

Joseph McCabe: From Monk to the Modern Aristotle of Culture.

By E. Haldeman-Julius

Although full of human incident, the chief interest in the life of Joseph McCabe is bound to center, for those interested in his writings, about his intellectual activities and his career as a great, scholarly debunker. He has lived quietly throughout a busy lifetime that has, at present, reached the age of sixty-two. Yet as the author of some two hundred books, as a periodical writer and as a lecturer of international scope and fame he has caused no little, indeed in its way the very greatest, stir in the world.

McCabe has devoted his life, since he left his Catholic monastery in 1896, to study and to the spread of popular culture. He certainly knows the world of men and human affairs very well. He has lived up to the age, to the contemporary scene, with very acute interest. His opinions on our most practical problems of politics and social controversy are very sound and informed. He knows intimately the men of the world of science and literature, men of business and governmental affairs, and the common run of humanity in all classes. He is no pale recluse of a scholar, knowing nothing of life. He is very human and realistic, and throughout his writings he stresses the joyous, practical element in his philosophy of life.

Yet McCabe's main adventures, so to speak, apart from being a very intelligent spectator of the life about him, have been located in the world of books and in the fascinating fields of knowledge, scientific and historical, which he has covered so thoroughly. I believe I am right in saying that no man in our time has lived so intensely in his mind. No man has such a broad and clear vision of life. No man puts more intellect, and with it genuine and sane emotion, into the art of living.

And along with the art of living, McCabe has always had a serious purpose: namely, the freeing of the human mind (or as many human minds as he can touch) from old superstitions and superficial errors and all the prejudice and misinformation which serve so recklessly, among most men, for ideas. Popular education has been a lifelong ideal of McCabe's, and no man has done more than he to realize this ideal by actually, incessantly and most brilliantly working at it.

IF YOU WANT to see drama in Joseph McCabe's life, then surely there is enough of it in the fact that he spent twelve years in a Catholic monastery where he was known as the Very Reverend Father Antony. He tells of this period of his life in *My Twelve Years in a Monastery* (Little Blue Book No. 439). His parents were devout Catholics, although he assures us that his father "liked his beer and laughter and he was entirely honest and honorable and kindly." And when Joseph left the monastery and the church forever, his pious mother wrote, "sadly and grandly" as McCabe says, "I do not understand, Joe, but I know you."

When McCabe was quite a young boy, his parents moved to the English manufacturing town of Manchester. Across the street from their home was a Catholic monastery. His parents, his mother especially it seems, wanted him to enter the priesthood and have a splendid holy career: at any rate, a holy career. While he was a pious enough lad, young Joseph didn't want to go into the monastery. Somehow the free world looked better.

"At thirteen," says McCabe in *My Twelve Years in a Monastery*, speaking of himself in the third person, "he [young Joseph] began to earn a dollar a week and dream of becoming a prince of commerce. In a great Manchester warehouse he heard oaths which made him pale and salacious stories which made him red, and altogether he learned in advance a very great

deal of the more piquant part of Moral Theology. But he never swore or lied, or did anything more wicked than smoke a furtive cigarette. He was incurably virtuous; so the devil gave him up, and the monks got him."

At the age of fifteen McCabe entered the Catholic monastery in Manchester and was taught in the monastic college. "There was as much pedagogy in it," he says irreverently but accurately I am sure, "as in a straw-strewn medieval classroom. A friar who might have made an excellent carpenter took every class." In reality, McCabe did his own studying, as he has done all through life. Immensely the scholar as he is, there is nothing academic in McCabe's culture. It is thorough—and very human, balanced, adroit. He has always taken knowledge for the purpose of understanding life and putting more livableness into life.

After eleven months in the Manchester monastery, the boy Joseph McCabe was taken to a monastery in song-celebrated Killarney, where he became a novice or "monkling" in the Order of St. Francis of Assisi. Quite early doubts of theology bothered McCabe; but his father-confessor assured him that his doubts would disappear in time and with broader study and that he had a great vocation ahead of him. "At the age of seventeen," says McCabe, "kneeling in the church in solemn ceremony before a thrilled congregation of Irish Catholics, I vowed celibacy (virginity), poverty (never to own a cent or any object), obedience (to my superiors) for life."

Receiving the usual Catholic education for the priesthood (which he tells us is very, very poor indeed), supplemented by a course in philosophy at the University of Louvain in Belgium, McCabe really learned the most important knowledge by his own efforts. And of course his great scholarship was chiefly acquired after he left the monastery and the church. It is enough to say that he at length, after a good deal of doubting, drew up a parallel list of reasons why he should and should not believe in God, immortality, the soul and so on; and the logic of agnosticism won; he left the church and went out into a world which was strange, certainly, to one reared in cloistered unnaturalness. But of course McCabe was never a thoroughly subjugated or docile monk. He learned more than he was meant to learn.

Since that honest and under the circumstances daring decision in 1896, Joseph McCabe has written and lectured and studied. He has made many lecture tours of Australia, the United States, Canada and Mexico; and naturally he has lectured much in Great Britain. He is a hard worker. He loafs little and does not go in for ordinary social diversions. He lives quietly in a suburb of London, England, with only a housekeeper, a select library and his steady program of scholarly work. He has two sons and two daughters. He does much research work at the famous British Museum. His work has earned him the title of "the modern Aristotle." He has often been called, and with justice, the world's greatest scholar. Certainly he has the broadest, most human scholarship I know of and he has been most industrious and able in communicating his scholarship to the masses—to all men and women, of all classes, who wish to explore the many fields of modern culture and bring from them a unified, realistic philosophy of life.

I HAVE McCabe's own authority for saying that the most valuable and interesting work he has ever done is his authorship for the Haldeman-Julius Publications. He first visited me in Girard, at my request, in 1925. It was not long before we had agreed that he should write fifty Little Blue Books, covering the entire history of religious controversy. And, by the way, let me remark that McCabe's extraordinary knowledge of history is his mightiest controversial weapon. He is not only a reasoner of the very first order, but he is tremendously, thoroughly equipped with facts; and this in science, too, as well as history.

Well, McCabe wrote the fifty Little Blue Books—and more, too, so that the number now is seventy. Then followed a much greater educational work: *The Key to Culture* in forty volumes of 30,000 words each; a complete course of culture, for self-education in the home, including the subjects of science (in all its major, fundamental branches), philosophy, literature, art, history, economics. This work is still unrivaled in its field and in the purpose which it serves: *The Key to Culture*, by itself, can be called a University in Print. There followed an eight-volume *Key to Love and Sex: The True Story of the Roman Catholic Church* in six large double volumes; *The Story of Human Morals* in twelve volumes; *The Rise and Fall of the Gods* in six volumes; and the latest work, in which he is now engaged, is *One Hundred Men Who Moved the World* (character sketches of the greatest creative forces of history) in sixteen volumes.

At the age of sixty-two, with far more than an average lifetime of intellectual and literary productivity behind him, McCabe is working more joyously and vigorously than ever. I am glad to say that he and I (and our American readers) have an ideal association that will last as long as McCabe lives and may that be long. I am sure we all hope that he has many more years of active, cheerful, interesting life ahead of him. No man can put the years to better use; and with him, fullness of years means years that he has packed full of extraordinary and enduring achievement. His immortality is not in a fictitious Paradise but in his writings that will survive as his splendid memorial.

