

# THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY.

---

VOL. XIV.

JULY, 1910.

No. 3.

---

## INFIDELITY TAUGHT AT AMERICAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES.

In a series of articles contributed to the *Cosmopolitan Magazine* last year by Mr. Harold Bolce, he set forth the claim that the leading colleges and universities of the United States taught and promulgated views on religion and morals subversive of biblical tenets. He referred to distinct universities and their teachings, stating in substance, as their doctrine, that the Christian religion is not a divine revelation, but merely the human mind groping in the dark for the infinite, that conscience is but the sum, or result, of human experience in matters moral, that the Bible is not a divine revelation, which God gave to man, but a summary of records showing what ideas man has of the Supreme Being, and how these ideas developed in the course of time, that the family is in no sense a divine institution, but a social arrangement contrived by man, which means that the Sixth Commandment is not obligatory on man.

True, Mr. Bolce was too sweeping in his statements when he represented his findings as the teachings of colleges the land over. *The Christian Statesman*, official organ of the National Reform Association, taking exception to these general statements, made a canvass of the denominational colleges of the country and found hundreds of them "where the Bible is taught as a revelation from Heaven and Christianity as the only true religion." St. John's College, of Winfield, Kans., was one of those whose reply in the affirmative was recorded.

On the other hand, we must, though reluctantly, admit

the sad truth that gross infidelity and skepticism, or agnosticism, is taught in the American universities, given forth as the result of honest and learned research, as the light which is bound to dispel the darkness of superstition handed down from the dark ages. To our knowledge not a single one of our universities has challenged the correctness of Mr. Bolce's statements as to the looseness of the religious views prevailing at their particular school.

Mr. Bolce is again heard from. In the February and March issues of the *Cosmopolitan* he essays to set forth the tenor of religious views prevailing at American colleges *for women*. And he creates the impression that he is speaking practically for all American colleges, saying: "More than four hundred coeducational colleges are addressing their revolutionary teaching to an army of young women, which is annually multiplying its numbers." However, the denominational colleges seem to have been totally ignored by Mr. Bolce; colleges, a great many of which are coeducational and are not given to that "revolutionary teaching."

Sad and true it is, however, that our great institutions of learning, all of which are coeducational to our knowledge, lend their learning and influence to discrediting Holy Writ and the great truths on which our salvation is built. Quoting Mr. Bolce, we learn: "Coming out of the great colleges of America is an annual procession of American girls trained for the affairs of life, but who are not marching back to old altars. They have been taught at the University of California, for example, to reject plans of salvation that cannot be accepted by the reason. . . . Such is the college attitude towards life, a point reached by trampling under foot the dogmas of the ages. And young women are coming out of college believing that it is absurd for humanity to stake its hope of salvation on much of what the Christian world has accepted as inspired writing. 'Make your soul worth saving, and it will be saved,' I heard an educator say to a college girl who asked him if he believed in the doctrine of the atonement on Calvary.

“As to the origin of right and wrong, the question is asked, ‘Which is right, the idea that the knowledge of God is a miraculous communication from God to man, or that man himself and man’s religion, in every respect, came to be through the long processes of evolutionary growth?’ The great university gives the sanction of its scholarship to the statement ‘that it is the conclusion of the investigation and reflection of the modern world that the latter is the fact.’

“The Bible is taught in the coeducational institutions of the United States, but the character of that teaching will startle Christendom when the truth is known. The University of Michigan, for example, declares that the books of the Bible are a composite of myth and legend in the form of fable, proverb, precept, folk-lore, clan, and domestic law and rhapsody. It is further set forth that these are of various and dubious origin; that the texts have been edited and interpolated, and often corrupted and marred by endless copying; that the Scripture writings were ascribed, as a rule, to men who never wrote them; that they are nearly all difficult to understand, and that it is preposterous to ask humanity to stake its hope of salvation on such a book. And at Chicago and California it is contended that there is no historic certainty that Jesus ever lived.

