

Morality, Stripped of Dogma, Is Rationalism in Behavior

By E. HALDEMAN-JULIUS

1. The Idea of Sin

There is no subject more confused with emotionalism, more burdened with prejudice, than that of morality. Here it is most difficult to persuade the average man—or let us say the crowd—to be cool, direct and rational. In distinguishing between the average man (individually) and the crowd in its collective attitude, I have in mind the well-known fact that as an individual the average man will discuss morals more reasonably than as a member of the crowd: get him by himself and he will admit certain exceptions and reservations to the orthodox gospel; yet the texts and dogmas of that gospel move him no less. He thinks that even if one is privately skeptical and rather free in practice, still the ruling morality should be stubbornly upheld in theory. It should rule, that is to say, in the opinions of men if not in their actions. Paradoxically, this morality is held to be indisputable while in many respects it is recognized to be impossible.

But what prejudices spring forth when one mentions morality. The very term itself, with its vague and sinister connotations, is inflammatory to the passions and sends the judgment reeling. Rarely do we find a man who can discuss this subject with thoughtful impartiality, seeking

only the truth, dealing with mooted moral questions as ideas. We may at once remark, of course, that this attitude of feeling rather than thought is commonly observed with regard to all ideas of whatever nature. Ideas indeed have no general interest among men. Utterior considerations having to do with prejudice and policy, with conservatism and compromise, dominate their beliefs. They argue, in defense or denunciation, but they do not discuss.

Even so, a special note of excitement and intolerance seems to follow upon the mention of such words as "morals," "virtue," "vice," "sin," and the like. Notions of good and bad, right and wrong, are more passionately interesting to the average man than ideas of true and false. The moral notions of men are evidently among the sacred things even though these notions are honored in the breach rather than in the observance.

For the explanation of this attitude we may look, I believe, to the influence of religion and Puritanism. The idea of sin, in the popular sense of the word (which is indeed the theological sense), precludes an intelligent view of moral questions. It suggests, in the first place, a melodramatic view of behavior. Ancient prejudices and taboos give it a lurid air. Things are painted black and white indiscriminately. The common sense

with which men may consider actions that do not involve morals is lacking when "good" and "bad" are in dispute. Acts of a moral nature are regarded as in a class apart and standards are applied to them which would not be considered with regard to most of the practical decisions of life. It is the dogma of "sin," essentially the religious attitude toward behavior, which makes the difference. Even the average sinner feels strongly about his conduct as to morals and has a sense of guilt which he would not have if he were merely to commit an ordinary error in judgment, to act foolishly, to hurt himself or others in a way not sinful. On the other hand, the free man may live quite sensibly with good judgment and consideration for others, and yet be called a sinner, and yet be absolutely without the "sense of sin."

Let me repeat that the idea of "sin" is, first and last, religious. It has no place in a rational, human consideration of morality. Originally, there was the idea that certain actions were displeasing to a God and would be punished by damnation beyond the grave. There indeed we see the theoretical foundation of the dogma of "sin." It is ungodliness, it is worldliness, it is disobedience to divine law—and while priests and preachers have been thrown into much confusion and disagreement about what is divine law, they have been none the less positive and dogmatic. The idea of "sin" also owes much of its forcefulness to the fiction that man has a "soul," the supposed violation of

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which by the sinner is far more important than any question of physical, social, human consequences. Thus we have morals, which should be considered as sensibly and dispassionately as anything else in life, befogged with a spurious "spiritual" significance.

A good many who have strict, bigoted ideas of morality no longer hold the dogma that a God issues commands, rewards and punishments. They have discarded theology but they are still faithful to that Puritanism which was produced by religion. Where the literal belief of old times has disappeared, the imaginative, falsely colored idea of "sin" remains. Superstition in the field of morals condemns certain behavior as sinful when there is no tangible, tenable reason given why it is sinful—it is just sinful, low or sensual or vulgar or what-not, that's all. Again, this superstitious or dogmatic morality is excessively aroused about "sins" which are, even from a rational point of view, foolish or harmful actions. Aside from the actual consequences of wrong (realistically not "spiritually" wrong) behavior, there is felt to be something inherently wicked about it. Its sinfulness, we may say, is not simply a matter of fact but of added, lurid fancy.

Whatever turn it takes, the idea of "sin" is incompatible with rationalism in morals. It is childish. It is, of course, utterly unscientific. It imports a fervor, at its worst becoming fanaticism, into the judgment of actions which should be judged solely with regard to their actual nature and results. What is good or bad is, intelligently considered, only a question of what is true or false, what is wise or foolish, what will work satisfactorily or what will not so work. Immorality is a matter of error, not of crime. And to be immoral, as most people are in one way or another, is not necessarily a matter of ruin or depravity or "sin" in its melodramatic significance. Nor is a strictly moral person necessarily a person of admirable character or ideal behavior. He may conform to the orthodox code of morals, yet be actually a far worse member of society than many so-called sinners.

The idea of "sin" has been greatly enhanced and aggravated by Puritanism. It is not due to reason or to instinct but to training, prejudices instilled during the impressionable period of childhood. It has been said that one who is reared in the notions of "sin" and shame—chiefly regarding sex—can never quite emancipate himself from his early training: he may intellectually break away from those notions, and he may decide freely about his behavior, but there is a residue of emotionalism about such things which will go with him through life. Raised in a perfectly natural atmosphere, free from the taint of religion and Puritanism, one escapes the ridiculous "sense of sin": which is not at all the same thing as to say that one will have no moral code, rationally derived from experience and a matter of plain cause and effect, observation and judgment, rather than perverse, perverted dogma. Anyway, the free man, even when he has a handicap of false training, will throw overboard the antiquated, unscientific idea of "sin." He will simply distinguish among the facts of behavior in the clear light of realism and the common meaning of "good" and "bad" will have no weight with him. For it is only when stripped of dogma—of the idea of "sin"—that we can find sense in morality and approach this subject, like other subjects, reasonably.

2. The Social Basis of Morality

Moral ideas do not emanate from a divine source nor are they intuitively perceived by men. They come from experience, from certain necessities of the social order, from the relations of man with his fellows. They have, primarily and most vitally, a social justification; their purpose is to protect and to facilitate the social life of men. This is their greatest significance, although there is of course an individual as well as a social morality, and indeed much of the trouble in moral controversy is an inability to make a sensible distinction between the two kinds. Individual morality, it seems obvious, should be left to the individual.

vidual. What concern all of us, most of all, are the ethics of social intercourse.

Whatever may be our various personal codes in matters affecting only ourselves, there are certain essentials of behavior upon which men generally are agreed. Defined at its simplest, society says that we shall respect one another's lives, liberties and possessions: thus social morality is a protection against personal invasion. Ideally it is that, but we know that it is far from perfect either in its principles or its operations. Of course, an ideal social morality would remove injustice from the world. As it is, men sanction as moral—or, at any rate, legitimate—behavior that is anti-social. We have exploitation, war, harsh and unfair laws, oppressive customs, many forms of intimidation and discrimination, and personal wrongs which society cannot—which it is not the business of society to—remedy.

It is only when the interests of society are collectively at stake, when the protection of these interests is a vital matter, that social morality or legislation has a place. It is not conceivable, for example, that any social action could compel everyone to be perfectly fair and kindly and honorable in his dealings with his fellows. That is a question of individual morality and, beyond that, of the progressive course of enlightenment and improvement of the social environment. For even within the scope of its correct and vital business society does not completely succeed in enforcing its codes, because poor, ignorant, harsh environments continually produce their fruits of evil. Just as it is foolish to force social morality into the sphere of personal interests, so it is inadequate in the last degree to depend upon individual morality for taking care of our social problems. The influence of environment is tremendous and it is a most important part of social policy to attack at their roots those conditions which breed crime, poverty and all the characteristics which are found in submerged masses denied both light and opportunity. Many reformers of the Christian type would be much better occupied if, instead of trying to make men good in a fanatical way and in a purely individual sense, they should direct their attention to the larger social evils. In a prosperous, educated, socially well-ordered world men might safely be left to work out their individual salvation, which anyway is nobody's business but their own.

