

**LITTLE BLUE BOOK NO. 1637**  
Edited by E. Haldeman-Julius

# **Absurdities of the Bible**

**Clarence Darrow**

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**HALDEMAN-JULIUS PUBLICATIONS**  
**GIRARD, KANSAS**

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**PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

## ABSURDITIES OF THE BIBLE

*Clarence Darrow*

Why am I an agnostic? Because I don't believe some of the things that other people say they believe. Where do you get your religion, anyway? I won't bother to discuss just what religion is, but I think a fair definition of religion could take account of two things, at least, immortality and God, and that both of them are based on some book, so practically all of it is a book.

As I have neither the time nor the learning to discuss every religious book on earth, and as I live in Chicago, I am interested in the Christian religion. So I will discuss the book that deals with the Christian religion. Is the Bible the work of anything but man? Of course, there is no such book as the Bible. The Bible is made up of 66 books, some of them written by various authors at various times, covering a period of about 1,000 years—all the literature that they could find over a period longer than the time that has elapsed since the discovery of America down to the present time.

Is the Bible anything but a human book? Of course those who are believers take both sides of it. If there is anything that troubles them, "We don't believe this." Anything that doesn't trouble them they do believe.

What about its accounts of the origin of the world? What about its account of the first man and the first woman? Adam was the first, made about less than 6,000 years ago. Well, of course, every scientist knows that human beings have been on the earth at least

a half-million years, probably more. Adam got lonesome and they made a companion for him. That was a good day's work—or a day's work, anyhow.

### *From Rib to Woman*

They took a simple way to take one of Adam's ribs and cut it out and make it into a woman.

Now, is that story a fact or a myth? How many preachers would say it was a myth? None! There are some people who still occupy Christian pulpits who say it is, but they used to send them to the stake for that.

If it isn't true then, what is? How much did they know about science in those days, how much did they know about the heavens and the earth? The earth was flat, or did God write that down, or did the old Hebrew write it down because he didn't know any better and nobody else then knew any better?

What was the heavens? The sun was made to light the day and the moon to light the night. The sun was pulled out in the day time and taken in at night and the moon was pulled across after the sun was taken out. I don't know what they did in the dark of the moon. They must have done something.

The stars, all there is about the stars, "the stars he made also." They were just "also."

Did the person who wrote that know anything whatever about astronomy? Not a thing. They believed they were just little things up in the heavens, in the firmament, just a little way above the earth, about the size of a diamond in an alderman's shirt stud. They always believed

it until astronomers came along and told them something different.

Adam and Eve were put in a garden where everything was lovely and there were no weeds to hoe down. They were allowed to stay there on one condition, and that is that they didn't eat of the tree of knowledge. That has been the condition of the Christian church from then until now. They haven't eaten as yet, as a rule they do not.

They were expelled from the garden, Eve was tempted by the snake who presumably spoke to her in Hebrew. And she fell for it and of course Adam fell for it, and then they were driven out. How many believe that story today?

If the Christian church doesn't believe it why doesn't it say so? You do not find them saying that. If they do not believe it here and there, someone says it. That is, he says it at great danger to his immortal soul, to say nothing of his good standing in his church.

The snake was cursed to go on his belly after that. How he went before, the story doesn't say. And Adam was cursed to work. That is why we have to work. That is, some of us—not I.

And Eve and all of her daughters to the end of time were condemned to bring forth children in pain and agony. Lovely God, isn't it? Lovely!

### *Can't Believe Story*

If that story was necessary to keep me out of hell and put me in heaven—necessary for

my life—I wouldn't believe it because I couldn't believe it.

I do not think any God could have done it and I wouldn't worship a God who would. It is contrary to every sense of justice that we know anything about.

God had a great deal of trouble with the earth after he made it. People were building a tower—the Tower of Babel—so that they could go up and peek over.

God didn't want them to do that and so he confounded their tongues. A man would call up for a pail of mortar and they would send him up a tub of suds, or something like that. They couldn't understand each other.

Is that true? How did they happen to right it? They found there were various languages, and that is the origin of the languages. Everybody knows better today.

Is that story true? Did God write it? He must have known; he must have been all-knowing then as he is all-knowing now.

I do not need to mention them. You remember that joyride that Balaam was taking on the ass. That was the only means of locomotion they had besides walking. It is the only one pretty near that they have now. Balaam wanted to get along too fast and he was beating the ass and the ass turned around and asked him what he was doing it for. In Hebrew, of course. It must have been in Hebrew for Balaam was a Jew.