DOGMA AND CULTURE

Until quite modern times the main, almost the exclusive interest, of the Christian churches has been to uphold their systems of dogma. They have not been friendly to culture. The intellectual activity of man has been recognized by priests and preachers as a threat to their bunkistic profession. Before Christianity, there was splendid culture in the pagan civilizations of Greece and Rome. Rome developed a system of general education, as well as high culture for its most studious citizens. Under Christianity it was a dark, ignorant world (in Europe) for centuries.

The relation of the Christian religion to education is set forth fully by McCabe in *The Church and the School* (Little Blue Book No. 1128). He gives a thorough view of the historical truth, showing exactly what happened and how and why. In definite detail he debunks the claim that Christianity conferred the boon of general education upon mankind. McCabe summarizes the lessons of this book as follows:

- (1) The pagan power to which Christianity succeeded in Europe had already given the world a fine general system of education.
- (2) Christianity contemplated the complete ruin of this school-system without a murmur, indeed applauded its disappearance, and made no effort to replace it.
- (3) So little was done in the way of education during the thousand years of absolute Christian domination that more than ninety percent of the people of every Christian nation were illiterate and densely ignorant.
- (4) The modern school-systems which have opened the eyes of the masses and enabled them to rise are due entirely to secular sentiment, and their development was in most cases opposed and retarded by the Churches.

Dogma versus culture—that is the true story of Christianity in its relation, its opposition, to genuine popular education. Knowledge led to heresy; therefore knowledge was anathema. And, as McCabe says, *the Church did so little for*

education that, after a thousand years of its rule, more than ninety percent of the people could not read nor write. Christians are welcome to any pride they can derive from this record.

BEFORE RELIGION

It is false to say that religion is an instinct of the human race and that men have always had some kind of religion. This is proved in Joseph McCabe's *The Origin of Religion* (Little Blue Book No. 1008), in which are reviewed the ideas of the lowest, most primitive, peoples living today in remote corners of the world: the Yahgans of Tierra del Fuego, the Botocudos of Brazil, the Veddahs of Ceylon, the Andamanese Islanders, the Aetas of the Philippine Islands, the Semoas of the Malay Peninsula, the Tasmanians, and the Bushmen of South Africa.

Two French scientists, Hyades and Deniker, studied for two years the life of the Yahgans and they reported: "We have never detected the least allusion to any kind of cult or religious idea." A missionary, T. Bridges, who had spent twenty years among this primitive people (and who certainly would not suppress any evidence for the presence of religious beliefs among them) said:

They have neither hope nor fear beyond the grave. For them there is neither God, nor good, nor evil, nor spirits to fear apart from the phantoms which may injure them in this world. Death is the end of existence, and they have no idea of a spiritual life or of the composition of man from a body and a soul.

The absence of religion in such primitive groups (and even among higher groups that are found in trace of belief in a God although spiritism has left its traces), proves that man has no religious instinct. Man evolved his religious ideas, along with a weird mixture of false notions and some true ideas slowly learned from experience, through ages of unguided but elaborating culture. Prehistoric man and historic man have, as we know, struggled through the mazes of strange superstitions, elaborately unsound beliefs and thought processes that were experimental. Our biggest task in modern civilization is to supplant the mistakes of the past with carefully acquired knowledge. McCabe summarizes the evolution of religion thus: "The human race does not begin with monotheism, or a revelation, and degenerate from it. On every strict test of the facts, it begins without religion, then believes in spirits of the dead, next in polytheism, and finally in monotheism."

APPALLING RECORD

As late as 1825, the record of Christian civilization in Europe was appalling. "Christianity was then the supreme faith: The churches, Catholic and Protestant, had enormous power. Newspapers, sermons and 'respectable' books blessed the condition of Europe as a divine order of things: and all rebels, whether religious or political, were severely denounced as agents of wickedness and monsters of impiety. And what was this divine order of things? And how did the churches use their influence?"

Taking England for example, where conditions were better than in other countries, McCabe gives us a brief but a revolting picture in *The Churches and Modern Progress* (Little Blue Book No. 1150). He says:

Of the 10,000,000 workers of Great Britain in 1825 about 3,000,000 were children earning from twelve cents to a quarter of a dollar a week; between 2,000,000 and 3,000,000 were girls or married women earning an average of less than two dollars a week; and the overwhelming majority of the four or five million adult males were agricultural or industrial laborers earning an average of not more than \$2.50 a week. No artisan earned more than \$6 a week, and only a few hundred thousand earned \$5 a week. The nominal wage itself had at least tripled since 1825.

One can imagine how these

workers lived. But let us glance at their condition in more vivid terms than money. McCabe tells us what the diet of these workers was. We quote:

Bread was nearly as dear then as now: tea, sugar, tobacco, and all overseas products were several times as dear. In other words, a dollar will now purchase far more comfort than two dollars then would. The increase of the real wage is even higher than the increase of the nominal wage. When I state that bread cost four to five cents a pound, it will be seen that the overwhelming mass of the people of Britain in 1825, after allowing a little out of the weekly \$2.50 for clothing and housing large families (as at then had), can scarcely have bought bread enough fully to satisfy appetites. They lived, as a fact, on bread, potatoes, cheap fat, and water. Meat, milk, butter, eggs, etc., they rarely saw. Flour was adulterated with plaster of Paris to an incredible extent. Disease was appalling.

That is bad enough. And remember the Christian churches did not protest against such conditions. On the contrary, the godly clerics were among the first to denounce anyone who insisted that humanitarian measures should be adopted for the betterment of the workers. Following McCabe again, we look more closely at the condition of the workers in 1825 under a Christian system upon which skepticism had not yet made serious inroads:

For this wage of, roundly, two cents a day per child, twelve cents a day per youth and maiden, and a quarter to half a dollar a day for grown men (except a very small minority of skilled workers), they worked twice as much as they now do. Children down to the age of seven, and often six, worked thirteen or fourteen hours a day, six full days a week. Adults worked fifteen or sixteen hours a day. There were no sanitary or other shop-regulations, and the tyranny of masters and foremen was appalling. Young children were thrashed with leather belts, dipped in tubs of water, and even nipped with pinners or vises, to whip up their drooping energy. For recreation they had neither leisure nor money. Those workers who had the money habitually got drunk. "The rest enjoyed the free fights (men, women, boys, cocks, etc.). But, as practically all worked from five in the morning until seven or eight at night, six days a week, with only two whole-day holidays in the year, there was not much need of recreation. You came home drenched to a 'home' most probably in a cellar, without light for windows and candles were heavily taxed and always without drains, devoured a dish of potatoes (smeared with grease) and bad bread, went to bed in your shirt or chemise, and rose at four. By sacrificing leisure you could thus get six or seven hours' sleep a night, with a long sleep on Sunday.

Far from protesting against this terrible state of things, the clergy, as McCabe shows throughout his book (*The Churches and Modern Progress*), thoroughly believed in the class divisions of society and the subjection of the workers. "Church and State agreed," says McCabe, "that this was the God-appointed order. The Church of England collected funds to 'teach the poor,' carefully explaining to the gentry that it meant to keep the poor 'in their proper station.' As late as 1807, when the French Revolution had shamed a few men into thinking about education, it was found that 95 percent of the adults of Great Britain could neither read nor write!"

Blessed churches! Blessed clergy! Observe how they not only preached but potentially practiced their gospel of damnation for the majority of mankind!

