because he may die ten years from today. Brisbane's "thought"—or rather his repetition of a stale old stupidity—is merely illustrative of the feeble slump of logic to which any defender of religion is reduced. Bad as it is, 'twas the best he could do. After all, the **Why Not Enjoy** most palpably silly joke (that **the Joke?** can't be dignified as a "cosmic joke") is offered in Brisbane's last line: "The clergyman might attract attention by advertising, 'Come to my church and learn what will happen to you when your jazz days are over.'" The assumption of Brisbane (and of course, egotistically, of the preachers) is that the pulpit **shown know** "what is going to happen after the coffin lid is nailed down"—i. e., that they have some peculiar and positive knowledge about a life after death, about other worlds (heavenly and hellish), about "spirits" and such-like oddities—that, in a word, the preachers have a special kind of knowledge apart from and indeed contrary to the knowledge which scientists have at their command. If preachers have such knowledge, they have never demonstrated it nor produced it to the conviction of realistic students of life and thought. Preachers offer only a puerile collection of words and images and dogmas. We repeat that preachers have added nothing to the knowledge of mankind. For knowledge about anything real, we go to historians, to scientists, to scholars, to men who have actually studied life. What do the preachers have? An odd and useless sort of knowledge, of a preposterous game of guesswork and arbitrary absurdities called theology, which at no point intelligently touches life.

The London Travesty

Recalling our editorial on "War Up to Date" in The American Freeman of March 8, our readers will not expect us to cry out in surprise at the course of futility along which the London naval conference has meandered and dwindled since that editorial was written. Even less has resulted from the conference (which is now about over except for the apologies) than we had thought possible, although our thoughts were not a bit optimistic toward an effective movement toward a peaceful world. We did think that perhaps some appearance of success might be achieved; that some ratio of limitation might be placed upon future naval armament—a political agreement, to last for only a few years, and not involving the slightest actual change in the present warlike status of the nations. Disarmament is a word very loosely, deceptively used: it is something much more than reduction of armament; and reduction, again, is something very different from a scheme of future limitation. An armament holiday might be welcomed by the nations (i. e., by the political-business rulers of the nations) if they could trust one another for awhile and maintain their relative positions, so that in a hostile situation they would be as nearly equal as they are today or as they would be after an expensive rivalry in building many new war vessels. For governments to seek a plan of temporary economy in armaments is a world removed, in actuality as well as intention, from the ideal of peace. However, as we said in The American Freeman of March 8, an atmosphere of intrigue and suspicion prevailed at this conference: quite the atmosphere of old-school diplomacy and distrustful, war-envying nationalism. The nations have not been able to arrange a plan that will save the face of the conference. The diplomats of each country will, of course, tell their people that they were not to blame. It is always the trick of politicians, whether engaged in foreign or domestic juggling, to shift responsibility. It is an old trick, and amazingly it still works pretty smoothly. Patriotic spirit identifies the diplomats with the country, seeing them through a haze of delusion as impersonal representatives of the country's honor. Thus millions of Americans, who are blindly vowed to the cult of patriotism, will believe it spite of all disillusioning evidence that the American government is, always has been, and always will be ideal-

Beliefs and Hard Facts--What Are Their Real Values?

Beliefs, not facts, are important—so we read in the Honolulu (Hawaii) *Star-Bulletin*. We read the same piffle in papers nearer home. In this instance the Honolulu paper is commenting on the debunking of "the angels of Mons." Colonel Friedrich Herzenwirth, who worked with the Imperial German Intelligence Service during the World War, has told how those legendary war-time angels were simply a trick of photography. "German airplanes" [we quote the Honolulu paper's summary] "carrying movie projectors hovered over the British lines and projected their pictures on the cloud banks, in the hope that the ghostly apparitions would fill the British with terror and complete the rout. The same stunt, says Colonel Herzenwirth, worked beautifully on the Russian front; but in Flanders it backfired, and instead of making the British army run away it strengthened their morale enormously, making them feel that angels from above were fighting for them." The *Star-Bulletin* is inspired to utter the following comment on this episode of modern "magic": He may be right, for all we know, and he may be wrong; but, really, it doesn't matter very much. The truth of a legend, the mechanics of its origin, is never important. All that counts is the legend's effect. Men have lived by a great many strange stories; and nothing is more profitable than tracking these stories down to their starting points. Hard facts don't amount to as much as we suppose. It is what we believe that is important. The Angels of Mons served their turn. It doesn't make the slightest difference whether they were caused by German movie cameras, simple hallucinations or imaginative men's hearts up for a while. That is all we need to know about them. Even taking its premise for granted, the *Star-Bulletin's* reasoning is one-sided. It argues that this legend was worth while because of its alleged effect upon British soldiers. In the same breath we are told that it had the opposite effect upon Russian troops; so that obviously, from the standpoint of Russian military morale, it would have

Queer Antics in Kansas

New Yorkers or Californians may be confused by the dispute about the liquor situation in Kansas. They can reason that politics and human nature manifest themselves in Kansas about the same as they do in New York or California. They can judge which set of reports—the wet or the dry—is best supported by solid, sensible evidence. But of course they are not eye witnesses of what happens in Kansas. Citizens of Kansas are, or ought to be, better acquainted with conditions in their home state. They ought to know whether Kansas is wet or dry. All they need do is keep their eyes open. They may not know exactly how many gallons are sold; but they need not be in doubt as to the main fact of dryness or wetness, as the case may be. Drinkers who live in Kansas are not in doubt. They have literal minds—which is rather an advantage in dealing with facts. They conclude that their ability always to obtain a drink when they are thirsty is sufficient—and, to them, quite satisfactory—evidence that Kansas is wet. Are other Kansans—those who don't drink—so blind and confused about conditions actually under their eyes that the wetness or dryness of their state is a debatable question? Querly enough, that is implied by the announcement of a lecture tour in Kansas by "Pussyfoot" Johnson, heavyweight performer of the anti-liquor crusade. It is not altogether clear whether "Pussyfoot's" mission—three months of lecturing—is to convince Kansans that their state is dry or that it ought to be dry. Apparently his propaganda has both objects. He has help, too—one Lieutenant Colonel Frank B. Ebbert, who, says the Kansas Anti-Saloon League, "is now applying mustard gas to a lot of the lurid stories put out by the wets who find increasing difficulty in getting their accustomed supplies of hell fire." Again we say that this is queer. Isn't it funny that "Pussyfoot" and his pal should spend three months telling Kansans that the wets have lied about their state? Kansans ought to know whether the wets have lied or told the truth. They oughtn't to need such refutation and persuasion. These dry propagandists should tell New York and California about the situation in Kansas. Between drinks, a number of Kansans will appreciate this joke.

What men need are fewer dogmas and more intelligent, realistic living.

Humanity has not yet fully learned that peace is more interesting than war. Piety signifies the lack of two very important mental qualities—humor and imagination. Men are always engaged not only in the pursuit but in the definition of happiness. How can the mystic explain life when he doesn't, in the first place, take the trouble of looking at life? Two wrongs do not make a right—but a score of errors make a religion. It is only the lively thinker, with whom thought is a fine and withal robust art, who can be consistent without being narrow. The man who enjoys life with a wholesome realism doesn't bother himself with fantastic notions about the meaning of death. To some, philosophy is a game of logic. To others—and they may reasonably combine both attitudes—philosophy is the art of intelligent living. It is merely poetic to say that life is a dream. The only comparison is that people often act as foolishly in life as they act in dreams. If there were a God, we should be inclined to say that he had played a deliberate, mocking trick upon sacred writers in making them promulgate foolishness. It seems to us that an illusion is not beautiful unless it is worthy of being recognized and is recognized as a poetic fancy. Illusion is worthless as truth, and serious belief robs it of any possible beauty. Godlessness is the customary attitude of men, regardless of their professed beliefs. There is nothing but human effort upon which men can depend nor upon which, actually, they do place their reliance. In the end, man has always celebrated the death of his gods by discovering a greater joy in life; or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that as man has discovered more joy and power in life, he has left his gods to die.

