

BOOGEY MANS IN RELIGION HOOEY JIBES REYNOLDS

Prospector-Poet, With 71 Years Background, Unburdens Self on Religion and War Against Devil

By J. C. REYNOLDS

I see by the papers that this flock of evangelists, who have recently descended on southern Oregon, have resuscitated and brought to light again that nearly defunct specter (the Devil) we used to hear so much about years ago, but who has been practically excluded by the country's foremost preachers for some time, because of the fact that people everywhere had become fed up on it and had ceased to attend church in consequence. Or at least such is the complaint of several of our leading church journals.

However, it seems to go over big in this section and if the idea gains sufficient popularity among the masses, it will only be a step backward to the days of witchcraft and the old attractive pastime of burning victims alive at the stake. And from there a slight push would shove us right back again into the Dark Ages which, as all men know, retarded the growth of the world's progress for one thousand years.

One can hardly blame those who make their living by teaching this doctrine for striving to revive this old belief, as it is plain that religion is founded on a mythological hell, from the torments of which none may escape unless aided by the efforts of these self-appointed deliverers.

If there were no hell there would be no devil, nothing to be saved from and consequently no need of religion—nor of preachers. Personally, I care less than nothing what my neighbor's religious beliefs may be. If he can get a kick out of loading down his mind with a lot of unnecessary grief, it is all right with me. But why, may I ask, out of the hundreds and thousands of devils recognized by the many religious denominations of this earth, has our Devil been selected as the great "I AM"? And why is it necessary to aid his cause with so much free advertising? Is it good business sense to advertise your worst enemy's activities and merchandise? Why not let this imaginary Devil do his own advertising? In which case he would soon die a natural death and cease to annoy suffering humanity. There is something wrong somewhere. Somebody must be getting a rakeoff out of it.

I am an evolutionist myself, and a free man. I am not pinioned down by the weight of enormous invisible shackles. I have a conscience which tells me the difference between right and wrong. When I go wrong, I do not try to hide behind an imaginary Devil and whine about how he tempted me. That kind of excuse doesn't go with my conscience. The most terrific punishment I ever received was from that conscience of mine. And as I have to live with him, I make it a point to keep him in good humor.

I know how to behave without

being scared into it by some wild threat of a Devil who started out as a snake, afterward turned into a roaring lion and eventually wound up as a dragon. Ahead of anything else in the world I believe in the teachings of science. When a scientist evolves a new theory, thousands of the most brilliant and giant intellects jump on it in the interests of truth and endeavor to pick it to pieces. If one little flaw is discovered, the new theory is discarded and relegated to the scrap pile. So when science evolves a theory that can withstand the onslaughts of the world's keenest minds, you may bet your last dollar that it is true.

Science has explored the realm of space in every direction. It has investigated every hole and corner of our entire earth. It has segregated and analyzed the 92 elements of which our universe is composed. And science states there is no place for a Devil in our universe, no need of a Devil, and that there is no Devil. So that's that.

It may sound queer, after saying I do not believe in a Devil, to state that I saw him when I was seven years old. I was living then in Providence, R. I., a city of about 100,000 population. Near where we lived was a cemetery covering several square blocks. The city had grown up around it. We kids used to play in it quite a lot. The grass was soft and clean and the grave-stones made excellent hiding places for our games. One bright moonlight night the Devil appeared. Raised up from behind a gravestone and looked at us.

One look at his horns and fiery eyes and we instantly became full of velocity. There were no jack-rabbits going our way or we would have run right over them. After that no kid could be induced to go anywhere near that cemetery. Some weeks later my uncle and I were returning home on another bright moonlight night and, arriving at the stile leading into the cemetery, he started to go in, as it was a shortcut to our home, but I very decidedly declared I would not go that way. He inquired why, so I told him about the Devil in there. How he did laugh and, grabbing me by the hand, went right in and as I couldn't break loose, I was dragged along. We were half way across when oh migosh! the Devil himself raised up from behind a gravestone and looked at us. Never had I been so scared. It was a wonder I didn't die right

there from fright. I fought like a wildcat to break away but my uncle held me tight and strode straight up to Mr. Devil, and what do you think it was? A darned old billygoat that had been feeding on the grass among the graves. But he sure looked demoniacal in the moonlight. After that I always associated the Devil with a goat, and I saw to it that he never made a goat out of me.