But if the power of society and the conditions of society do not entirely guarantee social behavior—if our laws and our ideas of human rights are not always enforced—there is little or no dispute about the broad necessities of morality from this point of view. However widely men may disagree in their ethical notions, none will deny that it is wrong to take life, to injure the person, to rob, to disturb the peace, to commit overt injury or violation upon another—in short, to conduct oneself menacingly toward other members of society. These are laws without which social life would be impossible and men are forcibly restrained, as far as may be, from violating these laws. In addition to such laws there are familiar terms of fair and decent dealing between man and man, which there is no agency of law to enforce, which are observed in varying degrees with many reservations and lapses, but which theoretically at least and to a large extent in practice men agree to consider right and necessary. We expect, for example, a certain amount of truthfulness from our fellows; we are often disappointed, and we do not take just anybody's word without confirmation (if the matter is very important), yet if there were no truthfulness in human relations we should be in chaos indeed: fortunately, the truth is often fitted to convenience and self-interest, a certain standard of reliability and courtesy is more or less easily maintained by the average man, and this, even in small things, is more important than we realize in the agreeable functioning of society.

And why have we these laws, these rules, these ideals of social morality? They are not valid because they have been revealed or commanded by a deity. They rest upon no dogma. They do not call

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Extract from League of Nations Report (1927)

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"The Story of a Terrible Life," by Basil Tozer; bound in red cloth, with green title-lettering in mounted panels on front and back; 242 pages, 22 chapters; \$2.65 postpaid.

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for sanction upon the intuition. They are simply plain details belonging to the technique of living together in groups. They are right not because of any idea of "sin" nor because they are inherent in any abstract conception of morality but originally, solely and realistically because they contribute to the safety and the success of social life. If men's social interests could be better served by lying to one another, then it would be wrong to tell the truth. If it were desirable that the individual should take the law into his own hands, that each man should enforce his own rights and will, then law and order would be wrong. If murder and robbery could be conceived fantastically as indifferent things, affecting only the murderer or the robber, then they would not come within the sphere of social morality. In short, morality—in the only sense in which it commonly concerns us—is a means of social protection and organization.

And at bottom our objection to murder, robbery, or any injury is not at all abstract nor altruistic but arises from our own disinclination to be killed or robbed. We object first of all selfishly—that at least is the origin of such laws, although we have developed a more humane sensitiveness and a progressive idealism: yet this idealism, after all, is based upon reality and would be meaningless if the acts condemned were not socially harmful or if they did not represent the actual injury of one man to another.

When we go beyond these obvious moral questions and enter the field of disputed ethics, where the lines of right and wrong are not so clearly drawn, we still find an attempt at social justification. Yet here dogma, tradition, custom and various powerful interests that wish to uphold certain institutions create a great deal of confusion. It may be that man's ideas of morality have largely a social intent, always and everywhere, but it does not follow that this intent is scientifically carried out. Primitive taboos had a social as well as sacred significance but they were not by that token scientific. Puritanism has been defended on social grounds, yet is not scientific, sane, social morality and is based upon a false view of life.

An interesting variety of moral standards prevails throughout the world, and what may be moral in one country—what may even be looked upon as a social duty—is immoral in another country. "Cannibalism," pointed out Samuel

Butler, "is moral in a cannibal country." French and English ideas of moral behavior are not the same. The Chinese and the Americans have different ethical notions. There is an official morality, a set of ethics decreed by custom, in each country which is by no means rationally defensible as a whole and which the free man, influenced by facts without regard for the alleged sacredness of traditions or institutions, chooses to ignore. He has no belief in the infallibility of an ideal of conduct, of a popular superstition or moral code, simply because it is believed by a large number of people. On that principle the worst errors and outrages of the past would be morally defensible because they were consistent with the official or popular morality prevailing at such times.

And conscience, as anyone must realize who thinks about the matter, is a fallacy which leaves room for all sorts of vagaries. Conscience is simply the reflection of one's environment and the way one has been taught. A medieval conscience is not the same thing as a modern conscience; a Christian conscience differs from a rationalistic conscience; the conscience of one who has been raised in a sordid environment will not be as scrupulous nor sensitive as the conscience of one who has enjoyed a more wholesome nurture, a more civilized background, a fairer chance in life; among periods of society, among nations, among classes, and among individuals there are varying manifestations of that kind of judgment on behavior which is fictitiously idealized as "conscience." We are left, then, with only the safe criteria of realism, facts and not dogmas, to determine moral ideas and, insofar as they are most commonly and rightfully our business, it is their social bearings that we must consider.

3. The Enjoyment of Life

The tendency of morality as a fanatical, religiously inspired code has been to oppose the enjoyment of life. It has taught men to be ashamed of their natural feelings and proclaimed in a most exaggerated way the virtue of self-denial. (This is not the same thing as self-control, which means not an unnatural abstinence but a sane, happy moderation in all things.) The classic Christian doctrine is that mortification and suffering, a rejection of the pleasures and ambitions of the world, is righteous for its own sake. The extreme exemplification of this doctrine was given by the hermits of the Middle Ages. Generally

speaking, save in certain periods and places, Christians have not tried very hard to follow this excessive doctrine. After all, human nature will not for long be denied and if suppressed in one way will break out in another. The very fanaticism of the pious moralists is an expression of passions which should be more given wholesome expression and which, denied on moral grounds, have been all the more fierce in their fanatical distortion.

But the puritanical anti-worldly influence of religion has done much to spoil the joy of life. Early Protestantism was sterner (one might say more logical and consistent from its point of view) in its demands upon the average Christian than was Catholicism, which (to put it mildly) permitted a pretty wide liberty of morals in practice and which had, of course, the handy technique of confession and absolution. The evangelical Christian reformers, however, were terribly earnest and literal in their moralistic preachments and wherever they looked they saw the scarlet face of Sin. Puritanism—the most unhappy and unnatural moral movement of history—was the result. It is not too much to say that according to the Puritan code pleasure was sinful *per se*. At best, it rested under a gloomy suspicion and to be on the safe side a man should refrain from smiling and enjoying himself: to deny oneself something pleasurable was to perform an act of piety; indulgence came to be associated with the idea of excess and the thought of moderation was lost sight of—one must either have a "hell of a time," joylessly, in this life or joyously lay up for oneself a "hell of a time" in a future life.

Influential as Puritanism still is, especially in America, and still carrying with it artificial, spurious problems of moral choice—a moral obscurantism, seeking to deny or hide the facts of human nature—its history is even worse. And its recent history, too, for not so long ago, dancing, the theater, novel-reading and the like were denounced by the religious bunkshooters of morality and the enjoyment of these things was called "sin." Few hold this extreme attitude today, yet the Puritan psychology is still at war with the natural and progressive enjoyment, freedom, and well-rounded expression of life.

Although there is no doubt that rationalism in behavior is growing in favor and the enjoyment of life (inevitably with the material expansion and enrichment of society) is more frankly recognized and sought, it is still necessary in any discussion of morality to emphasize this viewpoint. A narrow life is still felt by many to have a moral justification. The ideal of freedom and naturalness in behavior is opposed in many ways by tradition and prejudice. This opposition is most conspicuously manifested with regard to sex, of which more will be said in the following chapter, but it runs like an inherited taint through all discussion of moral questions. Nothing is more salutary than to have clearly in mind the truth that life is to be enjoyed and the human personality is to be expressed, attempts at suppression bringing inevitably the most unfortunate results.

The old distinction between duty and pleasure was wrong; reasonably taken, they do not conflict; perhaps it would be an exaggeration to say that they never conflict, but at any rate needless conflicts are posed between them. Certainly, the idea of any kind of duty apart from human society and the obvious needs of this life is foolish beyond words. In behalf of that phase of Christian morality not an intelligent point can be made. It belongs to the sad, ignorant history of human error and examples of it in this twentieth century are as grotesquely antiquated as the idea of witchcraft or astrology or miracles—in short, as the idea of supernaturalism in any of its manifestations.

As for our duty to society, our human and social morality, we have seen that it is quite rational in its foundation and aim and implies no contradiction of the natural and social morality. The Puritan would make the individual behave virtuously in conformity with his narrow code and allege that the welfare of society is at stake. It is not a convincing claim. Social morality demands only that we shall not interfere with another's liberty, life, peace or property. It demands that we shall adjust ourselves to a socially ordered way of living in

matters which extend beyond the sphere of the individual.