*And Joshua Said to the Sun, "Stand Still."*

Is that true or is it a story?

And Joshua; you remember about Joshua.

He was a great general. Very righteous and he was killing a lot of people and he hadn't quite finished the job and so he turned to the mountain top and said to the sun, "Stand still till I finish this job," and it stood still.

Is that one of the true ones or one of the foolish ones?

There are several things that that does. It shows how little they knew about the earth and day and night. Of course, they thought that if the sun stood still it wouldn't be pulled along any further and the night wouldn't come on. We know that if it had stood still from that day to this it wouldn't have affected the day or night; that is affected by the revolution of the earth on its axis.

Is it true? Am I wicked because I know it cannot possibly be true? Have you got to get rid of all your knowledge and all your common sense to save your soul?

Wait until I am a little older; maybe I can then. But my friend says that he doesn't believe those stories. They are figurative.

Are they figurative? Then what about the New Testament? Why does he believe these stories?

Here was a child born of a virgin. What evidence is there?

*'Twas the Fashion*

What evidence? Do you suppose you could get any positive evidence that would make anyone believe that story today or anybody, no matter who it was?

Child, born of a virgin! There were at least four miraculous births recorded in the Testa-



ment. There was Sarah's child, there was Samson, there was John the Baptist, and there was Jesus. Miraculous births were rather a fashionable thing in those days, especially in Rome, where most of the theology was laid out.

Caesar had a miraculous birth, Cicero, Alexander from Macedonia—nobody was in style or great unless he had a miraculous birth. It was a land of miracles.

What evidence is there of it? How much evidence would it require for intelligent people to believe such a story? It wouldn't be possible to bring evidence anywhere in this civilized land today, right under your own noses. Nobody would believe it anyway, and yet some people say that you must believe that without a scintilla of evidence of any sort.

Jesus had brothers and sisters older than Himself. His genealogy by Matthew is traced to his father, Joseph, in the first chapter of Matthew. Read that. What did he do?

Well, now, probably some of his teachings were good. We have heard about the Sermon on the Mount. There isn't a single word contained in the Sermon on the Mount that isn't contained in what is called the Sacred Book of the Jews, long before He lived—not one single thing.

Jesus was an excellent student of Jewish theology, as anybody can tell by reading the Gospels; every bit of it was taken from their books of authority, and He simply said what He had heard of for years and years.

But let's look at some things charged to Him. He walked on the water. Now how does that

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sound? Do you suppose Jesus walked on the water? Joe Smith tried it when he established the Mormon religion. What evidence have you of that?

He found some of His disciples fishing and they hadn't gotten a bite all day. Jesus said, "Cast your nets down there," and they drew them in full of fish. The East Indians couldn't do better than that. What evidence is there of it?

He was at a performance where there were 5,000 people and they were out of food, and He asked them how much they had; five loaves and three fishes, or three fishes and five loaves, or something like that, and He made the five loaves and three fishes feed all the multitude and they picked up I don't know how many barrels afterward. Think of that.

How does that commend itself to intelligent people, coming from a land of myth and fable as all Asia was, a land of myth and fable and ignorance in the main, and before anybody knew anything about science? And yet that must be believed—and is—to save us from our sins.

What are these sins? What has the human race done that was so bad, except to eat of the tree of knowledge? Does anybody need to save man from his sins in a miraculous way? It is an absurd piece of theology which they themselves say that you must accept on faith because your reason won't lead you to it. You can't do it that way.

### *We Must Develop Reason*

I know the weakness of human reason,

other people's reason. I know the weakness of it, but it is all we have, and the only safety of man is to cultivate it and extend his knowledge so that he will be sure to understand life and as many of the mysteries of the universe as he can possibly solve.

Jesus practiced medicine without medicine. Now think of this one. He was traveling along the road and somebody came and told Him there was a sick man in the house and he wanted Him to cure him. How did He do it? Well, there were a lot of hogs out in the front yard and He drove the devils out of a man and cured him, but He drove them into the hogs and they jumped into the sea. Is that a myth or is it true?

If that is true, if you have got to believe that story in order to have your soul saved, you are bound to get rid of your intelligence to save the soul that perhaps doesn't exist at all. You can't believe a thing just because you want to believe it and you can't believe it on very poor evidence. You may believe it because your grandfather told you it was true, but you have got to have some such details.

Did He raise a dead man to life? Why, tens of thousands of dead men and women have been raised to life according to all the stories and all the traditions. Was this the only case? All Europe is filled with miracles of that sort, the Catholic church performing miracles almost to the present time. Does anybody believe it if they use their senses? I say, No. It is impossible to believe it if you use your senses.