WOMAN IN ISRAEL

In the godly days of ancient Israel when, we are told, the old Bible tribes were guided by the direct commandments of Jehovah, a woman who gave birth to a male child was condemned as unclean for seven days and she was ordered to submit to a time of purification counting thirty-three days during which "she shall touch no hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying be fulfilled." If a woman bore a female child, she was adjudged unclean during two weeks and was compelled to wait threescore and six days before she was purified. This glimpse of the low position of woman in the good old Bible days is given by Joseph McCabe in *The Degradation of Woman* (Little Blue Book No. 1122) and he adds this further light on the darkness that surrounded woman under the rule of Jehovah:

The female was an inferior crea-

The Myth of Immortality

That immortality is a wishful fantasy, without basis in fact or reason, is shown by Joseph McCabe in *The Myth of Immortality* (Little Blue Book No. 1059). He shows that all things, from human beings to stars, follow the inexorable processes of birth, growth, decay and death. He brings out clearly the utter lack of evidence for the belief that man has a "soul"; and "man's mind is certainly evolved from a mind that is not spiritual and immortal." Personality, with its wonderful aspects and implications, has necessarily a physiological basis. The survival of a "soul" personality (of which we know nothing) is an idea that has no real meaning. Again, freedom of the will is an illusion; men act from human motives and natural causes; and man cannot, by an act of the will, make himself immortal. Immortality is a myth, a dream, a wish; and it is contradicted by the fundamental facts of life.

OUR MORAL PROGRESS

Superficial nonsense is talked about the need of religion. Usually it is asserted that religion is essential to the security and development of the moral life among men and women. Now, it is foolish to accept such statements without close examination. A fine suggestion of the method of inquiry which leads to the truth is offered by Joseph McCabe in *Do We Need Religion?* (Little Blue Book No. 297):

Suppose you appointed a committee of scientific men to work out this problem on the methods of a practical scientific inquiry. What would they do? They would at once establish two facts: first, that something through the ages, moral conduct has not varied with changes of religion, and secondly that there has been a very considerable moral advance in the last hundred years. They would then ascertain the causes of the modern advance, and would at once rule out religion. It is as plain as an arc lamp that religion has not had more influence on this and the last generation than it formerly had. It has lost enormously in influence. The millions who do not go to church or read the Bible may or may not have some sort of belief in God, but you know them, and you know what a feeble and unpractical thing it is. General education is the principal cause of the advance. Better and wiser education will mean further advance. The next chief influence is the evolution of higher standards of character by a minority of lay writers and thinkers, and most of these either had no religion or thought out human problems independently of it.

WOMAN IN BABYLON

Preachers who eulogize the barbaric tribes of Israel and represent their Bible as a guide to morality are fond, on the other hand, of denouncing ancient Babylon as a terribly wicked city. Its immorality is dwelt upon and as a corollary woman is supposed to have had a very brutalized, inferior position: that is the conventional Christian pulp picture. As a matter of fact, as Joseph McCabe points out in *The Degradation of Woman*, the law in ancient Babylon—say in the year 586 B. C. (although the law extended as far back as 2100 B. C.)—was too harsh precisely with respect to sex morality. Death was the penalty for adultery. But the law, if savage, was equal for man and woman. There was not one law for man and another law for woman. In other respects the position of woman in Babylon was infinitely superior to the lot of woman under the rule of Jehovah. McCabe tells us:

Woman was, at any rate, quite free in ancient Babylonia. Her rights were splendidly protected by law. She held property as legally as man did. She was not an inferior creature; she had no periods of uncleanness. She did not miss the Christian Mary, because Ishtar of Babylonia and Assyria, and at least in later Babylon was an ethical deity. Woman had, of course, no vote, as there were no votes for either sex. In a word, she was in every respect the equal of man, free to own and control her own property and therefore be independent, able to divorce an unworthy or even merely neglectful husband at any time, protected against any encroachments upon her rights by other women. That is what Rebecca, coming from the female slavery of Judea, would find in benighted Babylon.

The law of Babylon respecting the social rights of woman, says McCabe, was "immeasurably superior to the Christian law under which Christian women were living in England and New England 4000 years afterward, and far better than the Jewish law of 500 B. C." Pulpit history is distinguished by its extreme remoteness from the actual historical facts.

The belief in God today is strongest where man has least to thank God for, and it is weakest where men have most knowledge and mental training. It is universal only where life is poorest and where men have the least intelligence to perceive whether or not they are indebted to God.—Joseph McCabe in *The Futility of Belief in God* (Little Blue Book No. 1060).

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We should add (as McCabe makes clear in other books) that education has at the same time elevated morality—that it has especially broadened our conception of morality into social vision—and discredited the old assumptions of religion. Intelligent people grow away from *unsocial conduct* and *unsocial superstition*.

Rome had a population of about one million people in pagan days. Under Pope Gregory [sixth century A. D.] it had a miserable, ragged, densely ignorant population of 40,000 souls. That is a fair illustration of what had happened in Europe. It was this appalling economic revolution that had ended the old slavery; and the same revolution inaugurated a new, if not larger, slavery.—Joseph McCabe in *Christianity and Slavery* (Little Blue Book No. 1127).

Science gives us a natural interpretation of nature. It is very far indeed in its present stage from explaining everything, but to take some part of nature which is at present obscure and say that the hand of God must be there is a very poor fallacy. It is quite obvious that our ignorance of the natural causes may be, and in view of the history of science probably is, only temporary.—Joseph McCabe in *The Futility of Belief in God*.

Science as such is never concerned with religion. No branch of science deals with God or the soul or Christ. Yet there is a deadly conflict, because science tells us a large number of truths which, in the opinion of the majority of highly educated people, are inconsistent with the belief in God and the soul.—Joseph McCabe in *The Futility of Belief in God*.

"Most of the religions or gods that man ever invented," says Joseph McCabe in *The Origin of Religion*, "had no concern whatever about righteousness."

ONE BECOMES the victim, not the beneficiary, of an idea the moment one regards that idea as sacred.

McCabe's View of a Human Jesus and Religions of Ancient World

Taking the position that Jesus really lived (although the biblical accounts of him are contradictory and many are interpolations of early Christian sectarians), Joseph McCabe says in *Did Jesus Ever Live?* (Little Blue Book No. 1084) that such a person as Jesus was quite an ordinary figure of the time in which he lived. He did not burst upon the ancient world as a brilliant, original proclaimer of truth. What he said had been said often before and was being said by his contemporaries.

If there were a real Jesus, as McCabe concludes from historical evidence which he explains is plausible rather than positive, he was rather a commonplace person. His utterances reflected the thought—or a very familiar and widespread part of the thought—of the world in which he lived, obscurely and unimportantly. Jesus was of no particular importance until he had been transformed fictitiously into the Christ of the Gospels and mighty miracles had been ascribed to him; yet similar miracles, even so, were commonly reported of the mythical gods and Christs in many ancient religions of the time of Jesus.

In the near east where Jesus lived and where the Gospels were written (probably at varying dates, from three-quarters of a century to more than a century, after the time of Jesus) there was a vast deal of speculation and dispute about religion. "It was," says McCabe, "the world's most famous center of learning and religion. There were splendid schools and austere monasteries. The cross was a familiar symbol; and priests of Isis, with shaven polls and fine linen garments, sprinkled holy water on penitents. Every year there were

solemn celebrations of the miraculous birth of the divine son of the virginal Kore or of the semi-virginal Isis, and of the resurrection of a god, Osiris, who was to judge the living and the dead."

