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The Open Court

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Devoted to the Science of Religion, the Religion of Science, and the
Extension of the Religious Parliament Idea

Founded by EDWARD C. HEGELER.



CONFUCIUS AND THE HERMIT.

Design on metal mirror probably dating from the Han dynasty.
(See pp. 155-158.)

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“Wenn ich mir denke, dass vielleicht in hundert und mehr Jahren, wenn auch mein Staub schon lange verweht ist, man mein Udenken segnet und mir noch im grabe Tranen und Bewunderung zollt, dann freue ich mich meines Dichterberufes und versöhne mich mit Gott und meinem oft harten Verhängnis. Diese Worte, die sich in Tagen Schwerster Bedrangnis aus Schiller's Innerstem lösten, haben in unvergleichlicher Weise Erfüllung gefunden. Hundert Jahre nach seinem Hingang gedenken seiner dankbar Millionen über die ganze Erde hin und freuen sich dessen, was er in einem allzu kurzen, an Kampf und Arbeit überreichen Leben geschaffen hat.”—Extract from biography.

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FATHER HYACINTHE LOYSON.

AN OBITUARY CONTAINING A DOCUMENT BY FATHER HYACINTHE WITH REFERENCE TO THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS MARRIAGE.

BY THE EDITOR.

WE learn from the papers that Father Hyacinthe Loyson has died at Paris in the 85th year of his age. Two years ago his wife, Madame Emilie Loyson, had preceded him in death and left him for the rest of his days a widower deeply mourning for the companion of his life. Their paths met during his hardest struggles for an intellectual emancipation from the fetters of hierarchism, and when he had conquered they were united forever.

Father Hyacinthe came into connection with *The Open Court* soon after the Religious Parliament, held in Chicago in 1893, and we have remained good friends ever since down to the day of his death. He was a dear old man who combined in a rare way religious fervor with a high intellectuality. He was both a born preacher and a thinker, but the preacher was uppermost in his soul, and all his thoughts were subject to his faith.

In his younger days there was no conscious contradiction between the two souls that lived in his breast, but when the conflict between his conscience and clerical duties arose in him his intellect rebelled against the tyranny of tradition, and here his future wife was of a remarkable assistance to him. When his separation from the church had become an established fact he married his former penitent.

The first communication which we had from Father Hyacinthe Loyson was on account of the Religious Parliament and the Religi-

ous Parliament Extension, of which latter the editor of *The Open Court* was secretary.

Father Hyacinthe Loyson had become interested in some books of the Open Court Publishing Company, and entered into a controversy with the editor concerning the nature of God and the soul, which was published in *The Open Court* in the year 1894, and re-published in the book *God: Man's Highest Ideal* (on pages 190 ff). Here the old conception of God as held by all orthodox Christians and a philosophical conception of God are contrasted in the contemplation of a simile. God and the soul are to Father Hyacinthe as indispensable to gain his bearings in the world as the two poles of our terrestrial habitation are to the astronomer or to the geographer in science. In answer to this conception we reply that the old view materializes God into an individual existence as if the poles were two enormous infinite beings, while the true poles are mathematical lines, pure nonentities if conceived from a material viewpoint. These poles do not exist as things; they represent relations, yet as such they are not less significant than the axle of a wheel, for these poles are efficient factors in the existence of the earth, in its relations towards the world and in the very nature of the regularity of the cosmos. The soul and God remain of as much importance whether or not they are substantial beings or concrete units. It goes without saying that this new God-conception which to the faithful believer may appear sheer atheism, preserves the spirit of the old theism and is really the truth of theism presented in a scientific form. It is a God to whom no philosopher, no scientist, not even the atheist can object.

It is natural that Father Hyacinthe was not converted to the new view, but he at least understood that a God-conception is possible without the form of the externalities of the traditional faith. During the year of the Paris Exposition when the Congress of the History of Religion was convened on the Fair Grounds, the writer of these lines met Father Hyacinthe and Madame Loyson personally at their home at Neuilly, and since that time we became attached to one another by ties of a deep friendship. Father Hyacinthe told me at that time that his view concerning myself had changed since making my personal acquaintance. He had always (and he used this very term) "been afraid of me," thinking that I must be a most aggressive and negative character, but he understood better the positive aspect of my interpretation of religious topics since he had talked with me face to face.