Now take the soul. People in this world instinctively like to keep on living. They want to meet their friends again, and all of that. They cling to life. Schopenhauer called it the will to live. I call it the momentum of a going machine. Anything that is going keeps on going for a certain length of time. It is all momentum. What evidence is there that we are alive after we are dead?

But that wasn't the theory of theology. The theory of theology—and it is a part of a creed of practically every Christian church today—is that you die and go down into the earth and you are dead, and when Gabriel comes back to blow his horn, the dust is gathered together and, lo and behold, you appear the same old fellow again and live here on earth!

How many believe it? And yet that is the only idea of immortality that there is, and it is in every creed today, I believe.

#### *Matter Indestructible*

And everything that is in the body and in the man goes into something else, turns into the crucible of nature, goes to make trees and grass and weeds and fruit, and is eaten by all kinds of life, and in that way goes on and on.

Of course, in a sense, nobody dies. The matter that is in me will exist in another form when I am dead. The force that is in me will live in some other kind of force when I am dead. But I will be gone.

That isn't the kind of immortality people want. They want to know that they can recognize Mary Jane in heaven. Don't they? They

want to see their brothers and their sisters and their friends in heaven. It isn't possible. We know where our life began; we know where it ends.

We know where every individual life on earth began. It began in a single cell, in the body of our mother, who had some 10,000 of those cells. It was fertilized by a spermatozoon from the body of our father, who had a million of them, any one of which, under certain circumstances, would fertilize a cell.

They multiplied and divided until a child was born. And in old age or accident or disease, they fall apart and the man is done.

*Agnostic Because I Must Reason*

Can you imagine an eternity with one end cut off? Something that began but never ended? We began our immortality at a certain time, when the cell and the spermatozoon conspired to form a human being. We began then. If I am not the product of a spermatozoon and a cell, and if those cells which are unfertilized produce life, and those spermatozoa that fertilized no life were still alive, then I must have 10,000 brothers and sisters on my mother's side and a million on my father's. It is utterly absurd.

Now I am not a revivalist. In fact, I am not interested. I am asked to say why I am an agnostic. I am an agnostic because I trust my reason. It may not be the greatest that ever existed. I am inclined to admit that it isn't. But it is the best I have. That is a mighty sight better than some other people's at that.

I am an agnostic because no man living can

form any picture of any God, and you can't believe in an object unless you can form a picture of it. You may believe in the force, but not in the object.

If there is any God in the universe I don't know it. Some people say they know it instinctively. Well, the errors and foolish things that men have known instinctively are so many we can't talk about them.

As a rule, the less a person knows, the surer he is, and he gets it by instinct, and it can't be disputed, for I don't know what is going on in another man's mind. I have no such instinct.

Let me give you just one more idea of a miracle of this Jesus story which has run down through the ages and is not at all the sole property of the Christian.

You remember, when Jesus was born in a manger, according to the story, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem. And they were led by a star.

Now the closest star to the earth is more than a billion miles away. Think of the star leading three moth-eaten camels to a manger! Can you imagine a star standing over any house?

Can you imagine a star standing over the earth even? What will they say, if they had time? That was a miracle. It came down to the earth.

Well, if any star came that near the earth or anywhere near the earth, it would immediately disarrange the whole solar system. Anybody who can believe those old myths and fables isn't governed by reason.

REV. BEN M. BOGARD FAILS TO HALT  
DEVIL DARROW*Clay Fulks*

Aha! Now we know that the whilom doughty warrior of the Lord of Hosts, the Rev. Ben M. Bogard, D. D., LL. D., President of the American Association Agin Evolution (or something of that sort) editor of the *Baptist and Commoner*, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the Baptists of Arkansas, etc., etc., is, at heart, only a blowzy blowhard, a swaggering spiritual swashbuckler brandishing a paper sword! Under the flapping folds of the lion skin he wears, we can get a peep at the hoofs of an ass!

Ah, Brother Ben, with what humiliating chagrin, what agony of spirit, your most faithful followers must learn that their armored and anointed champion has permitted the Devil's Disciple, Clarence Darrow, to invade the sacred precincts of Little Rock, pollute the sanctuary with his awful blasphemies, and then escape unscathed!

Brother Ben cannot plead that he was taken by surprise. It was months ago that the newspapers carried the announcement that a religious organization—presumably one affiliated with a local Jewish synagogue—had arranged a debate between Darrow and Rabbi Sanders, to be held in the city of Little Rock on November 2. Preparations for the iniquitous event were carried on right in broad daylight; there was no pretense of secrecy about it. Thus the

Lord had given His prophet Ben timely and ample warning of what was coming.