“With all its challenge the doctrine of evolution is taught in all the advanced colleges. It is explained to the girls of Cornell that both man and the simian stock sprang from the same progenitor. . . . But the teaching goes still farther behind the record of Holy Writ, declaring that before this four-footed Adam the genealogical line ran ‘through a long series of diversified forms, of marsupial, of reptile, of fish, to an ultimate ancestral animal, a fish-like creature which united both sexes in itself.’ ‘The genesis of this earth,’ the girls of Cornell are taught, ‘is not explained by a single creative act, but implies a process extending over the immensity of geological ages.’ The doctrine that the Infinite created this earth by divine fiat, that the creative days numbered six, and that

on the seventh God rested and hallowed the day, is rejected as a picturesque but impossible myth.

“The young women who are going forth by thousands to shape in the home and in the common schools the thought of the coming generation of America are leaving behind them with a cheery smile what they regard as the fairy tales of ancient writ. . . .

“Sociology as taught in the University of Wisconsin points out that an ethic which bases its laws on human nature and the nature of the social organization is superseding the alleged commandments of Deity, the precepts of ancient sages, the customs of the fathers, and the edicts of Mrs. Grundy.

“President Hyde, of Bowdoin, who, it is said elsewhere in these articles, is in demand as a lecturer at many girls’ colleges, not only tells his own students, but has sent the message out to all the students of this land, that the modern world, at least the intelligent and thoughtful portion of it, has outgrown the old idea that God sent His Son to the earth announcing His advent by signs and wonders; or that this Son was authorized to forgive sinners who conformed to the terms revealed. . . .

“A prominent professor in one of the largest universities recently said: ‘The ordinary minister is a decidedly inferior person, and the morning newspaper, or a fishing trip, or a baseball game is decidedly to be preferred to anything he can give.’ . . . It is the belief of American colleges quite generally that the home has been the foster house of prejudices. It is the medium which hands down the provincialism of the fathers. Taste and tolerance do not thrive in the ordinary home. ‘The marked conservatism,’ it is taught at the University of Wisconsin, ‘of even latter-day women, in respect to religion, education, and ethics—her foolish clinging to superannuated race and class prejudices—is due to the immuring walls of the home. . . . Country life has been exalted, but contemporary educators see in the college spirit something superior to the atmosphere of the country home, a place of narrowing toil and

immemorial prejudices.' In the University of Wisconsin it is taught that 'the country has few contacts with the outside, and is therefore conservative. Here old-fashioned greetings, ballads, forms of speech, superstitions, and prejudices find their asylum. In the back-country survive clannishness, the sacramental marriage, full quivers, marital supremacy, patriarchal authority, snuff-dipping herb-doctors, self-supporting preachers, foot-washing, hellfire doctrine, controversy on the form of baptism, dread of witchcraft, and belief in the flatness of the earth.'"

We adduce what a lady student has to say of the influence on herself of these modern doctrines. Miss Bertha L. Daeley, of North Dakota, as quoted in the March issue of *The Christian Statesman* (p. 68), says: "If a girl comes to college with belief in any special religion, she is soon reduced to the doubting stage. One of the main causes, I think, is the tendency to belittle all authority, human or divine. The step in the working of the student's mind is a blind endeavor to find out for herself just what the truth is about life and death, and in too many cases she finds herself in such a labyrinth of opinions and creeds that the result is absolute confusion or a settled agnosticism." This college teaching "gives a psychology without a soul, a science which excludes the necessity for a Creator, and an ethics which is based on the unstable will and inclination of the multitude."

What are we to say to all the above? Though reluctantly, we must admit that these universities really teach what Mr. Bolce ascribes to them. Their views on religion have been published, let us note, in a prominent magazine of wide circulation and in a series of issues; we have yet to read of a correction on their part. If they were misrepresented in a matter of such vital importance as religious convictions, in a nation where they are largely the molders of opinion, they should, and doubtless would, make haste to enter a vigorous protest. People look to our great universities, and our institutions of learning generally, to lead in thought. Their find-

ings in the fields of science, of letters, and religion are accepted with a great deal of respect, and often as final. Here, now, we find our great schools throwing all their vast influence in the direction of counteracting the efforts of pious parents and contradicting the direct statements of Scripture and of discrediting Holy Writ, as well as the family and the Church, in every way possible. Note the slurs they cast upon the country home where the family altar is still held in reverence; the home (having a "full quiver") that sends many a son and daughter to college, and whence the prayers of pious parents follow the child to school.