Around the Table
Chats Among the Editor and His Readers

A DISAPPOINTED READER
In this style does O. C. Miller (Texas) sign himself, at the conclusion of a brief letter which you've guessed it—deals with the attitude of the American Freeman toward the Negro.

Your attention is called to an editorial appearing in the March 8 edition of The American Freeman, entitled "Southern Farce."

I have often admired your free thoughts, and your courage to openly state them, but I cannot understand your reason for allowing the above, editorial to be printed.

Will you kindly answer the following questions— Is the mistreatment of the Negro confined to the south?

Do you believe that this alleged mistreatment of the Negro is just cause to term the southerners uncivilized?

Have you ever been treated discourteously in the south? If so, where at, and what was your conduct?

Do you sell any of your books and publications in the south?

Do you think this editorial will help or injure your future business in the uncivilized south? Does this feature concern you in the least?

Have you any dislike for the south other than stated in the editorial?

I would like very much for you to answer the above questions through the mail as soon as possible or openly condemn this editorial.

Mr. Miller's prejudice is so intense that it blinds him to the possibility of a viewpoint squarely opposed to his own and held with firm conviction. He writes as if I might "openly condemn the editorial" when I have been made to realize how he feels about it.

Nothing could show more amazingly how Mr. Miller's mind is closed on the Negro question and how poorly he appreciates the unity of free, enlightened thought. Has he read my publications, with their consistent advocacy of freedom and justice and humanism, and yet failed to understand how I naturally must feel about the Negro question? Apparently he has read and he has not understood.

If he had never read a line in The American Freeman directly mentioning the Negro, Mr. Miller should have known, even so, that my position toward the Negro is in all logic that of one human being to another, without prejudice and without bunk. Mr. Miller should have known that, as I hate all injustice, I must hate the unjust treatment

imposed upon the Negro. It would be just as impossible for me to hold a racial prejudice as it would be for me to hold a political or religious or national prejudice. I have a scientific attitude toward things—and in the light of this attitude the feeling about the Negro which prevails in the south is a bitter, amazing irrationality.

I am glad to answer Mr. Miller's questions. Mistreatment of the Negro is not confined to the south, but is notoriously worse in the south than anywhere else. I am not picking on the south. Wherever injustice is done, I condemn it. It should be noted that the particular feature of injustice—the "Jim Crow" law—which was the subject of the editorial in The American Freeman of March 8 is confined to the south.

Certainly, I hold that the mistreatment of the Negro in the south is just cause to term southerners uncivilized in that respect. In other words, the majority of the southerners do not have a civilized attitude toward the Negro.

I have never been treated discourteously in the south. Should I therefore not resent what is more than discourtesy—what is an outrageous injustice—to a fellow human being with a darker skin than mine? That assumption would be neither logical nor humane.

I sell my books and publications in the south. There are, of course, a number of enlightened people in the south. Southerners have also written for my publications, protesting against the uncivilized attitude of the south on the Negro question—and on other questions, notably the immense support of superstition and antagonism toward science.

I am not worrying about my future business in the south. Is Mr. Miller giving a fair example of southern courtesy when he attempts to influence my opinions by an implied threat of boycott?

I do not dislike the south—it is a beautiful country. I do not dislike like southern people. I dislike and condemn strongly three main features of southern life: the injustice toward the Negro; the creed of violence; the dense religious superstition, with its opposition to science. I feel sure that these answers will not disappoint Mr. Miller by lack of clearness. As for his disappointment with me for not sharing his view of southern life—well, Mr. Miller is a patriot and I stand far beyond that limited way of looking at things. I am disappointed with him, too: disappointed that a man can have "admired free thoughts and courage openly to state them" and yet show a bitter intolerance toward an expression so just, so true, so decently necessary as that editorial in The American Freeman.

But I long ago learned the lesson that the human mind is enlightened only in sections. Reason on some subjects is accompanied by extreme emotionalism on other subjects. One

FROM A NEW ZEALAND FREETHINKER

The Country of the Mind is unbounded. No lines mark it off narrowly, indicating that beyond those lines is foreign country. This great country of thought and vision is, indeed, world-wide. It is found wherever a thinker looks at life with clear and honest insight. It is as extensive as the circulation of intelligent books and periodicals. It is as broad as the flow of ideas in the modern world. It is a rich, deep pleasure to know that at the other side of the world—that all around the world—kindred minds are dealing sincerely with the problems of life. Intellectual kinship is, after all, greater than an accidental tie of blood relationship or national residence. Our significant life is in our ideas. Here I am, in Girard, sensitively reacting to life; and far off in New Zealand is a young school teacher who has the same kind of sensitiveness. It is Karl M. Miller (Hokiana, New Zealand) who writes the following letter—which reminds us, by the way, that the name of Miller does not absolutely bind everyone who bears the name to an identical trend of thought:

Just a short note to convey, however inadequately, at least some slight expression of the great appreciation and admiration I have for you and your fellow workers in your efforts to liberate the popular mind from the crude tyrannies that have come down with the race from savage times. It is now about three years since first I came across a small advertisement of yours in the magazine, Current History, and I might mention that since that time I have added to my small library several hundred Little Blue Books. They combine in them such a range of topics, together with such a thorough treatment of each phase of all of these, that I have never met with elsewhere.

The subjects with which my special interest lies are history, religion, geology (and paleontology and evolution)—in which subject I have followed a three years' course at the Auckland University—and lastly sex in its various aspects. The latter is a subject which is under a very severe taboo in this country—that is, of course, in the open—though it does not take one long to realize that our youth are not a whit different from what, as I glean from several of your publications, the American youth are.

Being myself only twenty-one, and not insensible to the possibility that any time I might find myself more than usually enamored with one of the other sex, I was very interested to have your views on my note in the World's News, some few months after I had read Mrs. Haldeman-Julius' expression on the subject of companionate marriage, a small photo of your daughter Josephine and her "companion." However, from the comment beneath the photo I gathered that as yet few others, if any at all, of America's vast army of youth have been courageous enough to set aside the dictate of society and to test what appears to be, at least theoretically, a very admirable scheme and take it at its worth. The fact that over two years have elapsed since their agreement seems to be an effective reply to any quibble that such a scheme would be necessarily conducive toward any very serious breakdown of what decent, amenable home life exists at present in the family circles of the world. But I hope to hear further on the subject of this, the supreme result of the lifelong problings into the causes of the irresponsibility of youth, of such an infinitely kindly man as Jude Lindsey appears to be.

At present I am very uncertain what to do; I do not know whether I should continue with my B. S. degree, of which I have already gained three-quarters, or devote more of my time, outside my profession, towards the study of history and religion and the several related subjects. I am now about fifty miles from my home, as the saying goes, out back in a little country school, quite happy in my surroundings except that I miss the discussions which held so much interest for me at the university. I have managed to open up the subject with a visiting parson, whom I see every three weeks, when our spiritual requirements are attended to; but though he is a very gentlemanly man, he is one who knows little beyond his Bible, while my knowledge is rather of the history of the Bible and the contemporary periods. Result is—little doing.