And within the limits of tolerable social order we should be as individuals perfectly free to exercise our own moral choice. If the individual judges it his duty to follow a sparing or rigid mode of life, that is of course his right, although we would favor him if possible by pointing out the absurdity of his course. But the free man also has the right to enjoy life in a larger way and, with his rational attitude toward morality, he will indeed be superior to the inhibitions of piety and timidity and false training. Individually, there is a variety of moral attitudes which we may hold and no man the worse for another man's behavior. A good deal of moral fanaticism is due not to actual injury but to injured feelings or prejudices. But mere dislikes or distaste—a merely dogmatic notion of good and bad—is not admissible reason for interference. When each man orders his own life according to his conscience, he has done all that is required of him and all that is right for him to do.

At any rate, the free man refuses to put his head in the yoke of any code of morality that denies nature, reality and the rational, full-rounded enjoyment of life. He has no patience with the fiction of inherent "sin." Things are good or bad, not in a pious sense nor because thinking makes them so, but in a realistic sense and because they do or do not work out happily and efficiently.

Fortunately, the will to live carries with it the will to enjoy life and so Puritanism, piety, prejudice, morality is at hopeless war with human nature. Its influence has been bad enough, in all conscience, and the average man has not the courage (primarily he has not the vision) to live as freely as a few have chosen to live; but there are obvious and insurmountable difficulties in the attempt to make people, not good and happy, but good and miserable. The strongest forces of life cry out against the impossibility of a stern ethical code. Reasonably, there is no justification for such a code; and practically, it will not work. Not in the most powerful days of Puritanism was that way of life tolerable or successful. Actually, human nature cannot be suppressed—it can only be distorted. Puritanism does not solve any problems, but it creates worse problems, than those which it pretends to solve. It may cultivate the "sense of sin" and it may encourage hypocrisy, but it cannot banish what it calls "sin" from the world. Fundamentally, these stern moralists are the most foolish of rebels for they are in rebellion against the unalterable forms and tendencies of life. They are like the old king who commanded the tide of the sea unnaturally to cease.

4. Character and Morals

On this subject of morality, one has always to keep in mind the

What is

(1) A QUAKER?

(2) MR. HOOVER?

Is President-Elect Hoover a Quaker? He is called a Quaker. But what is a Quaker? But what business has a Quaker on a battleship? L. M. Birkhead contributes an important article to the March, 1929, DEBUNKER, entitled "President Hoover and Quakerism." Read it! Send \$1.50 now (\$2 Canadian and foreign) for a year. Address The Debunker, Girard, Kansas.

different meaning of the term "morality" when used by a careful thinker and when used by the average man. It is a term that has been much abused and restricted, not looked at broadly, not soundly identified with wisdom and character. So, taking the common use of the term, it is possible to say that a man may have character without morals or vice versa. That is a paradox which we make with smiling reserve. Yet the truth that lies back of it is not difficult to see.

Commonly, to be "moral" means to abstain from certain habits, certain indulgences, to which a bad name has been given—habits which are judged immoral by those who take such judgment peculiarly as their privilege. Such judgment is, in fact, a superficial view of character. It indicates a poor sense of values. Thus viewed, a man may pass as moral in conformity to certain rules of "good" and "bad" yet at the same time be lacking in the finer qualities of character. Now, habits are important beyond a doubt, indeed we may consider everything as a matter of habit—our way of thinking, our treatment of our fellows, our style of response to various situations—but let me distinguish for the sake of the argument between habits and character.

Intelligent people do not judge their fellows by whether or not they "sin" in a Christian way of speaking, or whether or not they have certain vices which bulk most largely in the common view of morality: they judge character as a whole and they put first things first. Morals, as tentatively distinguished from character, are of no great concern to the free man. He has, for example, a very free attitude toward sex and a liberal indulgence in this pleasure does not shock him nor lead him to rate another as immoral: what he judges most particularly in this respect is fairness and consideration for the rights of personality: the manner rather than the fact of indulgence. Many who live by the strict moral code are stupid and brutal in their sex relations, while many who seek the thrills of love outside the laws and conventions are contrastingly humane, considerate, gracious. In the narrow meaning given to morality, the latter would be called "immoral"; and yet in character they are obviously far superior to the merely "moral" fellow.

The sober, respectable virtues are not essentially indicative of a fine character. We all know men who do not drink, smoke, swear, gamble, philander or the like—who walk as regards these things in the straight and narrow path—but who are poor, petty and even mean in character. Perhaps the trouble is that they are unimaginative; perhaps their very virtues are due to a lack of the generous impulses; it is not so much that they are good as that they are dull. Here is a sober man—very well, but that doesn't tell us much about his character. Is he a kindly man? Is he honorable? Is he a man of integrity, courage and generosity? What, as a whole, are his principles and practices in the major issues of life? These are the criteria by which the man who freely considers the subject of morality is guided in estimating his fellows. In a way, it may be said that he cares no more about a man's habits, superficially considered, than about his clothes. They are, so to speak, the gestures of the man, but is more important is the essence of the man, what really he is in his sentiments, ideas, and purposes in life.

Old-fashioned morality, religious morality, the common restricted morality is inadequate because it lays too much stress upon maxims of behavior that do not touch the real issue—or that touch, rather coldly, only a few issues. This kind of morality is full of injunctions as to what one should not do—usually it is negative—but there is in it no real inspiration to character and no philosophy of life that will serve in a large, broad, intelligent spirit to guide human conduct or govern human relations. Take the Ten Commandments, which we are often assured are statements of the highest morality, and reflect what the full literal observance of those commandments might mean as to character. Plainly, a man could observe them all and yet be a poor sort of man. They require of course no intelligence; they demand no lofty standards of character; they encourage no fine idea of humanity; they are so many rules that may be literally obeyed by men of narrow spirit.

What is far better than "morals" as usually implied is, after all, the combination of good taste, a sense of honor, and a sense of justice. This combination is admirably observed in many indi-

viduals who have all manner of "bad habits" and who could never pass a moral examination before a committee of normally good, respectable or pious citizens. The man who drinks excessively, let us say, may excel in the deeper things of character the man who is a strict abstainer from potent liquors. And of course the free man does not hold the foolish belief that drinking is bad in itself, nor does he have at all a moral attitude toward drinking: in great excess it is foolish and destructive—it is bad policy, in a manner of speaking, rather than bad morals. Morally, the drunkard is no more culpable than the man who injures himself by overeating or by any other abuse of nature.

Profanity and vulgarity, again, may be in poor taste—although most men find a good use for them—but it is foolish to rail against them in moral condemnation. It is ridiculous to feel a "sense of sin" concerning these things. Gambling is folly—at least gambling on any considerable and very reckless scale—but it is to be judged by intelligent not moral standards. Like any other course of action, it is simply a question of what is sensible. Yet many good people consider that a gambler is, by that token, a lost and undone soul.

Of course, there are people who think that it is immoral to stay up late at night: they think that virtue is signified by retiring to bed at nine o'clock and rising with the dawn. Indeed, in this sphere of superficial habits there is a great confusion of ideas concerning what is "good" and "bad."

Common morality, however, is distinguished by its tendency to place the emphasis of moral judgment upon just such superficial habits, while being less curious and concerned about character in its profounder aspects. Yet such habits may be trifles, episodes, excrescences, while character is a man's whole life. What interests the free man, what to him is the greater view of morality, is the individual's characteristic, guiding attitude toward life—his traits which reveal a broad or a narrow personality—his sensitiveness to life, his standards of honor and value, his consideration for his fellow men. There are plenty of "good" people in the world who are mean, ungenerous and cowardly; and there are plenty of "bad" people who are fine, generous and brave.

But of course the intelligent view of morality is a view of character and conduct as a whole and in the light of rationalism. Certain habits, let us call them in the common way "bad" habits, may indicate weakness in a man; but they do not indicate viciousness nor dishonor nor meanness. It is destructive to a man's health for him to drink excessively, but it does not follow that the man is a fool or a knave. It is well to be precise in our statements: so that if a man is a drunkard, instead of saying that he is not "good" let us correctly say that he is not sober. And if the sober

man is not to be trusted, let us say of him that he has no sense of honor. If a man has all the category of commonplace virtues yet is a man of ugly, undesirable character, let us say then that he would be a better man if he had less "morals" and a fairer character.

5. Belief and Morals

I do not know that there is anything in this world quite so valuable as intelligence—and intelligence, to be sure, is a very vital part of character. Intelligence makes life safer, happier, fairer in every way. It is a fine individual recommendation and a very important social guarantee. And the man who is intelligently careful and has a likely sense of responsibility in his beliefs is apt to be scrupulous generally in his behavior and relations.