Yet Ben cravenly permitted the Wicked One to come right into the fold among his flock—and maybe devour some of his little ewe lambs! Ah, woe is you, Ben! What a shameful and egregious defection this. I'll bet you Jehovah holds you personally responsible. Indeed, you need not be surprised to learn that, henceforth, on the roll of the Lamb's Book of Life, your name will be Ichabod.

It is true that Ben tries to salve his conscience and save his face by emptying one little vial of wrath into his *Baptist Commoner* AFTER the Wicked One had licked his bloody chops and departed. But note what a weak, insipid solution he had in that little vial:

The coming of the noted infidel, Clarence Darrow, to debate with Rabbi Sanders, gave occasion for a display of this arrogance and insolence. The infidel part of the lawyers used the Bar Association to give Darrow the glad hand and then gave him a reception at one of the big hotels and a second reception in the form of a smoker and thus lauded him to the skies and flaunted this arch-atheist in the face of the church people in Little Rock. In addition to that they spent their money buying seats at a dollar and fifty cents each. This disgraceful thing was held in the high school auditorium. When Bryan came to Little Rock a few years ago and lectured on evolution, although he had been three times the nominee of the Democratic party for president and was the most outstanding man in American life at that time, no bunch of lawyers gave him the glad hand. No reception was given, and instead of that some of them scoffed at him. I had rather be a dead "nigger" in a backwoods graveyard than to be in their shoes. What a pity that we have come upon such times.



Think of it! The biggest and worstest old ogre in the country comes from his lair in Chicago right down into Beulah Land among the church people of Little Rock, desecrates the sanctum, as it were, and gets away to desecrate other sanctums and perhaps devour more little ewe lambs.

And Ben, what did he do? Not a thing.

How different were the prophets of old! When, for example, Servetus, who had expressed some doubts about the Holy Trinity, came to Geneva in 1553 the great saint, John Calvin, captured him and burned him at the stake. There was a man filled with the Holy Ghost, a man not afraid to do the will of Jehovah. Yet with that shining example, and hundreds of other such examples before him, Brother Benjamin, hidden under the bed, perhaps, allowed Clarence Darrow, a far worse ogre than Servetus ever was, to come among the church people of Little Rock, gorge his fill, and get away. But Servetus didn't get away. Bruno didn't get away. There were thousands of other heretics in the days of the Old-Time Religion who didn't get away. This was probably what Brother Ben had in mind when he lamented: "What a pity that we have come upon such times."

Ah, Brother Benjamin, you cannot hope to escape the consequences of your pusillanimous negligence by hiding behind the times. "God is the same, yesterday, today, and forever." He probably sent the ogre Darrow down to Little Rock just to try your faith. Then you had your opportunity. But instead of rising to it

nobly, as Calvin rose to his when God sent Servetus to Geneva, you cowered in the background and failed ignominiously. Now you whine about the times.

And what an opportunity Brother Ben let slip. If he had captured Darrow and burned him at the stake, why, Ben's name would have been bandied about the world for ages to come; and five hundred or a thousand years from now he might have been canonized—by fellows of his own kidney. And, moreover, what a star he would have got in his crown! (Being a mere worldly man and therefore carnal-minded, I have no way of estimating the candle-power of that hypothetical star, but surely it would have been dazzling enough to satisfy such a Follower of the Lamb as Brother Ben.)

Ben may think that he can obfuscate the minds of his followers by printing a little editorial denouncing Darrow in his paper—and maybe he can—but He Who sees all the English sparrows fall and keeps a careful record of the number of hairs on Ben's pate certainly has not failed to take note of Ben's apostasy.

Personally, I am fair enough to admit that there appear to be some extenuating circumstances which, taken into account, might excuse him under our present loose worldly standards of requirement. For instance, had Ben and his Baptist brethren undertaken to burn Darrow at the stake, it is quite likely that the police, if they could have reached the scene in time, would have interfered and stopped them. But, evidently, Ben didn't even try! He might have gone ahead and done his

duty as a bold soldier of the Cross, leaving the results of his efforts in the lap of Jehovah. Or, if he felt so sure that the secular authorities would not permit him to deal with Darrow as Calvin dealt with Servetus, he might have gathered a few husky anthropoid Baptists around him and stoned Darrow to death. But he didn't even attempt that. In fact, he did nothing, and herein he betrayed his lack of the ancient faith and really proved himself an apostate. For this he will surely have to answer at the Last Judgment.