In this country rationalistic utterances are very lukewarm. A society of which I am a member, known under the name of The New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Rationalism, does exist; but candidly I can say that, beyond being heard of now and again, it is certainly not a particularly outspoken body. They complain of lack of funds—truly a vital factor—though it should rather say their chief deficiency lies in a lack of ability and organizing power. I know from actual experience that several young people of my turn of mind are alienated from it for probably no other reason than that it is not sufficiently outspoken.

But had we only your prototype in the country I could see matters beginning to assume a new aspect. New Zealanders (I don't know

whether you have had any experience with them) seem to be a very trusting people, mentally sluggish when it comes to probing into such tabooed subjects as religion and sex. In short, they are a very admirable race of people if we judge them from the viewpoint of mental and physical chastity in both of these fields.

However, I must not take any more of your time. Again, many thanks for the great efforts you and your fellow workers are making in striving to reach the great goal. Situated "fifty miles from nowhere," Mr. Miller is intelligently aware of the thoughts and movements of civilization. Others live in the crowded centers of civilization—and don't know what it is all about. Mr. Miller's letter doesn't fill me with a wild and reckless optimism; it doesn't inspire me with the thought that I and others working along similar lines are going to save the world tomorrow or next day; but it does leave me with a good feeling. It is always a joy to meet (as I feel that I have met Mr. Miller) a person with whom one can talk in the full and intelligent sense of the word.

And, of course, I have enjoyed the letter from Mr. Miller of New Zealand all the more in contrast with the letter from Mr. Miller of Texas. The thoughts which run in the Country of the Mind are always superior to the mores in a more narrowly patriotic country.

The Right Note at Last

[Dispensing hokum is, in its way, an art. Care must be taken to offer the brand that will satisfy—to strike the right note. Practically in point to this episode told by "Pitchfork" Smith in his Dallas, Tex., magazine, The Pitchfork.]

This capitalizing [in business] of church and lodge affiliations reminds me of an incident that came to my notice up in Delta county back in the 90's. John Boykin was running for Congress. He got into his buggy and rode out to the picnic and was promptly invited to make a speech in support of his candidacy. A peculiar thing about his congressional district was that there were many communities that were almost wholly made up of one religious denomination. In that part of the country, in those days, people had a way of settling together according to their religious affiliations. Whole communities of Baptists, Methodists or Presbyterians could be found.

This candidate for Congress was of the impression that he was in a Baptist community, but was not sure of the fact, so decided to say nothing about it. He had not talked long, however, until somebody in the audience spoke up and asked what church he belonged to. He had to answer, but realized that he was getting close to some mighty deep water. Assuming a sanctimonious air, he said: "You want to know my religious persuasion? I am proud to state that my father was a member of the Baptist church for forty years and to the day of his death." Here the candidate paused to see what effect his reference to the Baptist church had on his audience. There was no disposition to applaud or approve his remark. He continued as follows: "While my sainted mother (pause) was an old school Presbyterian from childhood, until the angels came and called her home to glory." The old candidate paused again to see if he was making any grade with his audience. There wasn't the flicker of an eyelash; no sign anywhere that he had made a bit with his audience from a religious standpoint. He was getting desperate.

"My grandfather on my father's side, who fought with the immortal Robert E. Lee at Appomattox, was a shouting Methodist." Here the audience burst into wild applause and the candidate realized that he was in a Methodist community. When the applause subsided, he straightened up to his full height, and shouted: "And it was from his sainted life that I learned the story of the Cross and the greatest moral lessons of my life." Again the audience roared with applause. The old candidate had finally arrived in port so far as the religious complexion of the community was concerned.

Taking the story of Genesis at face value, God showed a hasty and biased judgment when he looked upon his creation as good. Man hasn't found the earth unspicily nor uniformly good. There are a lot of things about the earth which man doesn't like and which he would change if he could—and of course, he has made many changes. But the earth is all man has and so he makes the best of it: he adapts himself to it through custom and science.

Why should anyone ever have been struck with astonishment, as if by something curious and baffling, by the fact that rain falls on the just and on the unjust? These are human distinctions. The rain simply falls, and the rain doesn't know whether the spot of earth it soaks with moisture has been the scene of devotion or debauchery.

Sometimes a man's conscience accuses him, but that isn't all; a man's conscience is also quick in coming to his defense or, as it were, taking its own defense. New Zealanders (I don't know

"No Road—By Order of Moses"

Joseph McCabe in The Conflict Between Science and Religion (Little Blue Book No. 1211). Science has, ever since its birth, been in conflict with religion. Apart from the astronomical observations of the Babylonian and Chaldean priests, which had the ecclesiastical aim of helping them to keep a calendar, science began in the Greek colonies on the coast of Asia Minor. On that beautiful and healthful fringe of coast the first Europeans to be civilized, the early Greeks, learned the rudiments of knowledge from Persians and Cretans and Egyptians, and their fresh and energetic minds at once perceived that tradition was entirely wrong and man must begin to acquire knowledge by using his own reason and senses. Since these early Greeks formed colonies in Asia, away from the main tribes in Greece, they had a certain amount of liberty; and it is a universal truth of history that where there are liberty and the spirit of inquiry, religion begins to decay. But, as we see in what remains of the speculations of these early pioneers of science, the liberty was restricted. They were clearly in bad odor with their religious neighbors. The way they talk about the gods and spirits shows fairly clearly that they had to trim their sails. The more outspoken of them were chased from city to city, in the name of the gods.

When some of them at last reached the great city of Athens, they found religious prejudice against science much worse. Athens has a brilliant record in everything except science, in that it has no record at all. Anaxagoras, who tried to found a scientific school there, had to fly for his life. The Athenian philosophers found it advisable to despise science and devote themselves to "spiritual realities"; though even this did not save Socrates from death on the charge of impiety.

A few centuries later the work of science was resumed, under more favorable auspices, in the Greek-Egyptian city of Alexandria. Here there were so many religions and gods that it would escape notice whether a man worshiped or not. Science made very material progress. The mind of the race seemed at last to have entered upon its proper development. But, alas, a new religion, Christianity, got political power, murdered the last brilliant representative of Greek thought, Hypatia, and completely extinguished scientific research. The first thousand years of science, from Thales to Hypatia, were conspicuously marked by conflict with religion, and of all religions Christianity was the most deadly opponent.

For several centuries science was quite extinct; rather, it was in the condition of those animals which live in the rain-gutter of your house, flourish on rainy days, feed and breed, and then, as the moisture disappears, shrink into their skins, so to say, and become mere dry specks of dust until the next rain comes. The ideas of the Greeks thus lingered in Greek literature, but in the Christian Greek Empire no one dreamed of reanimating them. The beneficent shower of rain came with the new Arab civilization; not on account of its Mohammedan religion, but very clearly in spite of it. Skepticism appeared with remarkable rapidity in Bagdad and Damascus, and science revived with just the same rapidity. The ideas of the Greeks were taken out of their tomb in Greek literature, and commerce with China brought new scientific ideas to Persia and Syria.

Then this culture was carried across north Africa to Spain, and the Moors developed it with a brilliance that reminds us of the ancient Athenians (Little Blue Book No. 1137). Next, the Jews and a few Christian wandering scholars took translations of Arab works to Italy, France, and England; and, as the Mohammedans had settled also in Sicily and the south of Italy, a similar stream poured northward from there. Christian Europe began to cultivate science, in spite of the Fathers; and naive modern Christians, who know nothing about the history of these matters, clap their hands and say: Look at our Roger Bacon, our Albert the Great, our Gerbert, and so on.