Beliefs, however, are intellectual and not moral. If there is any ethical obligation regarding beliefs, it can only be that of fairness and sincerity. And, of course, toleration—toleration first, last and all the time, for nothing is so vicious as that spirit of bigotry which would deny to any man the right of deciding and expressing freely his opinions. For what a man thinks he should answer to none but himself: his own mind, as Thomas Paine said, should be his own "church."

There is a word in season to be said then, before leaving this subject, about the religious attitude of morality which makes a man's beliefs the test of virtue or, as our pious friends would put it, the test of "righteousness." So far as intelligent men are concerned, no argument need be made on the absurdity of this intolerant pretension that piety and morality are synonymous. Yet it is an idea widely held among Christians and may well be given some slight attention.

There are two aspects of this idea. In the first place, there is the claim that one who does not believe in the dogmas of religion—who has not, at the very least, the saving belief in a God—is by that very sign not a good nor a moral man. Thus doubt or disbelief ("infidelity") is held to be immoral *per se*. The greatest stress of Christian evangelism is indeed laid upon the mere declaration of belief: believe and you will be saved, believe not and you will be damned. And with many this crude bigotry and dogmatism, this utterly contemptible denial of the higher ethics of honest thought and intellectual liberty, passes for "morality."

Yet it needs only a little reflection to perceive that belief has nothing to do with morals as the term is commonly employed. Ideas are to be considered realistically, without regard to the distinctions of "good" and "bad." Thinking is a mental, not a moral, process and a man's beliefs represent, or they should represent, what he

has convinced himself to be true. When we have studied the facts about any argument or problem, when we have subjected this problem to the tests of reason, then we reach a conclusion about it which is our belief. It is irrelevant to speak of this belief in terms of morality. A belief in a God is not moral any more than a disbelief in a God is immoral.

To be sure, beliefs may have good or bad consequences in action. There is an impersonal level of thought, however, on which ideas should be considered apart and for themselves. What is seriously a confusion is the holding of moral preconceptions about certain beliefs: the tendency to demand allegiance to ideas in the spirit of moralistic dogma, thus rejecting critical inquiry into the truth of those ideas and indeed discouraging an impartial consideration of the question whether those ideas are (if we may use the term in a broad sense) really moral, that is to say humane and useful in their consequences. As a matter of fact, the widest variation of moral conduct is found among men who hold the same beliefs: whether logically they should or not, the fact is that beliefs and morals do not have a perfect, close relation.

There is another aspect of the Christian attitude toward belief—namely, that some submission to or profession of religious faith is essential to the maintenance of morality. It is claimed that belief in a God is necessary to decent behavior and it is even asserted that without such a belief there is no assurance that a man will obey the laws: in a word, that the remote notion of punishment by a God will influence a man more effectively than the near and very real prospect of punishment by the agencies of the human law: it is an argument quite unintelligently worthy of religion. We can only say that it is very fortunate that rational morality and the safety and decency of social life are not dependent on such a weak, fictitious support as religion; otherwise, we should despair of society and the future, first because that support is too dubious and arbitrary to be reliable, and second because religion declines while social life improves.

We know, however, that religious beliefs (and conventional beliefs of a non-religious but sentimental or traditional nature) are not moral in themselves nor do they qualify as the essential tests or assurances of morality. A far higher ethic is the love of truth. And indeed the subject of morality—the conduct of life—must be dealt with, first and last, in a truthful spirit. It should be freed from the confusion that has been created by dogmas, fears, prejudices and a spurious emotionalism. Morality is simply rationalism in behavior and all moral questions should be treated sanely, dispassionately in this light.

Ignorance Is the Worst "Immorality" in the Tragi-Comedy of Sex

By E. Haldeman-Julius

1. The Folly of Innocence

The meaning of innocence, as the term is employed with regard to sex life, is covered by its definition as "guileless, ignorant or simple." It would be the more amazing that this ideal of innocence has been upheld so persistently if we did not realize that men have never placed anything like a correct or full value upon knowledge of any kind. It seems obvious, of course, that it is best to know all that we can about any phase of life; that knowledge is the only safe, the absolutely essential, equipment for living; nevertheless there have always been powerful forces at work to maintain ignorance. Particularly with regard to sex, knowledge has generally been discouraged as guilty and shameful; and, again particularly, it has been presumed that the female of the species would be contaminated by knowledge (or by curiosity and a candid knowing attitude) concerning sex. To this strange, unreasonable, perverse attitude of innocence we can trace many of the follies and miseries connected with sexual life: not all of them, for sex is too emotional to be entirely reasonable even under ideal conditions: at least, as human nature appears today, this is probably true. Thus it is foolish to become too idealistic about sex: a main course of common sense—and, first and last, the clarity of knowledge—is all that we can ask; and it is this

position, at once liberal and sane, which the free man takes.

To make a virtue of innocence is to place even virtue at the peril of things not accurately known. It means ignorance of how to realize positive happiness in sex; it means blunders that men and women pay for miserably; it is strictly true and not a sensational exaggeration that it means ruined lives. Complete ignorance is not possible; one way or another, sex is an unescapable part of life. But the evil lies in an inadequate, haphazard knowledge and a false attitude. It is not simply anatomical knowledge that is valuable and that is, in any intelligent view, indispensable; there are considerations of psychology, personality and the spirit which one brings to this relationship. One should know the peculiarities of the sexual nature in men and women—the real differences, not those false notions which are conventionally maintained and which are unfair to both sexes. We can be satisfied with nothing less than a fully scientific, natural, humane conception of sex.

We say flatly that any idea of virtue or any conventional belief or any sentiment, superficially pretty though it may appear, that is a denial or a contradiction of nature is by that token unworthy to survive. Nature may be intelligently guided but it cannot be denied. Nature rewards or punishes, unfeelingly and without regard to artificial distinctions, according to the facts of life.

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according to the wisdom of men. And the follies of ignorant virtue are just as surely paid for as the follies of reckless vice. Vice indeed may by cleverness go farther more safely than virtue which is stupid, deluded, handicapped by false training. If that seems heresy, it is for virtue to make the most of it, not by railing nor by denying facts, but by changing to realistic tactics.

For whatever our feelings, our tastes or ideals with regard to sex, we cannot realize them save by knowledge. The most idealistic standard of virtue as well as the most sensual ideas and aims must turn to knowledge or suffer the unhappy consequences. But what virtue, what idealism, must primarily recognize is that asceticism cannot safely be followed as an ideal of life. It is in sheer violation of nature and must inevitably carry bitterness in its wake. A stern, ascetic, repressed feeling about sex is incompatible with a true understanding, with knowledge clearly and usefully applied.

A discussion of sex is indeed more than a comparison of different ideas of sexual behavior. That is what finally and most importantly we have to consider, but first of all there is the old, sharp, prejudiced dispute about sex knowledge. The upholders of conventional morality have committed the worst immorality of all by insisting, not simply upon this or that role of virtue in the expression of sex, but upon the virtue of innocence-as-ignorance. To be secretive about sex; not to discuss it or, if allusions are made to it, employ innuendo and vague unrealistic phraseology; to keep forward certain fictions about the relation of the sexes as if their repetition would make them true; to romanticize, idealize, and mystify this most vital aspect of life which, more than anything else, should be clearly known: this has been the attitude of virtuous obscurantism toward sex. Proudly in the full light, says Montaigne, is the destruction of men accomplished but the matter of their creation is surrounded by shameful darkness.

With this false perspective, men and women are bound to be careless, inaccurate, and partial in their sexual knowledge and even the facts which they obtain are not correctly understood or applied. Above all, they are cheated in spirit: sexually they are crippled and immature, young and old, married and unmarried.

The folly of sexual ignorance is most obvious, of course, in the case of youth. There is no kind of instruction that would be more useful to them. Yet it is this vital kind of instruction that they are denied. Parents feel that their own knowledge (which is commonly of a dubious, makeshift variety) is guilty knowledge. They feel too that their children will learn about such things soon enough. But when should they learn and how much should they learn? Obviously, with the beginning of their sexual life it should be made intelligible to them

and they should be instructed not vaguely but precisely and thoroughly.