In such an atmosphere the human Jesus would be merely another exhorter, preaching well-known beliefs and expressing sentiments that were on the lips of many; and later on, the God-Jesus made up by Christian idolaters would be merely another among many ancient Gods and Christs. In neither role would he appear as a unique or remarkable figure. McCabe goes on to describe further the world of Jesus:

Along the coast of Palestine are half a dozen smaller cosmopolitan cities. In ancient Tyre and Sidon, in Gaza and Ptolemais, the cultures of the Egyptians, Cretans, Babylonians, Persians, Hittites, Phoenicians, Phrygians, Hebrews, and Greeks mingle. Temples rise in scores; and a score of rival priesthoods shriek their wares to the multitude. "Come and be saved from your sins," is the common cry. Here the cult of the Phoenician slain and resurrected God, Adonis, meets his counterpart from Phrygia (Athys), from Babylonia (Tammuz), and from Egypt (Osiris). Here the new Persian religions of austerity and repentance, Mithraism and Manichaeism, bring a new miraculously born savior and a new judge of the living and the dead; and they are as stern about sin and repentance as the most bilious spinster could desire.

There are gayer religions. There are cults of fertility and merry-making as well as cults of asceticism. "But if the oriental sun is still in your blood," says McCabe, speaking of that period of abundant and contrasting religions, "if you think love a gift of the gods, there is Byblus with its beautiful temple of impurity, Antioch with its enchanted pleasures, and, a short sail over the water, Paphos with its undying odor of roses and blaze of sensuality." It was

a fertile ground of magic and superstition and philosophic dispute and priestly contrivances and new, prophetic declarations. Jesus was but one of many. He brought nothing to this world. He only repeated what others had said and were saying.

"Further north are Tarsus," continues McCabe, "(where a fiery little tent-maker broods on these things) and Seleucia. Further west, following the bend of the coast, are Rhodes and Laodicea, Ephesus and Smyrna, Corinth and Athens, and heaven knows how many other cosmopolitan cities, where the latest Stoic moralists and argumentative Jews and Asiatic and Egyptian evangelists fill the air with cries of sin, repentance, end of the world, judgment, baptism, mortification of the flesh, virtue, spirituality, the true

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god, resurrection, immortality, and so on, and so on." The conclusion is plain. We quote McCabe: "What, in the name of common sense, could Jesus or anybody else add to all this? There were hundreds of Jesuses. A life of the Rabbi Hillel, if we had one suitably embroidered with miracles, would be a life of Jesus. A life of the slave-moralist, Epictetus, if we had one, would be a perfect life of Jesus. The life which we have of the wandering apostle, Apollonius of Tyana, is a life of Jesus. The chief teachings, even the phrases and sentiments to a great extent, were common to priests of Isis, Serapis, Esmun, Apollo, Mithra, Ahura-Mazda, and

through, as well as wandering Stoic apostles. Every single moral sentiment attributed to Christ in the Gospels has several parallels in the literature of the time. There is not one point in the "teaching of Christ" that was new to the world. Even the parables were borrowed from the Jewish Rabbis. The chief doctrinal features of the Christ of the Gospels—the birth, death and resurrection—were familiar myths at the time, and were borrowed from the "pagans."

It matters not whether such a person as Jesus really did live. He could not have been a great, original nor leading personality. He could have brought no new message to men. His sayings, whichever side of the various contributions one may select, are matched in the contemporary literature of his world. The miracles are, of course, no more than fairy-tale hokum. And, as McCabe points out, there is not a "figure of Jesus" in the gospels; but there a dozen figures of Jesus; we have a blending of different conceptions.

Of reliable history concerning Jesus there is very little, virtually none. For a century or more after the time of Jesus various men who described themselves, as his followers passed around tales concerning him; and the stories grew, of course, as such stories naturally do; and occasionally some one would make an ancient manuscript about some phase of the life of Jesus. There were thus many gospels. "Our four Gospels," says McCabe, "were selected in the fourth century out of a large number."

It is McCabe's theory that Jesus most probably belonged to a monkish sect called the Essenes which were familiar in the Palestine of his day. His ascetic teaching is the same as that ascribed to the Essenes. "Imagine one of these Essene monks," says McCabe, "going about Judea, as most of them evidently did. His conduct would be precisely that attributed to Jesus. Poverty, virginity, avoidance of oaths, passive resistance, aid to the unfortunate, love of all men, and so on. Then imagine one of their number, of independent spirit, breaking with the main body. Imagine him obsessed with the idea that the Kingdom of God was at hand—that was a common Persian

phrase for the end of the world and judgment of all men—and feeling that he was called to go and preach repentance, as the Essenes, apparently, did not. You have then, surely, something very close indeed to the Jesus of the Gospels."

There is, says McCabe, only "the slenderest of evidence" for this or any other view of Jesus, but he adds that this seems to him "the most reasonable historical view to take." The most significant point—and that point is borne out abundantly by our his-

GREAT REVOLUTIONS

A stale bit of superficial reasoning, which is nevertheless frequently met with in the discussions of our time, is debunked in a flash of illuminating reflection by Joseph McCabe in *The Churches and Modern Progress* (Little Blue Book No. 1150). "Those who talk," says McCabe, "as many do, about the contrast between revolution and evolution are imperfectly acquainted with both science and history. The great landmarks in biological evolution are three revolutions in climate or Ice Ages. The great landmarks in the chronicle of the last century and a half, the supreme period of human progress, are three revolutions. Evolution is not a continuous process. It has long periods of stagnation or reaction and short sharp periods of advance which we call revolutions." McCabe refers to the French Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century and to the revolutions of 1830 and 1848 in France, which were accompanied by similar revolutions in other European countries.

torical knowledge of the world in which Jesus lived—is that there was nothing unique, original nor wonderful about the personality nor the teaching of Jesus. The Christian miracle-mongers, borrowing freely from the pagan cults, made a God out of Jesus and thus his reported sayings (which are, even so, contradictory) were preserved as sacred. These sayings were not peculiarly the sayings of Jesus but were sayings current in that ancient world.

DEATH OF DESIGN

The argument of design was popular among Christians in the early nineteenth century, as it had been popular in the eighteenth century, and as it is still frequently used although the knowledge of evolution brought together by Darwin struck the design idea a death blow.

Before Darwin's time it was argued that "the remarkable structures and instincts of animals and the wonderful adaptations of plants to their surroundings" proved the intelligent planfulness of a God. But, says Joseph McCabe in *The Futility of Belief in God*, this argument was smashed to pieces "when evolutionists began to show that all these things were gradually evolved during tens of millions of years. If these structures had come into existence all of a piece, certainly we should have to admit a creator. But if they were evolved gradually, one crude form leading to another, the whole situation is changed. Unconscious nature may do, by many trials and errors, in a million years what it certainly cannot do in a year." And McCabe forcibly adds: "No plea for the supernatural origin of anything is valid as long as there is a possibility of a natural explanation of its origin."

Evolution killed the design argument, although some preachers, mentally dead, continue to use this dead argument.

Comparing pagan culture with the darkness of Christian medievalism, Joseph McCabe says in *The Church and the School* (Little Blue Book No. 1128): "The Greeks frankly recognized their debt to earlier civilizations, and the Romans were not less grateful to the Greeks. But the new religion [Christianity] which came to dominate Europe had no human sentiments, and in its own interests it [belied and scoffed at its predecessors. Modern scholarship fully restores the credit of the ancient Empire, and teaches us that it was precisely one of the glories of Rome that it gave the world the first complete system of general education."

Joseph McCabe says in *The Forgery of the Old Testament* (Little Blue Book No. 1066) that "the far greater part of the more learned clerical authorities on the Bible say that many books of the Old Testament pretend to be written by men who did not write them; that many books were deliberately written as history when the writers knew that they were not history; and that the Old Testament as a whole, as we have it, is a deliberate attempt to convey an historical belief which the writers knew to be false."