We have looked at them (Little Blue Book No. 1142) and found that from Bacon to Copernicus they all merely repeated what Greeks or Moors had told them, and that, the moment they opened their mouths, the modern conflict between science and religion began. Bacon spent nearly half his adult life in his monastic prison; Albert was extinguished with a mitre, Gilbert with a tiara; Copernicus dreaded to publish his conviction that Pythagoras was right until he was beyond the reach of the Inquisition; Arnold of Villeneuve was hounded from land to land; Friar Jean de Roquetaillade died in prison; Cecco d'Ascoli and Giordano Bruno were burned; Galileo was smitten on the mouth by the Inquisition; Vesalius narrowly escaped its holy wrath, and so on, and so on.

At last authority in Christendom was weakened by the great schism, and the world became sufficiently enlightened to see that one need not be burned at the stake for studying chemistry, physics, astronomy, or anatomy; though such work was

generally held to be a damnable waste of time. With the nineteenth century a new phase opened. The Deists had attacked the crudities and inconsistencies of the Old Testament, and scientific men now began to reconstruct the real history of the earth and of man on lines which were very different from those of Genesis.

And whenever they opened up a new path of research, they, as Huxley said, found a notice-board: "No road. By order of Moses." Had the rocks been gradually formed by deposits in water? How old was the earth? How old was man? What was the origin of the stars, the planets, the animals, man, language, religion, the moral sense, civilization? No road. It was all settled by the Old Testament.

I am not going to linger over the conflict. There is no need to describe it, as it still rages in America. There is no dispute about the fact that there was a mighty conflict of science and religion in the nineteenth century, and that the Fundamentalists still maintain it.

Atheist Poetry

SELECTED BY CHARLES SMITH

FORGET ABOUT GOD

[Stanzas from The Kasidah by Sir Richard F. Burton.] What know'st thou, man, of Life? And yet, forever twist the womb, the grave, Thou pratest of the Coming Life: Of Heav'n and Hell thou fain must rave.

The world is old and thou art young; The world is large and thou art small: Cease, atom of a moment's span, To hold thyself an All-in-All!

A drop in Ocean's boundless tide, Unfathom'd waste of agony; Where millions live their horrid lives By making other millions die.

Silence thine immemorial quest, Contain thy nature's vain complaint. None heeds, none cares for thee or thine— Like thee how many came and went?

Cease, Man, to mourn, to weep, to wail, Enjoy thy shining hour of sun; We dance along Death's icy brink, But is the dance less full of fun?

There is no Good, there is no Bad; These be the whims of mortal will; What works me weal, that call I "good," What harms and hurts I hold as "ill";

They change with place, they shift with race; And, in the veriest span of Time, Each Vice has won a Virtue's crown; All Good was banned as Sin or Crime.

"Faith stands unmoved"; and why? Because man's silly fancies still remain, And will remain till wiser man The day-dreams of his youth disdain.

With God's foreknowledge man's free will! What monster-growth of human brain, What pow'rs of light shall ever pierce

This puzzle dense with words inane? There is no Heav'n, there is no Hell; These be the dreams of baby minds; Tools of the wily Fetisheer, To fright the fools his cunning blinds.

Who e'er return'd to teach the Truth, The things of Heaven and Hell to limn? And all we hear is only fit— For grandam-talk and nursery-hymn.

Do what thy manhood bids thee do, From none but self expect applause; He noblest lives and noblest dies Who makes and keeps his self-made laws.

Pluck the old woman from thy breast; Be stout in woe, be stark in deal; Do good for Good is good to do; Spurn bribe of Heav'n and threat of Hell.

Abjure the Why and seek the How; The God and gods enthroned on high Are silent all, are silent still; Nor hear thy voice, nor deign reply.

IN RELIGION'S PLACE

You rob us of all that is sacred, Of Bible, of God, and of Grace; But when you thus take our religion, What else do you give in its place? —The Old, Old Story.

The Bible wide open, the preacher, As its pages be pounded and pawed, Denounced the devices of Satan And exalted the glory of God. "All fable and myth!" cried the Sceptic; "Contradictions absurd on their face!"

"I know it," assented the other, "But what will you give in their place?" A traveler once in the Southland Discovered a people in chains; When he read them the story of Freedom, They gave him sour looks for his pains.

Said they: "We are told by our masters That chains are God's gift to our race; Before you have riven them from us Say what you will give in their place."

O Captive, we wrest from you nothing— The creeds that beguiled are untrue. 'Tis your bondage to falsehood we sunder When we rob Superstition of you. The cry comes from goblins and phantoms That hover about for a space, And, fleeing, still hope to dismay us With "What will you give in our place?"

In your place! We give reason and knowledge. Where before were belief and mistake— Fresh joys, that can thrive but in freedom. For every chain that we break, The gods that oppressed men shall vanish To unthinkable realms. In disgrace Their reign shall be ended forever, And Freethought shall stand in their place. —George E. Macdonald.

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In the World of Books

Weekly Reviews and Other Literary Ruminations Isaac Goldberg

THREE MOVIES I. Anna Christie

Greta Garbo, I suppose, is one of the chief reasons why so many American husbands are dissatisfied with their wives. And, incidentally, why so many wives—and sweethearts—are so dissatisfied with themselves. Easily one of the first personalities of the screen, she is also high among the actresses. I have always believed that she lacks a certain subtlety without which one cannot be a histrion of the first class; perhaps it is a necessary concession to her special medium. The cinema, on the whole, hardly favors delicacy of effect. Nor do I consider Miss Garbo ravishingly beautiful; often she suggests too frank a sensuality for the higher type of beauty, which should contain a certain repose at its center, however exciting it is on the circumference. And yet, when I think back to the early "ramps" of the movies—Theda Bara, for forgotten example—Greta Garbo seems of subtlety all compact. She is, when all is said and seen, a great little lady, and has one faculty that is invaluable to one who makes such frequent appearances: she manages to look almost like a different person in each succeeding picture.

Recently I saw her in an early film, made perhaps in Sweden; it was the famous novel of Selma Lagerlof's, *Goesta Berling*. She was the very statue of redemptive innocence; anything but the slithering temptress of the movie made from Blasco Ibanez's *The Torrent*. Not even Hollywood has succeeded in making her a stereotype, a stencil of the screen.

And now, in *Anna Christie*, she talks. The photography of the picture is excellent. The harbor scenes are in all likelihood just what O'Neill saw in his imagination when he wrote his effective, if not dramatically perfect, play. It has always seemed to me that the happy ending of this piece had been forced; even the movie audience laughs, when clearly it should not even smile. And that is exactly what I did when I saw the original performance of the play in New York. It is too improbable, and hardly indicated by what has gone before. Did O'Neill, like his brawny, boastful Irishman, himself fall in love with his ex-prostitute heroine? The play exists for the struggle between land and sea, for the characterization of the father, his daughter and her lover—their struggle for ownership of the girl, and the girl's struggle for ownership of herself. It makes an excellent picture.

And Greta? The first shock comes when she opens her mouth to speak. For she has a deep contralto voice, almost masculine until you get used to its mellowness. Her accent is, considering the circumstances, surprisingly good. Of course she has her lapses, which may be covered up by the fact that she is supposed

to be a Swedish girl from St. Paul, who has been brought up by relations from the old country. Once or twice she says "yob" for "job"; she speaks of "judge" for "judge"; she has a continental roll of her 'r's; when she forgets herself in her excitement she falls back upon Scandinavian inflection; her English, now and then, suggests Scotch enunciation. And yet, for the greater part, she does finely with a new language. Another picture or two and she will have conquered these difficulties. I wonder what one of our Hollywood beauties would do with a film in Swedish, if she had to learn the lingo from the ground up. But there, I'm not a sadist, so we'll drop that.