Brother Ben, I fear, cannot even plead ignorance. Ignorant as he notoriously is concerning the frivolous and ephemeral things of *this* world, he knows, perhaps, as much as Calvin knew about the High and Mighty Things beyond this vale of tears—the things Occult, Spooky, and Heavenly. He may know little about the world and the flesh but certainly he knows his devil. His knowledge of things divine is really marvelous; indeed, he is a regular practicing doctor of divinity. No, Ben can't plead ignorance at the High Court of Heaven.

Just what his alibi will be for this gross neglect of duty I have no idea.

The plain truth of the matter, however, is that the Church of Yahweh has fallen upon evil times—that is to say, upon civilized times—and its present-day prophets are becoming weak and flabby mollicoddles. They have become soft, rotund, fat-jowled, and compromising. They have more lard in them than they have faith; more paunch than Christian fortitude. They have indulged their appetites for

the modern fleshpots too much; and Brother Ben, I fear, belongs to that plump and contented category.

If he would shoulder up his cross and take to the desert mountains, clad in a good stiff breech-clout, and would go on a diet of manna, locusts, and wild honey, he would undoubtedly recapture much of the ancient faith. That's what Brother Ben needs, I feel sure—a few good messes of locusts. Look what John did on a diet of that sort. Ben might do just as much. Who knows? In the absence of locusts, he might find grasshoppers efficacious in restoring his waning faith.

Let Brother Ben try this good old saintly plan. Let him gather a trusted few of his faithful followers around him and do this, praying, meanwhile, unceasingly. Then let Clarence Darrow, or any other infidel, go among them advocating rationalism and we shall see that Yahweh is still in His Heaven and that the flames of a holy fire will still roast a heretic as eagerly as they did in the day of the Inquisition.

### WHAT CHURCH STATISTICS SHOW

*J. H. Patterson*

Some interesting facts have been brought to light in the "Comparative Summary of the Presbyterian Church in the United States for the Last Five Years" published in the July 2 issue of the *Christian Observer*. In this treatise, we learn that the Presbyterian Church in the United States, with a little more than 2,000,000 communicants, has lost 4,322 members since 1926. This is certainly not an insignificant

loss. And, too, the decrease in new members for 1929 was 2,500 over the decrease in new members for 1928. (The figures for the 1928 over 1927 decrease in new members were not given.) This means that within the past few years the Presbyterian church has been receiving several thousand less new members yearly than was expected. In other words, not as many people are joining the Presbyterian church now as formerly.

It is indeed interesting to note that, while the membership has plainly decreased, the number of ministers has constantly increased. The Presbyterian church has 174 more ministers than it had in 1926. More men are coming to the pulpit each year. More people are leaving the church. More pulpits, more ministers; smaller and smaller congregations. What does it all mean? When a church's membership decreases, it follows, per corollary, that its contributions decrease. So the situation is that of an ever-decreasing membership supporting an ever-increasing ministry. The predicament is a ludicrous one, indeed. But imagine how much worse it will be, say, twenty years from now. Every church will have at least one minister for each communicant. This means that every church member will have to support, besides his own family, a minister with his family.

The church has already noted the effect of its failing membership. Contributions for the last five years have decreased \$1,000,000. The pastors are plainly worried about this. One brother, Rev. Bernard Bain, has hatched a

plan with which to kill the deficit. His plan, in short, is to start advertising for souls. He figures that every soul saved will mean that much more money in the pot. Fearing his plan would shock the conservative Presbyterians—the Blue Stockings—Rev. Bain split a hair:

I do not hold up money as the motive, but the result, of soul winning. We are traveling over a treacherous sea of financial depression. In the distance beam two lights side by side: one is aglow with spiritual fervor, while the other is beaming with evangelistic zeal.

Rev. Bain suggested the "indirect method" of advertising. He said, "If the church is to have financial success, we must not only get the members to give more, we must get more members." Clever, indeed!

So, in the future we may expect the Presbyterians, long noted for their coldness and dignity, to adopt the Big Business tactics of the ranting-panting Baptists and Methodists. The high-hat Blue Stockings will fight this with all their old hauteur. But the Methodists and Baptists may as well gird up their loins, and prepare for a new era of competition in the Soul Saving Business.

### HOLINESS AND HALITOSIS

*William H. Burquest*

Although the Bible emphatically admonishes its faithful to maintain pure, healthy and undefiled bodies—living temples for the reception of the holy spirit—yet numerous Christians constantly violate that injunction.