The burden is usually shifted: and in what manner? It is assumed that they will "pick up" this knowledge somehow. And so they do. Sex is too strong and universal an instinct, and the facts are too familiarly insistent in human nature, to be kept hidden from them. Such knowledge as they obtain, however, is elementary, confused, and entirely lacking in any sane emphasis or guidance. It is scientific neither in detail nor in the sense of completeness. In this rough, blundering, hit-or-miss school of experience each generation is turned loose to stumble its way painfully and confusedly to a minimum of acting knowledge: and that knowledge, imperfect as it is, is gained at the price of physical and emotional injury which could be avoided by frank, realistic teaching: in other words, if society did not persist in what is at once a puritanical and a prurient conspiracy of silence on the subject of sex.

When the moralists express fear that the policy of enlightenment will give youth an exaggerated interest in sex, they but expose their ignorance of human nature. In any case, youth—men and women any virile age—must have a natural lively interest in sex. And the policy of silence and repression serves only to intensify, to aggravate, to distort this interest. The truth is that false conventional morality has been responsible for making sex more curious and provocative than naturally it would be if regarded simply like any other reality of common knowledge and use. There is no doubt that most men and women, while they live sexually in an imperfect and unsatisfied way, dwell too much upon the thought of sex. Denied its natural role, it manifests itself in an unnaturally intense, tantalizing, febrile, and mysterious role. It is all the more active when forced below the surface.

We have learned from modern psychology how powerful are suppressed desires. We know that forbidden subjects appeal most strongly to the curiosity. We know that when we are not well adjusted in any relationship, that relationship assumed a more painful prominence in our minds. And so it is with regard to sex knowledge and expression. A wide and clear knowledge of sex would mean less secret, disturbing thought about it. If men and women fully expressed themselves in sexual life, it would not annoy and intrigue them so pruriently. As it is, sex is conventionally a delicate and surreptitious theme, yet men and women constantly talk, think, suspect, worry, dream and plot about sex and the mind of the most moral person is apt to be darkened and distorted by such thoughts; whereas the man or woman of rational sex knowledge and behavior assigns it to its rightful harmonious place in life, deals with it naturally, and has

therefore no vexatious sense of mystery or futility.

It is only through knowledge that we can avoid the dangers of sex—disease, premature responsibilities, unfortunate foolish entanglements, and all those errors and pains which come under the euphemistic term of "incompatibility"—and it is only through knowledge that we can obtain a rational conception of sex which will save us from the two extremes (extremes which meet) of repression and over-emphasis.

2. Sex and the Emotional Life

Sex is a vital—one might say the vital—factor in our emotional life. And a leading accusation that one has to make against the moralists who persist in an attitude of obscurantism, prudery and severity is that their theory interferes unnaturally with the emotional nature that should be realized in sex. If there were, superficially speaking, no physical harm in this theory there is still an emotional injury which is incalculable. That means, of course, nervous injury. Health and happiness depend upon full sex expression—not merely the physical act, but unhampered emotions.

Yet this is difficult if not impossible for one who is caught in the toils of false morality. It prevents that frank delight, that ecstasy of love, which is the essence of sex when it is a liberated force and not trammelled by narrow, hostile conventions. With a feeling of shame or with a literal, limited idea of sex, how can men and women find in this relationship that final joy of emotional release which rightly it should give them? Sexually they only half live. If they have the psychology of Puritanism, they cannot possibly discover or fully yield themselves to the real significance of sex. On the other hand, if they have escaped very moral notions, the prevailing attitude of obscurantism and depreciation of sex has kept them from realizing its full significance. This morality which is so proudly and sternly asserted is, after all, a degradation of sex: it puts forth arbitrarily a conception of immorality and then morally denounces what it has created: it is sexual rationalism which shows sex as fine, beautiful and happy—yet which does not obscure it with the mists of meretricious romanticism but which is emotionally realistic.

To be sure, we have to recognize that a great deal of the trouble in sex life and the asperities in any discussion of sex is due to its very emotional character. When these emotions are misunderstood, especially when men and women are taught to feel vaguely or suspiciously about them, the results are distressing and often tragic. And obviously it is hard to discuss fairly and reasonably or to induce a receptive mood of sanity concerning such darkly felt emotions. Sex is commonly confused by jealousies, fears, prejudices and acrid, uneasy passions. Although, like anything else in life, it is a subject for intelligent consideration yet it arouses more feeling than thought and a thoughtful attitude toward it (which does not exclude but more truly appreciates the emotional quality of sex) is rare. As a rule, men and women tend to unreasonable, unfair extremes in their opinions about sex. They are playing with fire, which may be beneficent or destructive, without understanding the nature of the fire. Passions may be sublime or terrible—and so with the passions of sex. Emotions may enrich life or sadly distort it—and so with the emotions aroused by sex. These emotions are intensely egoistic and at best tend to produce suspicions and antagonism that are not easily controlled.

It is doubtful if the vagaries and the unreasonable tendencies of sex will ever be wholly removed. Perhaps sex will continually surprise us with its outbreaks of unreasoned feeling, with its unpredictable sudden tensions and conflicts, with its peculiarities of folly and lawlessness. Our ideals about sex do not easily and will not certainly take logical shape in reality. It is a truism that the more deeply the emotions are involved, the more complex and urgent are the psychic factors in a situation, the more difficult it is for reason to hold its own. When caught by the emotions of sex, probably men and women can never be quite sure of themselves—at least, according to variations of temperament and emotional impulsiveness and accidents of circumstance, sex will always present its problems. We have to realize that such a powerful excitation carries with it the possibility of eccentricities and excesses, not necessarily

tragic, often no more than amusingly unreasonable.

Yet the emotional follies, not to say the emotional tragedies and ugly, sinister bitternesses of sex are exaggerated by a false morality. Intense, fearful, violent emotions are engendered—or magnified—by this false morality: and indeed nothing could be farther from the truth than the idea that such an attitude of morality controls the sexual emotions: it denies them, uselessly: it obscures them, which puts men and women more at their mercy: it represses and excites them into forms of distortion that are darkly treacherous and which but serve to aggravate the natural problems of sex. Men and women have been storm-tossed helplessly by the influences of sex which they have not understood, which they have not tried to understand, which they have been discouraged from trying to understand by the combined factors of ultra-morality, romanticism and ignorance; they have not been taught the wisdom (better far than any conventional idea of virtue) of controlling not repressing, their emotions—a wisdom that they can only have in the light of a full knowledge and natural appreciation of sex.

Life is distressed, directly and indirectly, by sex because sex life is in the first place confused, irrational, emotionally false and strained far more than it needs to be. If we do not expect reason invariably to operate in sex life, it does not follow that we should throw reason to the winds and surrender ourselves blindly to impulse. But the charge against moral obscurantism and dogma is not that it leaves men and women to their impulses: its influence is decidedly worse than that, for it opposes on the one hand a clear scientific knowledge of sex and on the other hand it seeks to confine sex life within the limits of a narrow code, to impose upon it false notions of virtue, to surround it with suspicion and prejudice and fearfully marred passions—in short, to create an artificial confusion by the side of which the natural impulsiveness of sex seems ideally clear and orderly. To be reasonable in our sex life does not, of course, mean to deny our natural emotions. It means actually a greater appreciation of the quality of these emotions, their more wholesome expression and (in the fair harmony of personally sympathetic, finely valued relationships) their more civilized expression.

And the naturally intense emotionalism of sex makes it all the more important that we should strive for a reasonable view. It is necessary, above all, that we should have the fullest understanding of sex, that we should know as thoroughly as possible both its physiology and its psychology, that we should face even the mistakes and uncertainties of sex with a realistic and sanely tempered viewpoint. There is no doubt that a great deal if not the greater part of the sex troubles of men and women could be avoided by knowledge, carrying with it the tendency to express or fulfill the needs of sex in a perfectly natural way, and to get from it all that it emotionally holds of meaning and delight. So much of our trouble is due to ignorance and to false ideas of right and wrong—to a false secrecy, a false shame and a deplorably twisted sense of values. Put under unnatural pressure, the emotionalism of sex plays havoc with the lives of men. Then it appears in the dark menaces of thwarted desire. Its products are bitter and malicious. Cruelty, envy, intolerance and all uncharitableness are among the fruits of this distortion. We cannot have a healthy world while sex is confused by sickly cant and a morality that sets its face against the obvious, sane realities of life.