II. China Express

This film, after a profitable week at the Cameo Theater, New York, was hurried out of the state on the score of its propaganda. It was made by Sovkino, a Soviet organization. Now, where do you think it went from New York? Of all places, to that center of radical internationalism, fair play, uncensored artistry—Boston! It found a place in the almost unvisited Repertory Theater; the night I saw it there were some eight persons in the orchestra, and forty-odd in the balcony. Among these forty I recognized half the communists in the city.

The picture? A revolt of coolies on the Chinese Express. And the end, a question—"Whither China?" Perhaps the picture was badly cut up, although friends who saw it in New York tell me that Boston saw it as New York had seen. Like so many other Russian films, it makes a fetch of uninterrupted, breathless action. The director would stir the spectator to a certain emphatic excitement. After a while he defeats his purpose by wearing out the spectator's eyes, just as the political orator wears out his auditor's ears. There is a certain falseness at the heart of the picture, even as propaganda. The revolt of the coolies is shown, not as a reaction from economic oppression, but as an answer to the lecherous desires of a capitalist who looks with evil eye upon the sister of one of the men. The capitalist is all black; the coolie is all white. Melodrama all over again, with well-defined heroes, and villains as clearly outlined. Propaganda, of course, forces such unnaturally clean-cut demarcations upon the creator. Even then, the motivation should have been more logical.

Why the film should have been hurried out of New York I cannot see—unless the spectacle of the underdog rising against his oppressor is *ipso facto* un-American. But we, too, as underdogs, once rose against our oppressors. And it was, at the time, a most American procedure.

III. High Treason

Believe it or not, here is a picture that was forbidden to New York altogether. And once again Boston served as a haven for the celluloid fugitive. New York banned *High Treason* on the score of high treason. It was, alleged the censors, seditious. And in Boston, the land of the scream and the home of the slave, *High Treason* passed unnoticed for the entire week of its stay. It would have unrolled altogether unsuspected by me, only that a friend who writes on the movies in Gotham

tipped me off about it. (She resembles Greta Garbo so closely that it has become a disturbing leit-motif of her career. But her voice is easier to listen to than La Garbo's. . . . Why, however, should you care about that?)

High Treason takes place in 1940, when the world has been divided into a federated Europe and a federated Atlantic. A border brawl over a bootlegger leads to a clash of soldiers; shortly the two federations are on the verge of war. There is a vast Peace League that attempts to prevent hostilities; its president makes his way to the radio room of the European chief just as the chief is about to broadcast his decision of war. It will mean the needless sacrifice of millions—women as well as men, for progress has made women into warriors. If the European chief is slain before the message goes into the air these millions will be saved. The president of the Peace League fires the shot that slays one man and saves millions.

Of course he is tried; it is even admitted that he saved millions of lives. That evidence, however, is considered irrelevant. Did he kill a man? And does not the law indicate that his own life shall pay forfeit? He is found guilty and goes to his doom as a saint.

There is a secondary love story between the daughter of the Peace president and a leading soldier whose duty takes him off to the impending carnage. The emphasis of the film, however, is clear. It is peace propaganda, far more logical in motivation than is the revolt propaganda of *China Express*. There are pleasant photographic touches, as when the white uniforms of the girls, contrasting with the dark uniforms of the men, suggest in color the contrast between white peace and black war. This, unlike *China Express*, is a sound picture, and a rather skilful use is made of noise as noise. To place the time of the action in 1940 was optimistic, to say the least.

It is easy, however, to see why the picture was deemed dangerous in New York. It is pro-peace, anti-war; it exposes the greed of the munitions manufacturers, who see in war an opportunity for fatter profits, and whose bullets and cannon balls and torpedoes fight on both sides, as long as they are paid for; it indicates the possible conflict between man the destroyer and woman the preserver; it suggests the triumph of love over hate. And that would never do in this so practical world—so practical that it is hell-bent toward self-destruction.

Among the worst offenses of religion (especially of the Christian religion) is that it endeavors to fasten men's thoughts morbidly and fearfully upon death. It is important that men should think about life, enjoy life, and free life from a confusion of ideas about death.

Logically, Christianity and humanitarianism are antithetical attitudes. Christianity stresses the vision of a mythical heaven and hell—"a life beyond life," which is about the most foolish phrase we know of. Humanitarianism stresses the interests of life.

It is very thoughtless to describe the cynic as having a coarse temperament. He has a temperament infinitely finer than most of his critics. He is sensitive. He is clear-visioned. He is outraged by the cruelties and indecencies and follies of life.

One who had been to "heaven" and returned might be able to tell us something about it. But the sole qualification, negatively, of those who pretend to be authorities on "heaven" is that they have never been there.

Frequently when it is said that a man has achieved greatness what is meant is that he has achieved notoriety or a prominent place in the annals of human folly.

Why talk of loving our neighbors? That is idle Christian patter. We shall do well if we learn to be tolerant and just and kindly toward our neighbors.

The greatest truth is simple—to the really thoughtful and curious mind. The simplest truth is too great and incomprehensible—for the dull mind.

Harm does not always appear on the surface. A sentimentalist, for instance, is a nice fellow—but what harm he does by his refusal to face facts!

Man has thrived on his imperfections: in his struggle to be comfortable and rational in his imperfections, man has developed civilization.

When the Christian counts his blessings, the chief one is that he is lucky to have kept out of heaven—and he prays for his luck to continue.

Probably there is no profound thought in this observation: but it is true that a man never regrets having made an interesting mistake.

The most imposing structure of religion falls to pieces in collision with a few simple questions.

Every real thinker occupies an intellectual position measurably in advance of his time.

Propaganda and Censorship Isaac Goldberg in The Enjoyment of Reading (Little Blue Book No. 897)

One of the most difficult distinctions to effect in the mind of the art-lover is that between art and purpose. Those who have artistic leanings are usually of a hypersensitive sort. They see a better world than that in which we live; some of them even seek, in art, an escape from the present life into one less circumscribed by the conditions that determine daily existence. So doing, as we have already seen, they but grasp the half of art's vast potentialities. My point for the moment, however, is that the artistic soul is as often as not the purposive one. It longs to remold the world nearer to the heart's desire.

Let us from the outset grant the validity of such a desire. It is your right and mine to work for such a better world as we imagine in our dreams. It is your right to adhere to a rigid moral code, as it is mine to flout such a code. It is your right to write books which aim not so much at beauty as at convincing minds and stirring them to action. We must not, however, confuse personal rights with artistic validity. Art, and therefore the literary art with which we are here most concerned, is not a sphere of action or of conduct or of persuasion. It is quintessential living, experience gone through and communicated. It is the stuff out of which actions and conduct may spring, but with pre-determining them it has nothing to do; no more than a sunset or a tree or any other natural phenomenon. For such aims there are numerous means other than the art-forms; these forms man has developed not out of conscious intellectual purpose but out of semi-unconscious emotional stirring. Beauty, wrote Emerson in one of his most quoted poems, is its own excuse for being. It is. Art has the autonomy of nature. It is in such a sense, indeed, and not in any merely mimetic acceptance, that Aristotle's dictum about the imitation of nature should be taken. Could but all artists strive, not to present a copy of what they see, but to imitate the unquestioning independence of that nature to which they belong, we should have less bastard art to deal with. The goal is equally worthy of the creative reader.

You behold a sunrise. It thrills your being. For a rare moment you are made to feel one with the glories of nature. You have asked no questions; they would have been intrusively superfluous. You did not gaze upon the daily miracle and say to yourself: "See, my dear soul, behold the sun. Daily it rises upon its appointed task of shedding light over all the earth and its waters. So should you arise each morn and go forth on your own tasks, shedding as you go a splendorous light over the faces of man and woman." It may very well be that one of the actual, physical effects of the sunrise will be to live you for the day and send you to your task with a sunny eagerness. That is an indirect effect. I know persons, on the other hand, who are saddened by the sunrise. It is, to them, none the less beautiful. It represents an experience that links them to all that lives in the universe.