Previous to that time I had another experience that may be worth relating. I had two aunts who used to come to our house and stay a month or two at a time. These aunts were supposed to be good, respectable church members who would scorn to tell a lie. Yet they amused themselves by loading up my little noggin with a mess of nonsense, for which I have never forgiven them. I presume I was considerable of a nuisance, like all kids of that age are, and after being started for bed at 7:30 I would put on my nightgown but, instead of getting into bed, would slip out again to the sittingroom, where I liked to stick around and listen to the talk going on there. My father seldom came home from his business before 9 o'clock, so he never knew what they told me, or he would have made them quit it. And I never thought to mention it to him. They said that at just 8 o'clock there was a most terrible booger who slipped into the house and hid under my bed. If I went to bed at 8 o'clock like a good little boy, he wouldn't bother me, but if I did not get right into bed and cover up, he would bite off my toes or fingers, maybe my nose, if I stuck it out. He had been known to bite a whole leg off of naughty boys and sometimes he carried them away and their mothers never heard of them again. And I believed every word of it. Many questions I asked about this booger and finally I knew all about him. I knew how many rows of sharp teeth he had, all about the stinger on the end of his tail, and the long talons he grabbed bad little boys with and his slimy scales and everything. I knew he was under my bed and that he was simply waiting his chance to catch me dead to rights and perhaps carry me off and eat me. In my mind I could see him as plain as if I was looking straight at him, and nobody could have convinced me that I was mistaken about it. I never thought to ask myself the simple question,

"Why did my father allow such a dangerous beast in my room which might mangle or mutilate me at any moment?" We had gas in our house and my dad always insisted that there must be a dim light in every bedroom, turned down and shaded, so that any time in the night full light could be had quickly if needed. I became so expert in dodging that booger that I could run into my room, leap into the center of my bed and cover up so quick that a shooting star would have seemed slow in comparison. Then I would congratulate myself on the way I had fooled him and fall asleep. One night, not being very sleepy, I began to have a great curiosity to see him so, slipping very quietly, an inch at a time from between the covers, and ready to dart back to safety if he sprang at me, I finally got into position where I could see under the bed. I looked and looked, but could see nothing. He wasn't there, but I was so badly hypnotized that I simply imagined he had taken a night off, but would be back the next night. Being determined to have a look at him, I went through this performance night after night, till even my kid brain began to realize that there was a screw loose in the machinery somewhere and eventually I grew so bold that I would stop and peek under the bed before getting in and shout "Boo!" Later on, I got so daring that I would sit down on the rug with my back to the bed, under which the booger was supposed to

be. All this may not be of much interest to my readers, but it was one of the best experiences of my whole life as it taught me how easily an image can be formed in the mind and, by lending it one's energy of thought, can be built into a fearsome being that in time acquires power enough to deal misery to the thoughtless boob who allowed it to gain a foothold. How-

ever, there is a remedy. These grievous images can be just as easily thrown out by the exercise of the same amount of energy of thought.

The greatest sin of all sins, in my opinion, is to allow anyone to force you to believe something that your own good common sense tells you is not so. Nearly 30 years (Continued on page four)



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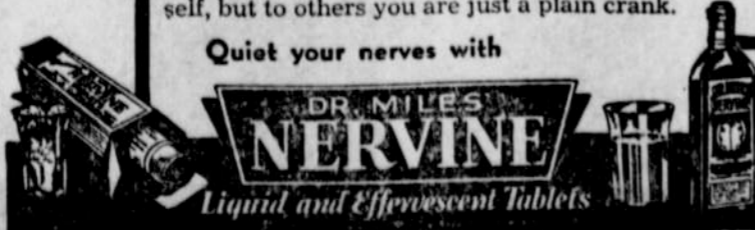
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