It is indeed far better to take sex comically than in the solemn ashamed tone of ultra-morality. There is no danger that it will not be regarded seriously enough—nature will see to that. The mischief lies in a ponderously moral attitude, in rigid conventions and idealizations that obscure the real significance of sex, or in an utterly irrational emotionalism in which the sanity of laughter finds no place. At best, sex has an emotional intensity that is apt to be upsetting and a serious, dogmatic, unnatural morality shakes the balance still more precariously, making an extra pressure where relief is needed—the relief of naturalness, the relief of free expression, the relief of humor which, not taking life too seriously, fortifies one against being too seriously hurt or fooled by life.

Rationalism protects us from many of the stings, the feverish vapors, the harsh demands, the burning prejudices of sex life as it is usually exhibited. The chief doubts and difficulties disappear when men and women take sex as naturally as the air they breathe, as naturally as the sensations and the functions of being alive. Erroneously they have fought against sex, made of it a mystery and a snare, yet at the same time have regarded it with a fixed jealous intent, a bloodshot gaze, a boiling passion, dangerous because of the tightly clamped (and frequently exp'd) lid of unscientific moralism. Normally, sex life should be beautiful but it is a fact—make of it what one will—that its ecstasies, its best gifts, have more often and truly felt by those who have stepped outside the bounds of conventional morality.

It is not that standards are unimproved, that sex life should be chaotic and irresponsible, but it is very important what those standards are. They should be based on scientific knowledge. They should be adjusted sensibly to the profound impulses and needs of human nature. They should leave room for that tolerably free play of the emotions which is essential in sex. They should be standards drawn naturally from the facts of sex and not standards opposed unnaturally to the facts of sex. They should be standards of growth and fulfillment, not forbidding, not hampering, not falsely, intolerantly definitive—standards not for the sake of theory but for the sake of happy practice.

3. The Idea of Sex in Religion

One cannot discuss sex without bringing in religion. For religion has beyond a doubt—as a matter of historic record—been considerably to blame for the thwarting unhealthy codes of morality. Even with many who have broken away from the doctrines of religion, its past influence in the moral sphere operates insidiously. A severe puritanical code may be rationalized defensively from other sources but its inspiration—its traditional place in our "Christian" civilization—is due to religion. One who accepts religion may accept the ideas of puritanical morality—that chastity is inherently a virtue, that marriage is a sacrament, that sexual behavior falls rightly under a moral judgment different from that applied to other kinds of behavior—but if one rejects the religious attitude toward life there remains no logical, convincing basis for this old-fashioned morality.

But religion, long before the time of a scientific view, imposed upon men and stupidly theological view of sex. It was an important part of the gospel and mythology of religion (for our present consideration, of Christianity) that man originally sinned through his sexual nature. Woman was portrayed as the temptress and an unclean, seductive creature, leading man astray from the paths of righteousness. Sex was an unpleasant, shameful necessity ("better to marry than to burn") or the joyless, technical fulfillment of a divine command, euphemistically to "multiply." To treat it poetically, sensually, adventurously was to give evidence of a wicked and corrupt heart. Marriage (arbitrarily given the form and authority of a religious sacrament) made the shame tolerable and dutiful, and children must serve as its excuse, but sex outside of marriage or simply as a personal, pleasurable experience was contrary to God's will as announced by pious ecclesiastics. Nevertheless, religious faith did not rule out the possibility of sexual liberties and weakness of the flesh was apt to be condoned where orthodoxy of belief was unimpeachable.

Yet the effect of this anti-sexual doctrine of religion has been exceedingly confusing and harmful and gave, when religion was more a ruling force than it now is, a powerful sanction to the code of ignorance and shame regarding

sex. Take away entirely this religious influence—this tradition of piety-plus-purity—and a great, perhaps the greatest, obstacle to sexual rationalism would be removed. It is not that all men and women who today consider sex puritanically are definitely moved by religious belief; they may be skeptical in religion, but they are letting a religious tradition of asceticism and sin determine their moral code.

For aside from its specific attitude of obscurantism and denial concerning sex, religion expressed a general attitude of stern piety. It was opposed to worldliness. The saints were men who felt or affected a contempt for worldly objects, interests and pleasures. Life here was a burden and a shame to be endured for the sake of a life hereafter. The physical senses were so many traps for the souls of men and women.

Looking with horror upon any evidences of emotionalism and sensuous joy in life, the preachers of religious morality talked aridly and arrogantly a great deal of nonsense about "spirituality." And we are still told that a realistic approach to sex is destructive of the "spiritual" nature. Yet how the "spiritual" nature can be protected by a dull, shameful indulgence in sex and injured by a bright, joyous experience is not quite comprehensible and presses even clever sophistry hard for an explanation.

It is not necessary to dwell long upon the religious idea of sex, although it may be mentioned that, for all its prejudice against sensuality, there is a very sensual, sexually emotional element in religion. Doctrines of religion are not so important today in this connection; but it is the inherited tendency of religion, as reflected in moral codes that have their origin in the past, which still obscures plain and free thinking on this subject. Actually, a view of morals must have a realistic or a religious basis. There is no middle ground. If there is nothing "sacred" about sex, about chastity, about marriage, then we must look at these things sensibly as we look at other things.

4. Sex—A Social Relationship

It is not religion, for example, nor an idea of purity that should reasonably move us in considering sex as a social relationship. Marriage is really a social rather than a "sacred" or moral contract. Morally speaking, marriage is not a dividing line between good and evil in sex life. Let us take it at its simplest. Marriage is a convenient arrangement for maintaining homes and raising children and in this society obviously has a vital interest. These responsibilities cannot and should not be left to whim or chance. Entirely as a practical question, men and women should bear their just responsibilities and not throw the burden upon society. Whatever

the form of marriage, whatever the moral view of it, the obligation of those who bring children into the world is past denial. It does not follow, however, that marriage should be an unbreakable bond even when children complicate or add to the seriousness of the situation. An enlightened social policy, to which the moralists have not completely resigned themselves, has in fact made marriage dissoluble: and the effort of rationalism is toward more liberality—but not an evasion of fair responsibility—in this respect.

Actually, the interest of society is limited to the this matter of responsibility for the offspring of sexual union. It is not necessarily the concern of society that husbands and wives should be technically faithful to each other. In the case of a childless marriage, it is not evident that society has any right of dictation in forcing a couple to maintain a bond that has no realistic importance and can have no moral meaning. And it is certainly not any part of a rational social morality that sex expression should be confined to a legally married relationship. It would be foolish, at any rate, to insist that this is a matter of social concern for it is naturally impossible to prevent such free relations among men and women.

It may be said that the home is a valuable unit of social life which should be maintained. Yet it cannot be forcibly maintained and there are circumstances under which it is impossible. If this theory were logically applied, all men and women would be compelled by law to marry, produce children, and maintain homes. The common sense of the question is obvious. Human nature is a greater force than laws in making homes and family life. It is the line of least resistance which the majority of men and women voluntarily take. Visions of the breaking-up of the home as a social institution, as a result of a liberal theory, of sex, are inspired by a needlessly alarmed and unrealistic view of human nature. The parental impulses and the natural feelings of affection and loyalty will survive regardless of moral dogmas. Where there is no definite question of loyalty or responsibility—where no social obligations have been incurred—it is quite beside the point to be dictatorial in moralistic fashion.

We should recognize the difference between a social and a moral question. It is not the business of society to see that men and women live morally, that they are pure, that they obey certain rules of virtue. It is simply the business of society to see that men and women fulfill their obligations as social beings, that they live justly (or insofar as the law must, for the sake of social order, demand a practical question, men and women should bear their just responsibilities and not throw the burden upon society. Whatever

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of moral dogmas, to insist upon obedience to any rules or ideals which are not clearly, absolutely essential to the maintenance of social safety, organization and justice.

It seems clear enough that monogamy is the most satisfactory and efficient form—as a general rule—of sex relationship. Its prevalence, however, is not due to any mere fiat of legislation. Nor is it mainly due even to the extralegal force of custom. It has been justified and maintained as the kind of relationship which has best pleased, which has most fairly met the needs of, the majority of men and women. And monogamy will continue for the same reason: not because of laws or social compulsion, not because of moral codes, but primarily and more powerfully because it works on the whole to the greatest satisfaction.

It is impossible to show by any process of clear, dispassionate reasoning that monogamy is the only moral or the most moral kind of sex relationship. Since people wish to have a moral reason for things, there has been a peculiar ethical importance ascribed to monogamy, to singleness of sex interest and affection, to the ideal of the home and family. But it is not really an issue of morality. Marriage reasonably considered, as a fair and liberal social institution, is justified on the ground of its usefulness; and it persists on the ground of its agreeableness to the average man and woman.