So, with the obvious differences, should we regard a work of art; this is what we get from great books and great music, and this is what we are entitled to expect from art that aspires to greatness.

A book that is written to point a moral is to that extent a bad book. It is, so to speak, like a sunrise with a "lesson" painted on it. It interferes with the purity of our experience by seeking to give it a direction. The "moral" may be a good one; that makes no difference. It adulterates an experience from which we are entitled to derive our own response, without the obtrusive advocacy of a certain, specified view. It often happens that moralists produce great art; this occurs in spite of themselves. The passion behind their purpose proves so vital that it vitalizes their work. The reader, too, you must remember, has no right as an artist to force upon a writer any specific attitude. Nor, knowing of such an attitude, has he a right to condemn the book unread, because of it. As he reads, it may happen—as often it does—that he discovers more artistic life in it than in some other book which flatters his private opinions but which is artistically anemic. The writer, on general principles, should refrain from obtruding a purpose: the reader likewise should refrain from expecting one. Yet just because the unconscious life plays so great a part in art, it frequently transcends the conscious desires of reader and writer alike and produces art, as it were, willy-nilly. In spite of man, whether in nature or in art, true life is determined to live.

The moralistic prejudice, carried to one of its logical conclusions, leads to censorship. A firm belief in one's right as distinguished from the other man's wrong easily induces a sense of social responsibility. When such a belief approaches a pathological stage, it merges into a passion not only to dictate the beliefs of others, but to control their actions—to restrict them, indeed, to "proper" courses. The censorious may be sincere; they are also bigoted. Their attitude toward art is the same as their attitude toward life: moralistic, purposive, toward

all their excuses, scientific and pseudo-scientific, is a religious principle, an unwillingness to permit people the freedom of their own experiences. It is at this point that they clash inevitably with the artist-as-writer and with the reader-as-artist.

The point of view of the creative artist has been stated so succinctly by Thomas Hardy that I can do no better than to quote him.

It may seem something of a paradox to assert that the novels which most conduce to moral profit are likely to be among those written without a moral purpose. But the truth of the statement may be realized if we consider that the didactic novel is so generally devoid of vraisemblance as to teach nothing but the impossibility of tampering with natural truth to advance dogmatic opinions. Those, on the other hand, which impress the reader with the inevitableness of character and environment in working out destiny, whether that destiny be just or unjust, enviable or cruel, must have a sound effect, upon a healthy mind.

Of the effects of such sincere presentation on weak minds, when the courses of the characters are not exemplary and the rewards and punishments ill adjusted to deserts, it is not our duty to consider too closely. A novel which does moral injury to a dozen individuals and has bracing results upon a thousand intellects of normal vigor, can justify its existence; and probably a novel was never written by the purest-minded author in which there could not be found some moral invalid or other whom it was capable of harming.

Censorship exercises compulsion upon experience that should be free. Herein lies its damnation. The infusion of morals into art is quite as damnable, though the evil is more subtle.

The yoking of art to moralistic aims is of a piece with the yoking of art to a social or an anti-social purpose. The propagandist uses art as the instrument of conviction. He, too, puts compulsion upon experience. He has an aim to further rather than an adventure to communicate. His goal is to alter opinions, not to enrich life. His art may be compared to a game with loaded dice. In advance he arranges the outcome of his work so as to reinforce the intended result. What he should be doing, what he has every right to do, is writing pamphlets, essays, treatises, in which his thought should be presented clearly and forcibly. Instead, to the reader who asks for bread he gives the stone of propaganda.

Religion is most popular where life is dull and where also minds are dull.

When a man stops asking questions of life he ceases to live mentally.

Gods have been the worst enemies—i. e., the worst delusions—of man.

How great a man is depends very much on the stature of those who judge his greatness.

If the God imagined by Christians were real, we should find it impossible to respect him.

Obscurantists preach that knowledge is dangerous. And knowledge is indeed dangerous—to the obscurantists.

The leader of men, in a conventional and popular sense, is one who follows the prejudices of the majority.

A great deal of the tragedy of mankind has proceeded from its sad fierceness and befuddlement with illusions.

The notion of "sin" is the fallacy that preachers have the right and the wisdom to tell their fellows how to behave.

There can be no sound appreciation of the poetry of life unless there is first a rational understanding of life's prose.

Lies will prosper so long as there are minds which regard the truth as unpleasant and therefore not worthy of acceptance.

Some children believe in ghosts. Some grown persons, who are children mentally, believe in souls. There is no difference.

The true lover of knowledge is the man who really wants to know and who is always eager to exchange a theory for a fact.

A disillusioned view of the history of thought shows that ideas, with the masses, have been popular in proportion to their falsity.

No religious or philosophical belief has ever yet made a sane, normal man ready to die a minute earlier than he could help.

Why do men argue? Unfortunately, it is seldom with a desire to test and enlarge their opinions. Too often, it is an insincere game.

The Call of Freedom

Honor the heart at Freedom's call! That, throbbing high and brave, Dares for his blithesome hearth and home

The dull and dusty grave! Grand is the voice that, loud and clear,

Proclaims 'gainst despot's ban, Defiant, stern, in words of fire, The sacred Rights of Man!

But braver he, and grander far, Who rings the warning bell To wake the Freethought hosts to storm

The forts of heaven and hell, All hail the morn when they awake, Set not, O glorious Sun, Till the grandest victory That earth has ever won!

Then forward, brothers, foot to foot—

Charge headlong on the foe, And with your sword-arm's mightiest swing

Deal each determined blow; Cleave Superstition's shield of brass; Showering your blows like hail, And stab to Priestcraft's inmost heart,

Sheer through the triple mail. Shame, brothers, on our craven ranks—

Black shame to you and me If mankind's virtual king remain The Man of Galilee; If tales that pleased the infant world When at its infant play,

Shall wither with their blight and curse The manhood of today!

We'll let no priestly bribes or threats

Obscure our clearer sight, But count as its own great reward Our battle for the right; Plant Freethought on the ruined creeds,

Till, in the world all o'er, To Science, as the only Lord, Be glory evermore. —Saladin (W. Stewart Ross).

Nonsense is amusing in its light, well-recognized role. It is the distinction of religious leaders that they have offered nonsense as a guide to life.

You have met him—the man who loves a theory so well that he doesn't want to know whether it will work.

Skepticism may not be good for "the soul"—but it is a most stimulating, clarifying tonic for the mind.

Adventure is not dead so long as men can live daringly and vividly in their thoughts of life.