We laud our millionaires for establishing great schools and magnificently endowing them. Is this so great a blessing if these schools break down our altars? We pay taxes—and a goodly proportion of them—to uphold our State Universities, our State Normals, our State Agricultural Colleges. All of these are saturated with the venom of antibiblical teachings and tendencies. Should we vote more of our money in that direction? We do not ask our state schools, high or elementary, to teach religion, even though it be the orthodox Lutheran, but we do ask them not to combat the Christian religion—for this is teaching religion negatively.

The church is never averse to hearing the truth. It is, however, not true that the results of scientific investigations, or of philosophic ramblings, have shown the Christian religion to be a fabrication of the human brain, built on ignorance and superstition. The slurs cast at the family have been heard before; the ape origin, so-called, of the human race is not an invention of modern times. But are we to send our sons and daughters to schools where such views are imbibed, and where these receive, by way of sanction, the immense impetus of the whole university?

We may ask, What has caused such wide-spread denial of the Word of God as distinctly a divine revelation, and, consistently with this, a denial of biblical doctrines, in some cases even the most fundamental? We are not too pessimistic when

we assert that all our higher secular institutions of learning, even the high schools, are contaminated with this leaven of unbelief. Our American universities will likely rest the blame — if such they consider it — of holding these revolutionary doctrines with the European universities, notably the German. If, however, we go deeper into the causes of this denial of divine revelation and truth, we must not charge any single person or school, but the perverse human heart, which ever seeks and welcomes any pretense for denying divine truth. And in these latter days, according to divine prediction, unbelief and skepticism, yea, hostility towards Christ and His Church, will multiply. The Prince of Darkness has succeeded in our day in enlisting on his side, the side of rationalism, nearly all the teachers at secular institutions and many at ecclesiastical, together with the wealth of millionaires and of the commonwealth.

This latter thought reminds us of the “Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.” And since we count that one of the causes of the rapid spread of rationalism at our higher schools of learning, let us give it some attention here.

As is known, Mr. Carnegie has donated \$15,000,000 of his wealth, the proceeds of which are to be spent in pensions given to superannuated or disabled teachers at educational institutions accepted by the officers of the Foundation. One condition, and the prime one, is, that the institution of learning petitioning for the benefits of the Foundation must apply no religious test of any kind in appointing or electing trustees or professors, or admitting students. The institution must not be under control of any church or denomination, or in any way affiliated with a church body. 'Tis true, the provisions also call for the compliance with certain prescribed standards of scholarship in admitting students, in instructing and graduating them. In thus standardizing educational institutions and in raising the requirements both for admitting and graduating students, the Foundation may be said to benefit higher education. However, this same end would be obtained with even greater uniformity by legislation; and if all state insti-

tutions meet certain requirements, private schools that wish to articulate with them would of themselves fall into line.

The cause of rationalism has received a great impetus by the Foundation placing a premium on the exclusion of the religious element from instruction and training. Originally, Mr. Carnegie did not intend to include the tax-supported institutions in the benefits of his gift, which was \$10,000,000 when first announced, but he was prevailed upon to include the state institutions and to increase his donation to \$15,000,000. The Foundation is now paying 318 pensions annually, the cost being \$466,000; the pensioners come from 139 colleges, distributed over forty-three states of the Union and provinces of Canada. In order to come under the provisions of the Foundation, a number of colleges have eliminated the religious element, though originally such colleges were founded by the church or by church people.