When morality (inspired directly or indirectly by religion) asserts that marriage is a "sacrament," that divorce is a "sin," that birth control is "immoral" and so on, it is simply expressing a dogmatic position which cannot bear the analysis of good sense. Such a view springs from ignorant preconceptions of human behavior and the nature of social institutions.

5. Sex—A Personal Relationship

From what has been said about sex in its nature of a social relationship, it follows that this relationship is a qualified one and that it does not include the whole of sex life. More profoundly, sex is a personal issue. It involves, first and last, the rights and the happiness and the intimate, private choice of two persons. This truth is increasingly given recognition even where marriage has formalized this intimacy and brought it within the sphere of social concern. Even greater liberality is needed in this direction, but the principle is admitted. Only preachers with medieval minds nowadays object to the principle of divorce.

And if a narrow moral code,

rooted in the archaic hostilities and dogmas of religion, is not applicable to marriage, it is obviously still less pertinent when we consider sex life outside the bonds of marriage. Love without the doubtful blessing of the Church or the express sanction of the State has been quite familiar under all forms of society. Not even the most puritanical society, with a sternly orthodox, official code of virtue, has been able to prevent such free intimacies. And in our time we have a very marked tendency of freedom and naturalness in sex relations, ignoring the arbitrary notions of right and wrong which have been inherited from the past.

It is a moral question—but from our point of view we insist upon judging it realistically. We entirely fail to see what taint of immorality can be in sexual union, which is freely the desire of two persons, which involves no one else, which represents no social obligations, and which dispenses simply with all formality of "sacrament" or law. The moralists have no argument save that this "free love" is inherently wrong—but the notion of inherent wrong is as antiquated and untenable as the notion of innate conscience. The plain question to be asked: Whom does this relationship injure? Whom does it deprive of any right? What tangible, plain evils does it produce? We are thinking now of sex as a personal relationship, for love and pleasure only, not involving parentage nor any sort of social responsibility. And no one can point to any consequence of such an intimacy which can definitely be called immoral on the contrary, it brings pleasure and a sense of natural fulfillment: its only aspect of "immorality" is that technically it conflicts with a dogmatic moral code.

Again we must insist that it is simply a matter of religious belief or influence: and one who places no credence in the claims and sanctions of religion is left without any reasonable—certainly without any clear and absolute—basis for the idea that chastity is a virtue. Chastity is a religious superstition or prejudice. There is no sense in the distinction of "pure" and "impure" as between persons who have or have not had sexual experience: a distinction that, illogically, is given special application to women. The fact is that scientific knowledge shows the unnaturalness of chastity, and long period it is unhealthy—is indeed, if we are to use the term "morality" with an eye to actual consequences, "immoral."

Furthermore, we know there are obstacles of an economic nature,

or reasons of a privileged personal nature, which make marriage impossible, inadvisable or undesirable in many cases: so that many have the alternative of living "morally" unnatural or "immorally" natural lives: rationally, there should be no hesitation in the choice. But it is not a question of whether persons can or cannot marry: they have a moral right not to marry and yet to have the natural expression of sex: and they have a moral right to a variety of sex relationships, so long as they are strictly personal affairs and do not conflict with the

plain needs of social responsibility and order.

Judging questions of sex in a free spirit, we find it impossible to apply the conventional moral formulas. These formulas are unreasonably arbitrary and, again, they are too general: they take no discriminating account of individual cases: and they fail to distinguish between sex as a social and as a personal relationship. And sex, being subject to such emotional confusion, ignorance, shame and prejudice, needs all the more the light of reasonable freedom.

The Moving Finger Writes

By Lloyd E. Smith

Another Book Suppressed

You have heard, no doubt, of the suppression in New York, by the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, of *The Well of Loneliness*, by Radclyffe Hall. This book, presenting intellectually and artistically a human picture of the little understood phase of emotional feeling known as homosexuality, was endorsed in England by outstanding leaders of thought, including Havelock Ellis, Bertrand Russell, H. G. Wells, and others. The prosecution of the book and its publishers in the United States is a blow to the freedom of the press, as well as a direct assault upon intelligence everywhere. Mr. Haldeman-Julius immediately wired the publishers, Covici Friede, Inc., 89 West 45th St., New York City, as follows:

"The Comstock-Summer assault on *The Well of Loneliness* is a crime against art, thought, freedom of the press and civilization. Intellectual freedom is meaningless without the right to full and complete discussion of every phase of thought and expression of life and character. Every lover of liberty hopes for your complete victory in this fight to save a serious work of art from the usurpations of vandals. You have arrayed against you the forces of obscurantism, superstition, and orthodoxy—the old enemies of culture. You should resist fearlessly, using every weapon to preserve your right to a free press. If American authors, editors and publishers fail to help you in this struggle then they stamp themselves as cowards and poltroons. My monthly magazine stands ready to give you generous space for a full report of your case. Please accept this invitation to tell your story to my readers. I am for you in this fight—to the limit. E. Haldeman-Julius."

Joseph McCabe in the New Weekly

The secret is out! Joseph McCabe will appear regularly in the new *Haldeman-Julius Weekly*. When he was here in Girard he completed arrangements with E. H.-J. for an indefinite time to contribute a series of 7,500 word articles, to be printed in the Weekly. These articles will be prepared, probably, every fortnight. Half an article, therefore, will appear in each issue of the new Weekly.

The subject matter of these articles is being left to Joseph McCabe. He thereby becomes a contributing editor to the new H.-J. Weekly! Ask yourself honestly now—can you afford to be without this weekly paper, with new material by E. Haldeman-Julius, and contributions from Joseph McCabe and John Langdon-Davies? Other features will appear from time to time.

The McCabe articles will probably begin March 1.

Friendly Arctic Explorer
Little Blue Books and other Haldeman-Julius publications number their friends all over the world. Among them is Vilhjalmur Stefansson, the famous Arctic explorer; and also, incidentally, Commander Richard E. Byrd, the famous Antarctic explorer. When on a lecture tour through Kansas recently, Mr. Stefansson sent the following chummy note to E. H.-J.:

"I have just been reading the favorable review of your *The First Hundred Million* in today's *Star*. Which reminds me of my regret that when I was at Fort Scott I did not have time to run down to Girard. But these lecture managers route us so close. I had to drive to Iola to make my first stop. The success of your publications is encouraging, and I would have liked to meet the head of them and see the machinery functioning. By the way, I spoke on the same platform with Will Durant at Detroit. He is an old friend. V. Stefansson."

Polar Exploration and Adven-

ture is the subject of Little Blue Book No. 580. And of course you know that Dr. Will Durant, who wrote *The Story of Philosophy*, is also the author of Little Blue Books Nos. 19, 39, 159, 443, 509, 512, 520, 641, 700, 772, 802, 813, 839.

Whence "Haldeman-Julius"?

Alfred M. Wasbauer, 513 Fisher Ave., Rockford, Ill., asks whence came the surname Haldeman-Julius, which first came to his notice when he read the "fine novel, *Dust*, many years ago." This name is explained in *Marcel Haldeman-Julius' Intimate Notes on E. H.-J.* (Little Blue Book No. 809), which also contains other more or less personal details about E. Haldeman-Julius. The name Julius was the surname of E. H.-J. before his marriage to Marcel Haldeman. They chose to combine their names, and now both use the hyphenated form, Haldeman-Julius, as a surname.

Mr. Wasbauer has some words to say about *Violence*. They are: "I want to tell you how thrilled I have been with the novel *Violence*! appearing in the *American Parade*. I think it is a wonderful piece of modernistic writing. Is it to be published in book form?" To the last question the answer is: Yes. This novel, under the new title *Dixie*, will be published in clothbound form by Simon & Schuster, sometime this spring.

The *American Parade* also wins praise from Mr. Wasbauer: "Thank you for the *American Parade*," he says, "the best thought stimulator in America today."

Eager Statisticians

Douglas Waples, Professor of Educational Method at the University of Chicago, Graduate Library School, has been quite captivated by the statistics printed in *The First Hundred Million*, by E. Haldeman-Julius. "I have just read with very great interest *The First Hundred Million*," he says; "it touches upon the problem which is of immediate concern to those who, like myself, are students of the interests and needs of adults for whom the public library undertakes to provide suitable types of adult education."