For example, why are there so many "bad breath guys" among the pious?

This is often rancidly evident when one converses with those nice, sleek brothers of the blatant, evangelical sects—those tremulous neurotics with incurable complexes for “saving souls.”

These holy halitosis brethren, usually of inane, anemic visage, with about as much expression as a pan of dough, may belong to typical fundamentalist creeds such as Moody's, Aimee Semple McPherson's or any of the hallelujah breeds which typify religion.

They infest tabernacles and places where “revival meetings” are in progress, being much less in evidence among the modernistic denominations. This, apparently, is because the latter are more progressive. They don't take religion so terrifically seriously, devoting ample attention to secular matters, such as personal hygiene, clean teeth and wholesome breath.

If there's anything that damns a person in cultured society, it's halitosis. Certain brands of Christians manifest a tremendous interest in an alleged damnation hereafter, but are utterly indifferent about being socially damned here and now. Strange it is that these pious, evangelical gentlemen don't get next to themselves. The least they could do would be to invest five cents for Life Savers. This, at any rate, would redeem their breath to some extent.

One would naturally suppose that a wholesome breath should be a very important proposition, considering the large number of persons these evangelical birds are contacting. However, it appears they don't bother about it at all. The Lord will take care of everything.

even their breaths. If they are sweet and wholesome spiritually, why trouble about corporeal things? That's the way these fellows reason. Their mental and emotional processes are really astounding; in fact, too recondite for mere free thinkers or unbelievers to begin fathoming.

Among this type of Christians, the bad breath malady prevails with the men, the women being generally immune from it. And this is not difficult to understand, inasmuch as women, the world over, devote more time to their toilet than do men.

I've encountered many of these holy halitosis gents. Ever and anon, to vary the interest of an evening, I've dropped into tabernacles or revival halls, just to observe how these neurotics—these intellectually submerged folk—conduct themselves under the emotional stress of religious frenzy.

I've lingered to talk with some of them, getting their curious reactions on points of logic and common sense. Aside from the obvious fact that nearly all had the mentality of eight-year-old children, and often were distinct psychopathic cases, I have on frequent occasions been well nigh nauseated—or I should say asphyxiated—by whiffs of the rankest kind of halitosis. I've reflected that some sort of strong deodorant or, perhaps, gas mask, would have been in order as a protective measure.

The said gents were, of course, zealously bent on "saving my soul," but I absolutely didn't click. During my colloquy with them,



I kept dodging my head strategically in different directions to avoid the halitosis barrage, and from being literally overcome by it.

And along with this very putrid odor assaulting one's olfactory organ, I've perceived that a godly percentage of these tabernacle and revival fanatics will unconsciously "spray" one's face when conversing at close range. They seem to have saliva sprinkler systems. A friend of mine who has also noted this phenomenon suggested that it wouldn't be a bad idea for one to carry an umbrella or, perhaps, wear an ulster with a high collar (turned up) when conversing with the holy gentry.

Instead of attempting to "save souls" from an abstract and fictitious hell, it would be infinitely more rational for these foul-breathing psalm singers to first save themselves from a very real and obnoxious sin—the halitosis corruption—in which they appear to move and have their being.

I've often felt impelled to take one of these glib ignoramuses aside and talk to him, rather hard-boiled and like a Dutch uncle, as follows:

"Say, for the love of Mike, do something drastic to cure that rotten breath of yours. Pardon me for being frank, but I think it's a good thing to speak the truth once in a while. And the truth is something you should gladly welcome. Otherwise you're a mighty poor stick. Now, take a tip from me—an unbeliever in your childish, hocus-pocus stuff—and get busy and consult a doctor. You're doubtless suffering, either from bad teeth or constipation. And, by the way, it's obvious that you're suf-

fering also from constipation of the brain. Go and get a sound education or a fair semblance of one. You'll find plenty of night schools and libraries in this man's town. After a few years of diligent study of the thoughts of the world's great thinkers—the outstanding scientists and philosophers—you'll quite likely wake up, as from a nightmare, and you'll not kneel, but stand erect, and be a real man. You'll quit loafing around tabernacles and silly revival rendezvous, and you'll forget all about this asinine 'soul-saving' business. Then you'll really be born again, but not in the way the pulpit racketeers have been telling you about. At any rate you won't be a holy halitosis brother any more."

## THE WAR BETWEEN SCIENCE AND FAITH

*Clay Fulks*

Glancing over that page of the *New York Times* of Monday, October 13, 1930, which carries reports of "Sermons Preached Yesterday in the Metropolitan District," my eye caught the headlines: "Science Found Void Compared to Faith—Dr. G. J. Russell Says It Will Never Dethrone God."