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Give It My Own Way

By John W. Gunn. FRIENDS, THIS IS GREAT STUFF! I was associated with a fellow who, when any little item of work was done, would exclaim: "Ah, that's a good work!" Judged by his scale of achievement, we regularly did a year's work each day. That was amusing. But now, quite seriously, I am sure that I have done a good, full, glorious year's work—all in one swift moment of perception that enabled me to recognize the supreme masterpiece of work which the profound, mystic, weaving and heaving of Time and Chance have, after ages of recalcitrant laboring in the depths of the dark reaches of Destiny, brought forth to the light of no common but extremely an extraordinary day in the Twentieth Century. I am using capital letters freely. I should even sprinkle this modest sketch—invariably modest in comparison with its amazing subject—with exclamation points and stars and arrows and like typographical astonishers. What's the use? What's the use? I know that this sketch can, no matter how ambitious I am, do nothing more than serve as a pointer. It can only call attention to the masterly bunkistic theme which has been covered so thoroughly—or conveyed so incomparably and perfectly in its plangent and even planetary quintessence—that nothing can be added to it and nothing can be taken away. Ah, yes, all these words of mine are grievously futile. I am not a scholar like William Lyon Phelps, nor an orator like Brutus, nor a clever, sinister guy like Mark Antony. Professor William Lyon Phelps—now, there's a pundit for you. He is a big professorial gun at Yale. He specializes, I believe, in English literature—not in thought, you understand, but literature. He has proved that the study of literature can be divorced from thought. Oh, that's easy for Professor Phelps. He goes into the most polite pages of magazines and newspapers and his own handwritten books as a literary critic. He has a critical mind, very critical in his own otiose way. (Get that—otiose! I am not sure it is just the word I ought to use. It means idle—and while Professor Phelps' mental activity is stationary and doesn't get anywhere, it is accompanied with a plain sweat of earnestness. It means useless—and Professor Phelps can't be considered entirely useless, when he has provided us with such a prodigious paragraph of bunk in which we have, so conveniently, the compressed essence of all Christian, patriotic thought in America. But "otiose" stands. It's a Phelpsish sort of word.) What has the fellow done? you will ask. Well, I have been rambling in this manner because of a tiny flutter of trepidation, a feeling that my pride in the discovery of this grand slam of bunk may not be justified in the reader's appreciation of this discovery, a nervous doubt whether you will see in a judiciously appropriate flash or will have the patience to explore at your leisure the vast and weighty implications of this stunningly quiet upheaval of bunk so unctuous, so unconscious, so umbilical in its serenity. I know you will appreciate it. Nobody could help it. But will you appreciate it enough? Will you take it to your heart and treasure it? The best can't be avoided. I must bludge. I must quote the thing and let its effect be felt somehow. Just bear this in mind, my friends—that geological ages of bunk are packed into these few words. These, as it were, are they: I had rather be a Christian and a foreigner than an American and not a Christian. My God, friends! Don't you realize how wonderful that is! Don't you instantly agree with me that, in making this discovery, I have performed, solely through the simplicity of my own sagacity, a year's work in our superb fraternal labor of classifying and celebrating bunk! Yet the thing merits more attention. It shouldn't be quietly laid away in 8-point type—although I grant that such a masterpiece could not, in the end, remain hidden but holds within itself a force that would blast its way to notoriety. These words of a great scholar—remember that, friends, a great scholar—deserve to be printed a bit more prominently. Let us try the 9-point type. Now! How's that? It begins to assume its true proportions—honor bright, doesn't it? It is glorious. It is inimitable. It is irresistible. It is sempiternal—I don't know exactly what that means just now but boys and girls, the best words are none too good for such an occasion. Oh, I tell you, these words of Professor Phelps are already...

can't—I say "we" because now you must be sharing my enthusiasm—leave this magnificent splurge of bunk in 9-point type. It has to be printed in 12 point. Gather round closely: I had rather be a Christian and a foreigner than an American and not a Christian. My friends, I am exhausted with joy and gratitude and frenzy at this terrific discovery. It seems to me that it should be engraved upon a huge tablet of stone, in such a manner as Coolidge's 500-word history of the United States. For here, indeed, in these sixteen words uttered by Professor Phelps, is an intellectual history of the United States from a certain, popular point of view. I can't let it go. Some strange compulsion—probably what Emerson called "the Inworking of the All"—drives me to do more approximate justice (full justice cannot be done) to this gorgeous peroration which crowns with sublimity centuries of Christian, patriotic thought. It must be given the honor of 14-point type, and there let it command the admiration and the astonishment of endless ages: I had rather be a Christian and a foreigner than an American and not a Christian. The believer in a religious creed is lacking in sensitiveness. He does not feel the true challenge of life, the real drama of life, the genuine beauty which is so simply natural and is so human in its connotations, the intellectual stimulation which logically turns the keen and sensitive mind away from creeds. We have not found any exceptions to this rule—that belief in a religious creed reflects decidedly a narrow-mindedness and a bluntness to the profound mystery and drama of life. Life is a fact. Death is a fact. Not all the oceans of rhetoric can make them what they are not. It is sensible to take each of these great facts in its natural order and character. Life is real and it is brief—then let us live it soundly and not clutter it with foolish speculation about death. Death is the end of life, so let us not cheat ourselves with illusions about it. There is a big surge of hokum in the old phrase that wisdom is to "see life steadily and see it whole." No man could see life steadily unless he were to stand still and neither think, learn, nor live. He couldn't see it whole because there is too much of it and he is successively seeing it from different angles. When praise is given to all the emotions and all the fine sentiments, it must be recognized that intelligence is the essential condition of a civilized society, of human brotherhood, of splendid and happy progress. The best emotions are unworthy and treacherous when they are not illumined by intelligence.

Help for Mankind or the Priest?