Prof. Waples is interested to secure further Little Blue Book statistics for various towns throughout the country, to check up with the library facilities in these towns and see whether the libraries are providing enough reading along the lines that the statistics indicate are most in demand. Mr. Haldeman-Julius is extending to Prof. Waples and his assistants every possible cooperation.

But Prof. Waples is wrong if he thinks that providing the books in libraries will affect Little Blue Book distribution. People yearn to own books, and they can own five-cent books without too much expenditure of capital. Whether the libraries provide sex books, self-improvement books, or whatever is in demand, in sufficient quantities or not, makes little difference. The Little Blue Books have their own field, quite apart from the usefulness of the libraries.

Houdini Spiritualist Fake Exposed

Were you one of the smilingly incredulous who picked up the papers carrying United Press items a few weeks ago, and read that the widow of Harry Houdini, magician extraordinary, had endorsed the message received by a spiritualist medium as authentic—as one of the messages which Houdini promised, if possible to send through to his friends in life when he died? The Associated Press frankly denied the truth of the story, in items printed in A. P. papers on the same day. But the U. P. papers carried the story, with further developments, for two or three days.

The Debunker, again on the

alert, has an exposure of this hoax in the next issue. It is by E. W. Hutter, a name not by any means new to *Debunker* readers.

Joseph McCabe Hailed as "A Modern Aristotle"

On his way through Kansas City (Mo.) recently, Joseph McCabe was met by a small contingent of friends and newspaper men. A photographer was among them, and the world famous scholar had his picture snapped for the *Kansas City Star*. That evening the story appeared, with the heading: "A Modern Aristotle. Joseph McCabe, 'The Walking Encyclopedia,' Visits Here. Between lectures, world travel and book writing he keeps fairly busy—his mind a storing place for facts."

In these days of hustle and bustle, it is something worth noting when a city pauses to do homage to a scholar. As the *Star* story begins, "If it was Jack Dempsey come to town, now, there might have been a band and a thousand persons at the union station last night." True, but there were some people to greet him, and it is only an eminent scholar who is so honored, even today.

The story continues: "But instead (of Jack Dempsey) it was only Joseph McCabe, a little man, a sprightly fellow with something particularly astonishing about him. It wasn't his fists, or his biceps measurements, or a matinee profile. The something astonishing about Joseph McCabe is his mind, and therefore it doesn't matter to the most of us." That semi-sarcastic note at the last is hardly justifiable; matters of the mind are mattering more to a great many of us as the years go by. There is a tendency for the mind to loom larger in the life of Mr. Average Man.

"Little Mr. McCabe's mind—and we use the little just to indicate his physical height and small dimensions—is a marvelous blotter, perhaps the nearest storing place of facts, theories, knowledge, understanding, in the world today. That's a big order, to be sure, but better known men than Joseph McCabe have said it about him—and these men, so far as erudition is concerned, are in a class by themselves. These compeers of Joseph McCabe have called him such things as the modern Aristotle, the walking encyclopedia, the man who knows everything. For our purpose we are content to call him the man who knows everything."

Such a tribute, certainly, has been given to few men of our time. The significant thing about it is that a large metropolitan newspaper should give the better part of a column to offer such tribute. Joseph McCabe has made his mark in the consciousness of the American reading public!

"The man who knows everything," the *Star* goes on, "is half English and half Irish, an Englishman by birth, and now a man about 55 years old, with bifocal spectacles, but an alertness of bearing quite apparent at first glance. He's the author of *Marvels of Modern Physics*, *Wonders of the Stars*, *Ice Ages*, *The Evolution of the Mind*, *The Evolution of Civilization*, *Can We Disarm?* *Crises in the History of the Papacy*, *Life of Peter Abelard* and other books and articles, many of which have been translated into the principal languages of the earth.

"Between lecturing and world travels and book writing, Mr. McCabe has dashed off three million words on *The Key to Culture* and more besides for the Little Blue Book series published at Girard, Kans. He has agreed to write three million more words in the next three years. With H. G. Wells and a few other men he has been listed among the greatest living popularizers of information.

"After saying all that about a man and then not telling the half of it, one might expect to find something justifiably pompous about Joseph McCabe. But all the acknowledgments fall off his back like water off a duck's. Except that he's good, and makes him interestingly confident, Joseph McCabe is a most unpretentious man. He's sure of himself, but for a reason."

For a reason, indeed, that his thousands of readers are in a position to know.

Shop Talk

John Langdon-Davies arrived in Girard while these notes were being typed. In case you don't remember him, Mr. Langdon-Davies wrote *A Short History of Women*, which was one of the Literary Guild books last year. More about him anon.

SEX AND THE LOVE-LIFE

By William J. Fielding, Author of "Sanity in Sex."

Here is an honest, straight-forward exposition of the sex question, thoroughly constructive in tone, written in a popular vein, and at the same time scientifically sound. Practically every problem concerning sex that the average person is interested in is covered, and many important facts and informative features are included that cannot be found in any contemporary book published for popular reading.

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Haldeman-Julius Publications, Girard, Kansas

Russell R. Winterbotham, who, until a few weeks ago, was on the editorial staff of the Haldeman-Julius Publications here in Girard, is to tour through the southwest during the spring. He has a hankering to see the country, he says. H.-J. readers will probably not lose him entirely, for he may contribute some mss. once in a while. He has had several little articles in the *Debunker*, you remember, and his Little Blue Book entitled *Lindbergh: Hero of the Air* will soon be issued as No. 1349.

A good idea: Mr. Darwin Kellogg Pavey, 929 Terpsichore St., New Orleans, La., wants to organize the freethinking veterans of all wars, honorably discharged from the U. S. Army or Navy. Such liberals as Mr. Pavey describes should get in touch with him.

Sinclair Lewis, author of *Elmer Gantry*, *Babbitt*, et al., wrote to Mr. George M. Huser, author of *Crooked Financial Schemes Exposed* (printed in the *Debunker*, and soon to be released as Little Blue Book No. 1339) as follows: "I think your Little Blue Book on crooked financial schemes is corking—it is both interesting and valuable." Mr. Lewis says further that he has just finished a new novel and is now reading the proofs on it.

Isaac Goldberg, so popular with Weekly readers, has contributed another Little Blue Book—after some lapse of time since his last one—to the pocket series. Dr. Goldberg's new book will be *How to Develop Good Taste*—that is to say, good taste in art, literature, and so on. It will be worth watching for.

There was a young lady not long ago who wished to purchase *Lives of U. S. Presidents*. Obviously, she wanted Little Blue Book No. 1065. But she enclosed the remarkable remittance of \$1.50 for this one book! At first this was incomprehensible, but it suddenly dawned on us that she had gone to the immense trouble of finding out just how many presidents

there might be lives of—and she had sent five cents for each life!

The Outline of Bunk, by E. Haldeman-Julius, is here. Shipment came in just the other day. But since the publication date is February 15, we cannot send out any of these copies until that date. If you have already ordered your copy, please be patient; if you have not ordered it, better do it right away, so as to get one out of this first shipment. It is a handsome book—weighs two pounds!—beautifully printed. Not to mention its readable, stimulating contents—

Incidentally, *The Outline of Bunk* will be featured in a half-page advertisement in the N. Y. Times Book Review, Feb. 17, 1929.

The Pielti Bureau (587-1, Muradkhan Road), Karachi, India, suggests five new Little Blue Books, as follows: *World-Tour*, *Shorthand Self Taught*, *Bookkeeping Self Taught*, *How to Improve Your Handwriting*, and *Graphology*. As to the first, some travel titles will be found among the new books now scheduled for publication, including *A Tour of Europe for Stay-at-Homes* (to be No. 1355). Books on shorthand, bookkeeping, and handwriting may be added as soon as suitable writers can be found to handle the subjects satisfactorily. Possibly a book on graphology (the so-called science of telling character from handwriting) might be added, to join similar titles already in the list: *Facts About Phrenology*, No. 411; *Facts About Palmistry*, No. 704; *Facts About Astrology*, No. 767; *Facts About Fortune-Telling*, No. 845. We appreciate suggestions like this; readers are urged to send in ideas for new titles.

Dr. Leon Shulman, 2007 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, Calif., wins highest honors in the recent *Debunker* Jubilee Subscription Campaign. Dr. Shulman sent in 16 new yearly subscriptions to the *Debunker* during the campaign. Dr. Shulman, we congratulate you and thank you heartily for your efforts in behalf of furthering the cause of debunking in America.

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