Mr. Henry Smith Pritchett, president of the Board of Trustees who administer the funds of the Foundation and decide who is entitled to pensions, has a peculiar and yet a very prevalent definition of a "Christian education"—a definition which, we presume, reflects the views Mr. Carnegie has on religion, a definition, moreover, which tends to explain the hostile attitude of the Foundation to definite and positive Christian teachings. In an address President Pritchett delivered before the Educational Conference of the Southern Methodist Episcopal Church, he said, in part:

"Much confusion has heretofore existed as to just what is meant by Christian education—a confusion which arises partly out of the almost universal failure to discriminate between religion and church membership, and partly out of a lack of appreciation of the intellectual strivings of the college and university student.

"The essentials of religion are the same whether men belong to one religious organization or another. Religion is a life springing up in the human soul which blossoms into forgetfulness of self in the service of God and men. This life exists without any reference to the denominational or eccle-



siastical definition of it. It has, in fact, to this formal expression much the same relation that the stars have to the science of astronomy, or that the flowers have to botany, or that the chemical reactions have to the text-books in chemistry. Now shall Christian education mean the effort to bring into the minds and into the lives of students the conception of religion as a life, or shall it mean the presentation of the forms of worship of a particular denomination and the claims of a particular view of truth? And shall the methods by which these elemental relations are to be brought to the attention of college boys be those of the congregation, of the Sunday school, of the revival, or shall they take account of the intellectual processes through which the student is developing? Shall they be planned to appeal more directly to the emotions or to the reason?"

The fundamental mistake made by Mr. Pritchett consists in severing the means of grace from the new life—from "religion." He says, "Religion is a life springing up in the human soul which blossoms into forgetfulness of self in the service of God and men." This life exists without dependence on the great text-book of religion, the Bible. In other words, "religion" is nothing more than the development of certain virtues, such as truthfulness, unselfishness, loving-kindness, general good morals. However, if that is religion, then let us adopt Socrates and Plato of old as our instructors; they have given us excellent precepts; let us close the Bible.

True, we should "discriminate between religion and church membership" in the sense that nothing *merely external*, be it church membership, knowledge of the saving truths, or even "service of God and men," is to be confounded with true religion or accepted as its substitute. Religion is a *life*—true; but a spiritual life is built on thoughts, on principles, on truths; how can there be a *service* without them? More than this, the Holy Spirit, we Christians hold, by means of these truths of Law and Gospel, engenders the new life in the heart of man. This new life changes the whole man, and by medium of the Word the Holy Spirit continues to supply food for this new

life and to strengthen it. This is not only the biblical view of "religion," but it is psychologically the only true conception. To analyze spiritual life as a "service" — "only this and nothing more" — is not at all scientific. A service, a life, is built on thoughts, on principles; these principles must be right, or the service can have no moral value. To ignore these principles is to degrade man to a mere machine, for this renders service without any reference to text-books. Even if all the actions of a man be unselfish ("blossoming into forgetfulness of self"), this would merely exclude the hypocritical feature of the service. But the work of an assassin or burglar is not morally right, simply because it be performed in a spirit of unselfishness. The Master teaches true psychology: "Whatsoever is born of flesh is flesh." Therefore, "Ye must be born again." So we hold that a spiritual life leading to God must spring from God, and be sustained by God.

It is apparent that a young man or woman attending any of our universities will find in all the learning of those places no food for the soul and no support for the old established faith, and that means that a soul thirsting for the living waters will not be led to Christ.

What position are we Lutherans to take? Merely denounce the infidelity of the age, or shrug our shoulders and pass by? Let us, above all, work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. And let us not fail to patronize the colleges of our own Synod, supplying them liberally with students and money. Let us also see how we can reach our young men and women who by force of circumstances must attend the universities. Some religious bodies have established houses or homes at university centers where the students of their church meet with church privileges, and where lectures on religious topics, free to all, are given by men placed there and salaried by their respective church. A Lutheran oasis of this kind would undoubtedly prove a great blessing not only to Lutheran students, but also to many other hungry and thirsty souls.

Winfield, Kans.

A. W. MEYER.