What! Have I carelessly picked up a copy of the *Log Cabin Democrat*?—and am I reading a report of Elder Simpleton's latest sermon preached to the peasants and possum-hunters of Podunk Hollow, sent in by Bud Bartlett, correspondent from that neck of the woods? Again I glance at the top of the sheet. No, it is the *New York Times*, and the sermon is one delivered in the metropolitan district of New York—in the Second Presbyterian Church,

Central Park West and Ninety-sixth Street, to be exact.

"Science found void compared to faith." Well, well, the report of a divine message headed like that should be worth looking into. I read on.

"If God should ever go out of style altogether and if the whole nation should succumb to the material progress of science, . . . America is doomed to meet the same fate as Sodom and old Rome.

"While there never has been a time when God was fully in style, the great material progress of the country does not justify a certain belief that science has dethroned God and that people have no need for religion, for the creature of science can never replace God and the scientist lacks interest in the finer spiritual things.

"Sometimes the vice prevailing in this city is very discouraging to observe. Indifference, pleasure and materialism is [*sic*] prevalent here. Lack of faith in God is amazing. But the city is not the whole nation or the whole world. In the old days the city was the center of religion. The peasant, or, as the word meant then, the pagan, was the heathen. Today the peasant is more religious than the city dweller.

"Cynics with toothaches in their souls must note that today more attention is given to religion than ever before.

"What can science tell as to what will happen to us in the great unknown or where we shall go and what we shall do? The service science can do is to enhance the material side

of our lives. It goes to pieces when it comes to God and things spiritual."

Why, this is the same sort of mental pabulum that is regularly ladled out to village Fundamentalists down South! To what stratum of New York society do the members of Dr. Russell's flock belong? Can it be that they are on the same intellectual level as that occupied by the village rustics of Arkansas? Apparently that is the case, if this sort of stuff is suited to their tastes. There is, perhaps, nothing remarkable in the fact that holy mountebanks, willing to supply such stuff for, say, five or ten thousand dollars a year and a furnished home, are to be found in the metropolitan district of New York; but it is surprising that they can find enough customers there to make such business pay. Then, fortune-tellers and voodoo doctors should be able to get along very well there.

What do religionists like Dr. Russell think science is, anyway?—and what do they take the purpose and function of science to be? Do they think of science as simply a conglomerate of published guesses made by hardened, educated "old infidels" concerning things of which they are either wholly ignorant or only superficially informed?—and that its only usefulness and legitimate function is to minister to the "low," base, and material wants of man? Evidently, this is the case.

Of course it is not reasonable to expect the Fundamentalist mind to hold anything approaching a real and adequate conception of science; to have any knowledge of scientific

methods of investigation; any understanding of the scientific attitude; any appreciation of the scientific spirit; or any respect for the integrity of the scientific mind. Indeed it is the inability to do these things that leaves the unfortunates exposed to the Fundamentalist blight. It is the ability to do these things that distinguishes intelligent persons from Fundamentalists.

Everybody, excepting the Fundamentalist, understands that science—and its application through the arts—has been the sole means of elevating a portion of the race from a primitive, universal state of savagery to its present stage of culture. Had all men relied on faith alone—using the term in its theological sense—the whole race would have remained fixed in a permanent condition of savagery.

Maybe, however, a savage who is filled with the “simple, trusting faith” is acceptable to Jehovah whereas a scientific-minded civilized person is not. Indeed, as I now recall, this is an acknowledged belief of the religionists.

A “worldly” faith founded on actual experience and observation—as faith in Nature and human nature—is, of course, a fine and sensible thing; but that is something vastly, I might say, diametrically, different from what the theologians mean by faith. What they mean by faith is that blind, unquestioning credulity which can swallow any imaginable tale of the supernatural; that pop-eyed, gaping credulity which, everywhere and always, finds it infinitely easier to accept the fantastically impossible than the natural and probable and takes to

fetishism, incantations, "signs," and the boom-a-lay of resounding tom-toms as naturally as a duck takes to water. Faith, in this sense, belongs to the arrested and static mentality—the type of mentality that delights in contemplating the unreal, the magical, and the fantastic; in a word, the "finer spiritual" things. the things not of "this world." Science, on the other hand, appeals to the inquiring, developing, and dynamic mind—the type of mind that normally prefers to grapple with the real and the actual, the things of this world.