Did you order a batch of 25c Freeman Sub-Cards?

Creeds made in Dark Ages are like drawings made in dark rooms.—Joseph McCabe in *The Revolt Against Religion* (Little Blue Book No. 1007).

Creeds and legends and rituals have evolved just as stars and flowers have evolved.—Joseph McCabe in *The Origin of Religion* (Little Blue Book No. 1008).

The law of the entire universe is death, and you state that one single being in it, man, one amongst myriads of living things on a single globe out of myriads of globes, is a grand exception to the law. I ask proof in proportion to the magnitude of the claim.—Joseph McCabe in *The Myth of Immortality*.

There is not a single page in the chronicle of man on which you can put your finger and say: here the power of a god intervened, or here a supremely new and higher principle appears in man. From the lowest ape-like level to the highest known, from Miocene animalism to twentieth century civilization, it is an entirely human and natural story of evolution.—Joseph McCabe in *The Myth of Immortality* (Little Blue Book No. 1059).

LAWS OF NATURE

When a preacher refers to the laws of nature as demonstrating the necessary existence of a God who formulated such laws, he is giving a meaning to this phrase which is not at all scientific. This is put very clearly by Joseph McCabe in *The Futility of Belief in God* (Little Blue Book No. 1060) as follows: "Laws of nature, as we use the phrase in science, have not the least resemblance to human laws, and have no relation whatever to a 'legislator' or a mind. We say, for instance, that there is a law of gravitation. But we do not mean that there is a code of behavior drawn up in advance which things must obey. We mean simply that things do behave consistently in certain ways. The 'law,' as we call it, is simply a description of their behavior."

The Inquisition was founded in all its ghastly features by the Popes. Innocent III (its virtual parent), Gregory IX, Innocent IV, Alexander IV, and Clement V—all within about half a century—created it, and used every weapon and implement at their disposal to compel a generally reluctant world to adopt it.—Joseph McCabe in *The Horrors of the Inquisition*.

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EVOLUTION OF MORALS

Before the tremendous knowledge of evolution was obtained through the methods of modern science, the problem of morality and its origin and nature was very intriguing to thinkers. There were Greek philosophers. Like Plato, who speculated about ideal Good, Truth and Beauty as absolutes or imperatives having a spiritual origin. There was an ideal world of which the real world was only an imperfect reflection. Other philosophers, like Epicurus, reasoned that the good life was utilitarian; it was the kind of life which brought, as the philosophy of Epicurus insisted, the mood of tranquillity. A number of thinkers could perceive the relation of certain moral ideas, such as truthfulness and justice and honor, to social utility. But it was generally assumed that man had an innate conscience through which was revealed to him a moral law that was mysteriously implanted in the nature of things.

That was for centuries the attitude toward moral law, says Joseph McCabe in *The Human Origin of Morals* (Little Blue Book No. 1061). And McCabe goes on to explain:

The entire situation was changed when the truth of evolution was proved. Some writers are fond of saying that evolution describes processes, but does not explain anything. You have here a good illustration of the foolishness of that gibe at science.

Evolution said that the human race had been evolving, from the savage to the civilized level, during at least some hundreds of thousands of years. This meant two things, as far as the great problem of the origin of moral law was concerned. It meant, first, that the law may have arisen amongst, or been formulated by, human beings themselves long before the historic civilizations arose. This would explain how the ancient civilizations simply found themselves in possession of the moral code, and could therefore not suppose that it was drawn up by men. If they themselves had not formulated it, who had?

We quite understand their difficulty. But that difficulty would have

disappeared ages ago if the theory of evolution sketched by the first Greek scientists had been retained and developed. Then the Greeks might have learned how all their religious and moral and political ideals had been gradually forged in the workshop of experience, by a long line of developing ancestors. Evolution lit up the whole problem, and nearly every other problem.

One of the chief sources of our modern understanding of the evolution of moral ideas, as explained by McCabe, is the actual study of tribal ideas and customs among surviving savage peoples at different stages of culture. From the lower tribes to the higher peoples—the Vedda, the Australian, the Bantu, the Polynesian level and so forth—investigators have traced the changes in moral notions; and these changes, while here and there they shoot off in eccentric patterns, conform to a broad and fundamental principle of social utility. "Circumstances," says McCabe, "drove one branch of the race onward and kept other branches behind, at various stages of development. If this is true, we ought to find every stage in the evolution of moral ideas and conscience in the innumerable 'savage' tribes scattered over the earth."

Familiar as we now are with the true story of the evolution of morals, it is foolish for philosophers and idealists to continue the antiquated language about man's innate conscience and the superhuman moral law and so on. Common sense, moreover, assures us that this gradual development is quite the way in which we should have expected moral ideas to have grown and assumed their importance in human society. There is no evidence whatever for the theory of a mysteriously innate and inspired conscience of man; but all the evidence confirms the view that, like all things else, morality has been a slow evolution through the ages.

INDIFFERENCE to justice is treason to humanity.

What Do Scientists Know About Religion?

Scientific knowledge as a whole bears heavily and conclusively against the various assumptions of religion. Most scientists are irreligious, skeptical, anti-clerical in varying degrees; few can be described as at all orthodox. Prof. James H. Leuba's well-known investigation of the beliefs of American scientists, which is analyzed carefully in Joseph McCabe's *The Beliefs of Scientists* (Little Blue Book No. 1237), indicates fairly the situation. Addressing questions about God and immortality to a thousand scientists (including, too, industrial scientific workers with the higher class of original and intellectual scientists) and receiving answers from a majority, Leuba's results were published as follows: Of the physical scientists, 34 percent believed in a God and 40 percent believed in immortality. Among the historians, 32 percent believed in a God and 35 percent in immortality. Among the sociologists, 19 percent believed in a God and 27 percent believed in immortality. Among the biologists, 16 percent believed in a God and 25 percent believed in immortality. Of the psychologists, 13 percent believed in a God and 8 percent believed in immortality.

It should be added that a belief in God or in immortality among cultivated men and women is very different from the belief shared by the credulous masses who believe in the fairy tales of religion. The God of an educated person generally turns out to be a vague abstraction, cold and remote and meaningless; and the same is true of such a man's notion of immortality. It is significant that higher education and a familiarity with the methods of research and the intellectual conclusions of science tend strongly to weaken and often to destroy any sort of belief in religion.

This does not imply that the individual scientist is necessarily an authority on questions of religion. When Prof. Eddington or Prof. Millikan talks about religion, for instance, he is obviously departing from his special field of physics and is talking with as little real knowledge of the subject as a crossroads evangelist. These men do not actually attempt to prove religion by science. Their belief in religion, as shown by their own language, is very idealistic and indeterminate. And as McCabe points out again and again, religion (its history and psychology and comparative nature) is a special subject of study and some branches of science are more extensively and profoundly important than other branches in their bearing on religion. In *The Beliefs of Scientists* McCabe says:

Broadly speaking, to begin with, authorities on the physical or inorganic sciences have no special interest for us when they talk about religion. They may be men who are known to have given very serious and prolonged study to either the historical evidence for Christianity or the philosophical evidence for Theism. In that case they are entitled to the same respectful hearing as any other men of ability, and no more. Their scientific work gives them no particular fitness to judge historical or philosophical questions. A man may be brilliant in physics or astronomy, but when he assures us that there is a Cosmic Mind or a Great Something behind phenomena he is entitled to no more respect than the banker who launches a new theory of the stellar universe (as a banker friend of mine did) or the engineer who gives us a new psychology. Indeed, such a physicist or astronomer speculating about God should be less entitled to respect than these amateurs, at whom he smiles, for the latter have at least given years of reflection to their schemes.