Although a strange clipping has fallen from somewhere upon our desk, offering the strange statement that one Rev. John A. McCloy, Catholic priest, is "a world-famous author and educator," we confess that we have never before heard the noise of this gentleman's greatness. Nor do we regard him as deserving much study, after looking at a sample of his mind in deliberate, professional functioning. He is quoted as saying: When we consider in particular the aristocratic character of culture, its futility as a cure for misery is emphasized. For culture is for the few; it does not touch the multitude. A handful of the privileged prate about culture saving the world—forgetting all the while that the world as a whole never sees or tastes it. The world as a whole is intent upon bread and butter and coal and clothes, and these are not poetic things. How ironically the poor would smile if you told them to let their souls be raised and expanded by philosophy, art and poetry. This priest derides the possibility of culture serving the multitude, and the inference is that religion is definitely more helpful than culture. His statement about culture is superficial; but granting its application, cannot the same charge be laid more forcibly against religion? Have religious dogmas and fears and prayers ever alleviated the misery of human beings? Does Catholic superstition supply the material wants of the poor? Does belief in Catholic legends help men and women in obtaining "bread and butter, coal and clothes"? It should be pointed out, also, that culture is a reflection of the world. Religion claims to be a reflection of "the other world" which is only a chimera profitably exploited by the clerical business men. Culture is realistic. Religion is mythical. It is certainly more useful to a poor man that he should listen to a lecture on biology than a sermon on theology; or that he should read a book about history rather than a book about church dogmas; or that he should cultivate an appreciation of the real beauty of life rather than beg his mind with nonsense about God and the Devil, Heaven and Hell, Bunk and Superstition. This priest speaks of culture in a limited sense, as something useless, something enjoyable but apart from the serious realities of life, something that is not at all practical. Intelligently, however, culture includes a great deal more than that. In science, for example, we have the most important culture of modern society—and science has conferred immense material benefits upon mankind. Defining culture as the sum of man's knowledge of life and his enlightened attitude toward life, it is clear that culture has brought mankind all the progress that they enjoy—and it is a great deal. Liberal culture and the modern spirit—realism, the spirit of enjoying life, the realization that human effort alone can be depended on for all the good that mankind envisage—these are the means through which mankind have achieved more freedom and joy and through which they will continue to function widely in progressive thought and labor and common welfare. Culture means the most intelligent and realistic attitude that mankind can have toward life. Culture means saner, better living. Seen in its full meaning, it certainly is the inspiration and the sum of progress. And what is the message of religion? "Prepare for a world to come." That helps a lot, doesn't it? Oh, yes, it helps the priest a lot. The New Doxology Praise God from whom all cyclones blow. Praise him when rivers overflow. Praise him who swirls down house and steeple. Who sinks the ship and drowns the people. Praise God for dreadful Johnston flood. For scenes of famine, plague, and blood. Praise him who men by thousands drowned. But saved an image safe and sound. Praise God when tidal waves do come. O'erwhelming staunch ships nearing home. Praise him when fell tornadoes sweep Their swift destruction o'er the deep. Praise God for poor Dakota's drought. For fires and floods in West and South. Praise him who sends the killing frost. And Louisville's dread holocaust. Praise God for the flood of Eighty-four. And the earthquake on the Pacific shore. Praise God for sorrow, pain, and woe. For railroad wrecks, for storm and snow. For parsons who with hood and bell Demand your cash or threaten hell. Praise God for war, for strife and pain. For earthquake shocks; and then, Let all men cry aloud, Amen. Notwithstanding all the dignity it has assumed and the apparent prestige it has held at times, the idea that virtue is the opposite of pleasure never has been and never can be successful. Unnatural and unconvincing, such an idea can be honored by men only in pretense or as an abstract, fatuous pose. Yet underlying all the propaganda of moral reformers is this idea, which is so violently at war with common sense, with natural sentiments, with humane emotions and aspirations. Like all things, man's superstitions have developed from the simple to the complex. The superstitions of primitive man were comparatively simple; the superstitions of civilized man (how civilized!) are more complicated but not more intelligent. If there is any other difference, it is that civilized man has made his superstitions more adroit in rhetoric and doctrinal trimmings and has surrounded them with a protective haze (at best) of "interpretation" and "idealism." Great thinkers have not been admired generally as heroes; nor have great artists; nor have great scientists. It is obvious that a popular hero must be well within the range of popular understanding or appreciation. Yet the insight of a civilized minority has kept the greatest thinkers, artists and scientists in a heroic light which, rare and lofty, is peculiarly their own. Here is a simple, useful thought which will save us a good deal of time: a reasonable man cannot prove the soundness of his ideas to a man who is incapable of or unfriendly toward the use of reason. One cannot prove to a fool that his opinions are foolish. Proof is a matter of reason and its quality is understood only by men of reason. New ideas require fresh and zestful minds for their appreciation; and so, for that matter, do the important among the old ideas. One should—and one can—retain one's mental freshness until the end of one's life. Youth is often dull of mind, while age often sparkles. Men have talked, argued, dreamed, wept, raved, and fought about various conceptions of a God; but in all the centuries of their theistic frenzy they have never brought forward a single piece of respectable evidence for the existence of a God. In orthodox blasts of damnation, the freethinker is numbered chief among the sinners. Shall he repent the clear exercise of his mind? Shall he repent his knowledge? Shall he repent his freedom from superstition? How absurd! The most stupid and bloody and obscene pages of history are those which reflect the influence of priests. The brightest pages of history are those which reflect the nobility, the sanity, the humane effectiveness of skepticism. Volumes of religious apologetics cannot conceal the importance of the simple, striking fact that man's fears and man's interest in religion have exhibited a correlative weakening as scientific knowledge has advanced. Preachers naturally encourage "the sense of sin," which means a man's feeling that he is wrong to disagree with or ignore or fail to help...

thought and labor and common welfare. Culture means the most intelligent and realistic attitude that mankind can have toward life. Culture means saner, better living. Seen in its full meaning, it certainly is the inspiration and the sum of progress. And what is the message of religion? "Prepare for a world to come." That helps a lot, doesn't it? Oh, yes, it helps the priest a lot. THE TIME OF THE STORY From the fall of 1921 until the summer of 1923. It was at the former period that Means began to serve Mrs. Harding as her private investigator. It was in the latter period that President Harding died—suddenly and mysteriously. The time covers, however, all of the Harding administration; for Means was on the inside from the start, and he has lived to see the drama completely unfolded. THE SCENE OF THE STORY Mainly in Washington. Many of the most exciting scenes occur in the White House—in the private sitting room of Mrs. Harding. Various offices in the Department of Justice. The "mystery house" on H street, where Means is called in the dark, small hours of one morning to prevent a scandal which might have ruined the President of the United States then and there. Glen Haven, the Washington home of Mrs. Boyd, a friend of Mrs. Harding, where the President's wife first reads his letters to Nan Britton and Nan's diaries. It was in the Boyd home that Harding secretly met Nan Britton on one occasion (Mr. Boyd being a close friend of the President) and Mrs. Harding arrived most embarrassingly on the scene; Means was again called to the rescue. It was on the veranda of the Boyd home that Mrs. Harding told Means—as reported by Means—of her strange, desperate resolve. The "fortress" in which Means lived at a rental of \$1,000 a month and where "the gang" had their headquarters is also the setting for many significant scenes. There Jess Smith revealed his fears to Means. There most important conferences were held. There—in the back yard—was the "bank vault" of the super-grafters. The Wardman Park Hotel and Means call in the night. There Means introduces the reader to a sinister scene of death. Suicide or murder? Instructed by someone higher up, Means takes from Smith's dead body a collection of most vital, dangerous papers. All this happens at four o'clock in the morning. The news that Jess Smith has "committed suicide" is given out officially at six o'clock in the morning. A leading New York City hotel, where Means has a very clever yet simple arrangement for collecting millions in graft from the bootleggers. The reader is told where the money was delivered, how Means watched over its delivery, what precautions were taken for accuracy and safety. A Chicago apartment house, in which Nan Britton's married sister had her residence and where Nan thought she had certain letters and diaries safely hidden away. But Means, by patient planning, has his own way with that apartment—and in the end Mrs. Harding has the proof that she dreads yet demands. A Pullman car, in which Nan Britton is traveling from New York City to Washington. Means enters the car at Baltimore. He keeps Nan under surveillance. Will she go to the White House? Several persons are very much worried. Mrs. Harding is jealous and desperate. THE CHARACTERS OF THE STORY President Harding—nominally the chief executive of the United States, yet in reality the signer of papers for Harry Daugherty and Fall—the gay liver who is entangled in his own desires. He is Nan Britton's lover and the man whom Mrs. Harding first loves, then hates, and then—? Mrs. Harding—proud, jealous, desperate. She insists upon finding out every detail of the Nan Britton affair. She knows enough about "the gang's" operations to be fearful. Nan Britton—who pursued Harding from her girlhood and who found him, at length, not difficult to catch. Nan fits in and out of the story as the lovely but sinister Nemesis of Harding. Harry Daugherty—with his "cold nerves of steel." He was the master of operations, the leader of "the Ohio gang." Jess Smith—a dandified Babbitt from Ohio who was involved in plottings and financial operations far beyond his natural capacity. Jess Smith grew fearful. He had reason to be afraid. General Sawyer—the White House physician, not too old for a bit of philandering. What part did he have in the climax? What did he know about the strange death of President Harding? Mr. and Mrs. Boyd of Washington—close friends, respectively, of President and Mrs. Harding. Dramatic and delicate situations were staged in the Boyd home. The Unnamed Man—who called Means at four o'clock in the morning from the Wardman Park Hotel, and who directed Means to search the rooms and the body of the dead Jess Smith. Gaston B. Means—who had the most intimate knowledge of the astonishing drama of the Harding regime, and who has finally disclosed what he knows in The Strange Death of President Harding, the most startling book of the century! THE ACTION OF THE STORY In detail—the action is told so perfectly and dramatically by Means that the book itself must be read for the real effects. In brief—there are love, jealousy, espionage, hate, fear, greed, graftings and plottings and bribings, mutterings of scandal and death. Human emotions appear in all their strangeness and strength, breaking down conventions and laws, issuing in tragedy and—mystery? The Most Startling Book of the Century. \$3.65 Postpaid. HALDEMAN-JULIUS PUBLICATIONS GIRARD, KANSAS

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