Take, to begin with, the body of knowledge embraced by cosmogony, cosmography, cosmic evolution, and astronomy. How much of it was given us by faith and how much by science? Faith gave us just what Jehovah knew when he submitted his well-known MSS. to the publishers and it has not given us a scrap of information since. All the rest of our knowledge of those subjects has been given us by science. Of course the Fundamentalist regards Tycho Brahe, Kepler, Galileo, Copernicus, Newton, Laplace and all other scientists in that field as fakers; but worldly-minded persons are much inclined to accept their discoveries and conclusions, or at any rate, to take them seriously.

Consider our knowledge of biology. How much of such knowledge was given us by faith and how much by science? Faith has given us what we were able to derive from the published reports of Yahweh's casual researches and not one bit more. All the rest of our knowledge of that subject has been given us

by science. The true Christian, of course, who has been washed in the Blood of the Lamb, regards Lamarck, Darwin, Huxley, and all other biologists as unscrupulous nature-fakers; but wicked worldings treat them and their discoveries and arguments with profound respect.

Take pathology, pharmacology, and hygiene. How much of our knowledge of those subjects was given us by faith and how much by science? Through faith man learned that he was "possessed" of devils and that the "cure" came from exorcism, incantation, and prayer. Not another iota of knowledge of these subjects has faith ever contributed. All the rest of our knowledge has been contributed by science.

But hold! Here I must pause to confess that I was a bit hasty in saying that faith has made no progress in therapeutics; for I recall that, in addition to exorcism, incantation, and prayer, faith has discovered and made known to the world an impressive number and variety of "remedies" for diseases, many of which are successfully applied in Fundamentalism today. But I have space to cite only a few. An Irish potato carried in the pocket will cure "rheumatiz." Chicken feathers burnt under the child-birth bed will stop hemorrhage. "Thrash" may be cured by having one, who has never seen his father, blow his breath into the patient's mouth. That dread disease known as hives can be cured by giving the patient a "solution" of buckshot. "Sheep-pill" tea is an unfailing remedy for measles. (My own life was saved by a timely administering of that great specific by one of my grandmothers when,

as a puling infant, I had the measles, so I was later informed.) Rattlesnake oil, skunk oil, buzzard oil, and goose grease were found to be sure shots for many dangerous diseases. The seventh son of the seventh son of a Fundamentalists carried a mysterious assortment of specific remedies up his sleeve by means of which he could cure many of the worst diseases that flesh is heir to. Many "yarbs"—catnip, horehound, mullein, poke, etc.—when gathered on the dark of the moon and brewed with the proper mystic ceremony, were found to be sure cures for many maladies. And, moreover, candor compels me to go a step further and confess that faith made some progress in preventive therapeutics. A ball of asafetida, wrapped in a frog skin and suspended from the neck by an eel-skin string, rendered the wearer immune to contagious diseases. It was also good against fits. Fruit of the buckeye, carried in the pocket, would keep off malaria and rheumatism.

But to resume the argument. What has been remarked of the above-mentioned branches of science is equally applicable to all other branches.

Of course science doesn't undertake to "tell as to what will happen to us in the great unknown or where we shall go and what we shall do." Why should it—when theology itself has so thoroughly and authoritatively done all that?

"It [science] goes to pieces," says Dr. Russell, "when it comes to God and things spiritual." Just what the reverend doctor means



by a statement like that I have no idea. What I should mean by such a statement is that if science were to undertake to do such a fatuous thing, it would instantly cease to be science at all and would degenerate into theology.

"In the old days," the doctor reminds us, "the city was the center of religion," whereas "today the peasant is more religious than the city dweller." This statement is undoubtedly true, and, it may be added, religion will probably become the exclusive possession of the peasantry. Certainly, nearly all intelligent persons have become thoroughly ashamed of it.

The learned doctor admits "there never has been a time when God was fully in style" but if he will review the history of the Dark Ages, he should not fail to note that there was a time when God was perilously near "fully in style" which is precisely what made the Dark Ages so damned dark.

"Lack of faith in God is amazing," says the reverend doctor. But this doesn't seem to harmonize with his statement that "today more attention is given to religion than ever before"; since, clearly, he means favorable attention, for it is to this assumption that he so triumphantly calls the attention of "cynics with toothaches in their souls." Lack of faith in God may be amazing to such as Dr. Russell, but to many others, equally as wise, it is the exact opposite that is so amazing. When, however, faith in God finally becomes the exclusive possession of the peasantry, the phenomenon will cease to be so amazing. In fact, abnormal psychology has pretty well explained it already.