We can see easily enough that mathematicians, physicists, chemists, geologists (in the very technical sense) and astronomers have no special qualifications to discuss religion—unless they happen to have studied the evidences about religion as they are to be discovered in quite other branches of knowledge. [The biologist, dealing with life and with evolution, is evidently more qualified to speak about religion than the astronomer or the physicist. The science of biology brings conclusions about the long, slow, blundering, unguided evolution of life which are fatal to the idea of God or soul. And McCabe goes on to say:

The evolution of civilization, of ethics and religion in particular, is just as fatal to Christian claims of revelation, doctrinal originality, of ethical superiority. Physiology, again, is of importance, since it studies the world, the living animal, in which the immaterial is said to make its first appearance. Russian physicist

ogy, which is properly concerned with brain processes, is even more important; and, although, as I said in another book, psychology no longer regards the question of the spirituality and immortality of the mind as part of its province, the opinions of psychologists on this religious issue are obviously important.

The sciences which are of special importance in dealing with religion are paleontology, prehistoric archeology, archeology, physiology, psychology, ethics and comparative religion. When Prof. Millikan talks about Jesus and religion, he betrays an ignorance of history which at once disqualifies him as an expert in this field. Prof. Pupin knows little or nothing about physiology and psychology. Prof. Eddington is not an authority on ethics and comparative religion. Scientists who have made themselves masters of the fundamental studies dealing with life and evolution (organic and social and historic evolution) are more likely to be found among the company of skeptics. If they give much thought to religion, these scientists readily perceive how the conclusions of their special knowledge tell against religion. But there is a wise caution given by McCabe:

We must remember, however, that even in the case of the latter branches of science the master may have given little or no thought to the bearing of his facts upon religion. When a physicist or a botanist or an embryologist assures us that there is no conflict between the teaching of science and the statements of religion, we have a right to smile. No one thinks of conflict in the case of his science, and in these days of necessary specialism he, as a rule, knows less even than any generalist cultivated man about other branches of science than his own. He is really abusing his scientific position and deceiving the ignorant public. But a master of human psychology, paleontology, or prehistoric science may not have much authority when he says his facts do not conflict with religion. That conflict itself requires special and prolonged study, and it is not his business to make such a study. In few cases does he give evidence that he has done so, and the men who give such evidence are generally Rationalists like Haeckel and Huxley.

The important point is that the facts of science, when thoughtfully examined in their bearings on religion, are seen to be atheistic. Science as such does not consider the question of a God; a scientist may, as he usually does, ignore that mythical question and study realities; but the conclusions of science make the idea of a God unnecessary, inconsistent and hugely ridiculous.

We are further reminded by McCabe that in these days, when everybody who wants to be sentimentally connected with religion or who wants to be polite to religion is dodging the issue by giving his own peculiar and vague definition of religion or even Christianity, we should be more suspicious than ever of statements by scientists which are advertised by the clergy as favorable to religion. Before modern science came to deliver its devastating blows at the structure of religious orthodoxy, a scientist who called himself a Christian usually meant that he believed in the specific, superstitious doctrines of the Christian religion; i.e., the resurrection, the atonement and the miracles of Christ. Nowadays, in the confused decline of religion in the transition from orthodoxy to complete atheism, a scientist who calls himself a Christian usually means that he has an amiable appreciation of the ethical teachings of Jesus; and when he says that science does not conflict with religion, he is apt to mean by "religion" a kind of idealism or poetry which has nothing to do with any definite beliefs of religion.

"The clergy," says McCabe, "once burned the map of science—Servetus, for instance—who questioned the divinity of Christ. They now implore him to condescend to describe himself as a Christian." And even so, with all the erratic attitude of definitions which now shelter under the name "Christian," few scientists of any distinction will stoop—for it is stooping—to this polite deception.

THE ATHEISTIC STARS Oh, no, we do not mean that a star thinks. We mean that our knowledge of the stars leads us to atheistic thoughts. We mean that the stars contribute to the growing influence of atheism. Let us take, at random, a point made by McCabe in *The Revolt Against*

Religion (Little Blue Book No. 1007):

If all the stars were strewn by the hand of God over the heavens in creation's morn, it would not matter much if they numbered two thousand, or as they do, over two billions. But if they were so strewn, we should expect them to be of approximately the same age. Yet they differ in age by billions of years. Stars are just rising from their cradles, or still lie in the giant wombs of nebulae; stars hundreds of billions of years old are slowly and feebly sinking out of luminous existence, and between the extremes is a vast population of stars as varied and graduated in age as the throng on a city street in the afternoon. We see no hint of a beginning or an end. Life on the planet earth is a brief episode in an eternal process.

All things pass away, men and stars, all things die—the "lords" of the earth and the institutions of the earth and the earth itself. It is only trivial fiction to speak of a "friend behind phenomena." Atheism is the lesson which is enforced by every fact of life.

What then? Why, we should put as much intelligence into life and get as much joy out of life as we can in our brief span of years. Religion can't possibly prolong our life; it can't change the facts; but it has interfered and it still does interfere with the realistic enjoyment of life.

Religion talks vainly about a life to come. Atheism faces honestly the truth that life is only here and now for us, and that we should make the most of it.

ASCETIC JESUS

How many who praise the ethics of Jesus have really studied those ethics? How many would even think of putting them into practice? The alleged sayings of Jesus which are most admired (in pulpits) and least practiced reflect a view of life which was impossibly ascetic. The counsels to be meek and humble and to turn from the things of this world and to cultivate the "soul" rather than the body and, in short, to prepare for the Kingdom of Heaven—such counsels, which are supposed to be sublime as coming from Jesus, find little place in real human conduct. This anti-human aspect of the ethics of Jesus is debunked by McCabe in *The Sources of Christian Morality* (Little Blue Book No. 1095) as follows:

But all moral rhetoric of this kind is bound to be ineffective with the mass of mankind. Buddha was not more successful in Asia, on this side, than Plato was in Greece or Jesus in later Europe. Our blood is as much a part of our nature as is our reason. We feel the falseness of a philosophy or an ethic that belittles the pleasure of life and would condemn us, in a world of sunshine and flowers, to close our eyes to the light and color. Only men and women of a peculiar nature ever pay implicit attention to such counsels. The teaching of Jesus was condemned to futility by its own exaggerations. It is not too hard for human nature; but human nature healthily refuses to be ruled by it.

We moderns care nothing for the ethics of "soul" cultivation. We refuse to regard as sublime the ethics of preparing for a mythical Kingdom of Heaven. We are interested in living—and therefore we are not interested in Jesus.

JESUS AND DEMONOLOGY

It is clear in the life of Jesus as portrayed in the Bible that he had the superstitious belief that an insane person was one possessed by devils. You will recall the story of the Gadarene swine, which tells how Jesus miraculously drove the demons out of a crazy man into a herd of swine which forthwith rushed into the sea. And for centuries, after the triumph of Christianity, this appalling theory of insanity dictated the most cruel treatment of the insane. The account is given in full by Joseph McCabe in *Christianity and Philanthropy* (Little Blue Book No. 1218) and from this book we quote two paragraphs summarizing the Christian record:

It was from the gospels, from the very lips of Jesus as his words are given in the gospels, that the Jewish theory of lunacy entered the minds of the Christian Greeks and Romans. The Egyptians had regarded lunatics as afflicted with a peculiar disease and had dealt gently with them. Pines says that there were hospitals for the insane in connection with the temples, but this is disputed. We know, at least, that the priests of Serapis received them, as they received all diseased people; and we know that the remedies they employed were occupation, recreation and music. Greek physicians also recommended the soothing influence of music and were opposed to the harsh restraint of the insane. In Roman law a charge of insanity had to be put before a magistrate, and, if it were proved, a curator was appointed to take care both of the property and the person of the insane.

And every authority on the subject goes on to tell us that with the

rise to power of Christianity these humane ideas were abandoned and the lunatic became one of the most pitiable figures in the world. In the fully developed Middle Ages, it is true, his property was carefully preserved. You could always trust the Church to do that. But the person of the lunatic had no protection whatever, and the most brutal methods were adopted to expel the devil from him. If he were, or threatened to be, dangerous, the recipe was simple: chain him up. The state of his cell or dungeon must be left to the imagination. "Torture and the cruelest forms of punishment" were, says our highest authority, the recognized remedies.

Demonology was one of the most popular of the Christian beliefs, widespread and cruel and revolting throughout the centuries of powerful church rule. A decent attitude toward the insane had to wait upon the growth of modern science and humanism and tolerance. This is but another instance of the superiority of utilitarian ethics—ethics which have for their objective the promotion of human welfare—over theological dogmas.

Its treatment of the insane is alone enough to condemn the record of Christianity; and there is certainly not enough of doubtful good in the Christian record to compensate for this cruelty of superstition. And indeed, as McCabe proves in book after book, Christian claims of having been a good influence upon society are false in almost every line; while since the beginning of modern times, and proportionately with the growth of the modern attitude toward life, Christianity has itself been forced into refinements of its old crude ideas and practices by the good influence of skeptics and rationalists.

ISOLATED RACES One method whereby scientists have learned a great deal about the evolution of religion, morals and other human ideas and institutions has been through investigation of backward races. These races have, at different times, been isolated from the main stream of development. Their modern value as living laboratories is explained by Joseph McCabe in *The Origin of Religion* (Little Blue Book No. 1008):

Evolution does not in the least mean that every living thing goes on evolving. It is only when their conditions of life change that animals or plants need to change. It is the same with human beings. Put a race of men in an island like Australia, and keep out all higher competitors, and there is no need for them to make progress. There is no stimulation to advance. And from the beginning of its history the human race has been throwing off these side-branches into isolated regions. There they generally remain unprogressive, and we pick them up today, and so learn what the race was like when they fell out of the march—ten, fifty, or a hundred thousand years ago.

Thus religion can be traced from its shadowy beginnings, through primitive superstitions, through theology and priestcraft, and down to the modern scene. Prehistoric science and the study of living races also show that at the early level of primitivism man had nothing resembling religion. All things have evolved. They have all been natural processes of trial and error. Nothing has been magically revealed. Nothing has been handed down from a God to mankind.

"DIVINE commands" do not look at all well when they are studied in the light of human interests.

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Clash of Creeds

Throughout the history of Christianity it has been agitated by the clash of creeds. In these modern days, the bitterness of these differences about doctrine is vested in words. We do not have to turn very far back in the pages of history to meet the signs of violence with which brother Christian fought the heretical ideas of brother Christian. In short, Christians have never agreed on Christianity. This conflict appeared in the very beginning of the new Christian faith, the articles of which faith were never clearly determined but were tossed on the spears of bloody contention. Joseph McCabe says in *The Evolution of Christian Doctrine* (Little Blue Book No. 1121):

We shall probably never recover the true history of the beginning of Christianity, but in the Epistles and the Acts we have a red glow here and there of conflict. Well did Jesus say that he came to bring into the world, not peace, but a sword. There were at once a dozen struggles: Peter or Paul, faith or good works, resurrection or no resurrection, obligation to the Jewish law or freedom. Christ had forgotten to leave instructions. His Church settled these dozen fiery controversies only to find itself locked in a terrific and protracted fight with Gnosticism. It emerged from that to confront Montanism, and Novatianism, and Ebionitism. After these came Patristicism, Adoptionism, Modalism, Sabellianism, and Arianism. The fierce passions and bloodshed of these struggles had hardly ceased when Nestorius and Eutychius, Helvidius and Jovinian, Donatus and Pelagius raised the temperature again. Then came the Monophysites, the Monothelites. . . . But the list would be too long. The battle is as fierce as ever today.

The list given by McCabe, which he tells us is only partial, indicates the sects into which the early Christians were split. There was never any settled, authoritative Christian doctrine which Christians themselves unanimously or anything like generally accepted. All through the Middle Ages, as McCabe shows in *The Evolution of Christian Doctrine* and in other Little Blue Books, there was a lively succession of schisms and heretical sects were always arising, only to be bloodily suppressed in most instances by the Roman Church. Christian doctrine could not, however, escape the influence of these many sects; and it changed through the centuries, until at length there came the Reformation and the world saw a rapid multiplication of Christian creeds.

"There was, in fact," says McCabe, "never a period of more than a few decades in which the Church was not engaged in fighting some heresy about the divinity of Christ. Yet the belief remained so vague and uncertain that when, three centuries after the death of Jesus, a Council solemnly formulated the dogma, a storm of resentment swept over the church and tore it, literally, into halves." Yet this doctrine

of the divinity of Christ, as McCabe points out, is held to be "the really fundamental and essential doctrine" of Christianity. There was a great struggle—and a violent one—over the doctrine of the Trinity. Christians disputed hotly the doctrine of the Holy Ghost. The cult of the Virgin Mary was another innovation made at a comparatively late date and resisted by many Christians. Other instances of the evolution (that is to say, the uninspired fabrication) of Christian doctrine are given by McCabe as follows:

Whatever else is obscure, it is plain that in the early Church there was only one "sacrament"; and that not in the doctrinal sense, for the Catholic doctrine of sacraments was manufactured mainly by Augustine. Baptism itself presents no difficulty. It was common in Judea and in all the ethical religions of the time. All the other "sacraments" were plainly manufactured by the priests. Cyprian very effectively began the manufacture of "holy orders." Extreme Unction and Confirmation crept up to the rank so slowly and unobtrusively that no one can retrograde to "matrimony," hardly any Catholic doctrine is more audacious. The Church had no control of marriage until the Middle Ages. It was a purely human matter. The "seven sacraments" are a discovery of the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century; and the most resolute theologian cannot affect to find them before the fifth century. They are priest-made; and, since they gave enormous power and wealth to the clergy, they are priest-craft-made.

In short, far from Jesus having founded a church with a perfect set of inspired doctrines, all these and other Christian dogmas were worked out by the priests in the midst of incessant schismatic war. Jesus, for that matter, did not speak of a church; it is at least clear in the Gospels that he was opposed to formal worship; and he believed that the end of the world was at hand. Protestantism, pretending to go back to the Bible for its doctrines, is in no better case than Catholicism. The various Protestant creeds have never been able to reconcile their bitterly conflicting views of what is real Gospel Christianity. And in these modern times, where we find any disposition toward Christian harmony, it means usually an indifference to creeds.

This clash of creeds, dating from the very beginning of Christianity, is evidence enough that Christianity has never been an inspired religion. Dogma has been piled upon dogma. New sects have invented new doctrines. It has been a long series of ridiculous, yet terrible, battles of bunk.

The real interest of the Inquisition is that it shows us Europe rebelling against the Christian creed and hierarchy as soon as it returns to a moderate level of civilization and, as in the fourth century, being compelled by brutal force to accept that creed and hierarchy.—Joseph McCabe in *The Horrors of the Inquisition* (Little Blue Book No. 1134).

The Dark Ages

It will be agreed by all that history is of the utmost importance. It determines many of our disputes when we simply refer them to their sources in history. Thus we know the history of ideas and institutions and, knowing this, can judge them more intelligently.

One of the most important things in history is the distinction between medieval and modern. In *The Dark Ages* (Little Blue Book No. 1130), Joseph McCabe summarily describes the Middle Ages as "a stretch of a thousand years during which crime, vice, violence, drunkenness, disease, mortality, brutality, exploitation, and injustice were immeasurably worse, as we shall see, than in the preceding or in our own time." He continues:

Hourly we repeat the division of time into two parts, B. C. and A. D., and millions still think that B. C. means Benighted Chaos and A. D. means Age of Delight. In history we divide time into three parts, Ancient Times, the Middle Ages, and Modern Times; and we consider the Middle Age (as we ought to say) a period of dark and turbulent semi-barbarism lying between two phases of civilization, ancient paganism and modern paganism. What redeeming features will even the apologist find in the Middle Ages? First—and almost last—medieval art: those glorious cathedrals that you go to Europe to see, those illuminated missals, those wonderful tapestries, those exquisite paintings, those feats of color and form. These artistic achievements are very real and important. They make one hesitate to call the second half of the Middle Ages barbaric; in the first half they did not yet exist. To understand aright their relation to medieval life in general and Christianity in particular we have to devote a special Little Blue Book to them [*Medieval Art and the Church*, Little Blue Book No. 1136]. And we find that they must certainly not be put to the credit of religion.

What is there besides the art? The guilds of craftsmen? I have already shown that these affected only a tiny minority of the workers, were pagan in origin, and were fiercely resisted by the Church until it found them irrepresible. What else is there? Nothing. The rest is misery, suffering, exploitation by priest and noble, appalling superstition, utter lawlessness, dense ignorance.

By the Middle Ages, says McCabe, we mean the period from about 500 A. D. "when paganism and the Roman Empire were extinct" to about 1500 or 1600 A. D. From about 500 to 1100 A. D.—the first half of the medieval period—is designated as the Dark Ages.

Regarding the guilds of workers, McCabe says in *Christianity and Slavery* (Little Blue Book No. 1127) that these organizations were survivals and revivals of the old Roman associations of laboring men and that the Church tried its best (or its worst) to suppress them. Furthermore, these guilds never affected the great majority of workers, who were serfs bound to the soil and under the harsh control of the feudal lords.

Again, McCabe shows in *Medieval Art and the Church* that the artistic activities of the later Middle Ages—when, indeed, the influences of modernism were dawning and the Church was confronted with increasing opposition—were in major part due to the influence of the Moorish civilization in Spain (see *The Moorish Civilization in Spain*, Little Blue Book No. 1137) and then to the development of trade and industry in the towns, which meant an increasingly secular life.

The school movement (again coming in the later Middle Ages) has been exaggerated, as McCabe shows in *The Church and the School* (Little Blue Book No. 1128), and in its early and Church-dominated phase it was rendered in the main futile by its extreme theological nature. The progress of real education, naturally, depended upon worldly as apart from religious interests. In the Dark Ages (500 to 1100 A. D.) there were not even these incipiently brighter features. Life in Christian Europe was terribly violent, ignorant, unjust, diseased, dirty and altogether wretched. Monstrous plagues swept the land. Fighting was almost continuous. Life was nowhere safe. Human rights were unknown. The Church, in a word, was supreme.

AGNOSTIC BUDDHA

Buddha (fifth century B. C.) was an agnostic, says McCabe in *The World's Great Religions*, and "he precisely aimed at diverting men from everything that was then called, and most men still call, religion." He was like Confucius in that he "distrusted and rejected all speculation about gods." And McCabe points out significantly that no great religious leader has ever been silent about the gods—or about a god; that,

indeed, has always been the chief alleged inspiration of their preaching.

"Buddha's doctrine," says McCabe, "was purely humanitarian." Professor Macdonell, professor of Sanscrit at Oxford University, says that Buddha "denied the existence both of a world-soul and an individual soul." And McCabe says: "Professor Rhys Davids, perhaps the highest authority, agrees, and draws the conclusion that Buddha was an Atheist."

Buddha's moral creed had two main features: it was an ascetic ideal of renunciation and also an ideal of human brotherhood. When Buddha lived, India was in much confusion and this probably explains the two conflicting features of his teaching. Pure, original Buddhism was later corrupted and became a religion with all sorts of extravagant doctrines.

The moral ideas of Buddha were similar to moral ideas ascribed to Jesus and were, in fact, quite familiar to idealistic thinkers and moralists of the ancient world, centuries before the time of Jesus.

SAGE CONFUCIUS

The average man, if he hears mention of Confucius, has a dim notion that this Chinese sage of the sixth century B. C. was a religious leader. The contrary is true, as McCabe shows in *The World's Great Religions*. Both Confucius (whose Chinese name was Kong-fu-tse) and Lao-tse were agnostics. They were concerned with strictly human questions of an ethical and practical nature. McCabe tells us that "even Lao-tse 'knew nothing of a personal God' though the moral system he founded, Taoism (*Tao* is the Chinese for 'way' of life), was later mixed with ritualistic Buddhism and is now a tissue of superstitions."

Most readers are more familiar with the name of Confucius. About this great Chinaman, McCabe says: "About the Agnosticism of Kong-fu-tse there has never been any question. Dr. Legge says that his moral system is 'hardly more than a pure secularism.' It is no more. No one in the world disputes that, when Kong was pressed to declare his opinion on a religion, which he never mentioned, he said: 'To give oneself earnestly to the duties due to men, and, while respecting spiritual beings, to keep aloof from them; that may be called wisdom.' Two thousand five hundred years ago this great sage founded an Agnostic code of morality as high as any in the world, and it has had a finer influence than any. For two thousand years it has been the standard of Chinese gentlemen, and it has never taken a religious form."

An excellent, full sketch of the life and teachings of Confucius is given in the larger series entitled *One Hundred Men Who Moved the World*.

HISTORIC MISFORTUNE

The long persistence of religion in the life of mankind is one of the greatest historic misfortunes. This has been possible owing to other blunders and burdens of the race. Naturally, says Joseph McCabe in *The World's Great Religions* (Little Blue Book No. 1030), a higher development of the race forces a broadening skepticism about the claims of religion. Priesthoods insist that their old dogmas are absolutely right; but men, as they go forward each step in civilization, dispute these dogmas; and in the end priest-hoods must cut down their claims and rearrange their ideas.

"If civilization had developed continuously since the laying of its foundations in Crete and Egypt," says McCabe, "the era of religion would have been over long ago. Wars, however, and the constant collapse of a civilization to which wars led, retarded the growth of the spirit of man, so that we are only now entering upon the last phase."

The vastness of modern culture and the world character of civilization (which was formerly isolated in small areas) promise a future of strong, enlightened humanism without religion. Religion is not dead, but it is dying. Let us hasten its death. Let us resolutely resist every movement to revive this historic source of enormous misfortune: for a revival of religion means a new and bitter war upon culture.

"Morality touched with emotion" was another definition [of religion]. But all morality, especially social morality, is touched with emotion; and most religions are not touched with morality.—Joseph McCabe in *The Origin of Religion*.

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