I will say further that Madame Loyson was an indispensable

part of his life. They were both so different, and yet, or perhaps on account of their difference, they needed one another. Father Hyacinthe was a thinker and his wife was a doer. She was full of ambition to undertake great tasks in life. She wanted to harmonize our religious world, and her sympathies went out to the Jews and to the Turks. She had not been thrown into contact with Orientals, such as the Hindus, Buddhists and Confucianists. Otherwise her religious horizon might have expanded also to nontheistic religions, but that problem had never entered her mind. She wanted a union of the theistic world religions, and cherished the plan of having them convene at Jerusalem, the city sacred to all theists, Jews, Christians, and Mohammedans.

In fact she contemplated a journey to Jerusalem, and wanted her husband to join her in the enterprise. Father Hyacinthe was not so enthusiastic in this plan. He saw the difficulties which her bold American spirit had overleapt in the hope that nothing was impossible and everything could be accomplished by bold courage. She succeeded in inducing her devoted husband to undertake the journey to Jerusalem, but the realization of her dearest plan to have a great religious ecumenical council could not be realized. The Turkish authorities themselves were opposed to it, and refused to accede to her wishes in most polite terms, for Madame Loyson had a wide circle of influential friends, and if the plan had been feasible at all she might have accomplished it in spite of the many obstacles and difficulties.

We will only mention one of the difficulties which in her mind did not exist. Jerusalem is by no means a modern city. The water supply is limited to cisterns, and the conveniences for European and American travelers are scarcely first class, nor could the hotels have accommodated large crowds. Further, the tension between the different religions, especially between Mohammedans and Christians, but also and possibly in no less degree between Armenians and Roman and Greek Catholics, also of the Jews and Turks, is very great, and it might have become a disturbing factor if by any mishap the fanaticism of some sectarians had broken out at the time of such a council. Diseases on account of impure water and insufficient food would easily have developed among the visitors unaccustomed to Oriental diet in a city like Jerusalem at the present time. The expenses of living would have risen enormously during the time of such a council, and the dissatisfaction would have been great in all quarters.

Father Hyacinthe and Madame Loyson undertook the journey

to Jerusalem. They went by the way of Algiers and Egypt; and she published her memoirs of this remarkable trip in a stately and fully illustrated volume, under the title *To Jerusalem Through the Lands of Islam*, in which she reported all her experiences, as well as religious contemplations concerning the views of many people whom she met on the way, especially among the prominent Mussulmans.

The son of Father Hyacinthe and Madame Loyson, Paul Hyacinthe Loyson, has inherited from his parents a literary spirit and is active in several reform movements of modern France. He advocates the cause of international peace, of republican ideals and of humanizing the state, and his voice makes itself felt in the reform journal *Les Droits de l'Homme*. Above all we must mention that he is a poet, and his drama *Les âmes ennemies* was well received at Paris.

After their return Father Hyacinthe and his wife settled for a time in Geneva where he had been the pastor of a Gallican church for some time. Though in his advanced age Father Hyacinthe had retired from the life of an active pastor, he continued to lecture and preach in different churches, Protestant as well as seceded Catholic, and everywhere he was welcome on account of his brilliant oratory and the fervor of his address. He exercised no small influence upon the liberal-minded Catholics, Protestants, and even infidels who in France play a very prominent part.

Father Hyacinthe had left the church, nevertheless he remained a good Catholic for all time. He preserved his monk's cowl, and clung to the very cloth as a relic of a time sacred to him. He loved the Roman Catholic ceremony, and would have continued in the church had his intellectual conscience, and also the conscience of his deeper catholicity, allowed him to stay there. If he had not had charge of so prominent a pulpit as Notre Dame, if he had been a layman, he might have remained a Catholic to the end in spite of the intellectual differences because he might not have felt the responsibility of his affiliation. He was too broad-minded to condemn other views, and here the necessity of leaving the church began.

One tenet of both the Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic churches is decidedly uncatholic, and this is the condemnation of all those who do not accept the very symbols of the Catholic doctrine. Father Hyacinthe had taken this doctrine of the Athanasian confession of faith as a matter of fact, and when his American penitent became converted to Roman Catholicism she protested most vigorously against pronouncing a condemnation upon the faith of

her beloved mother. With Father Hyacinthe's permission granted after some discussion, the two clauses referring to such a condemnation were taken out and this gradually wrought in him the change that finally drove him out of the church.

We grant that it was the influence of his future wife which started in Father Hyacinthe the change, but it would be wrong to say that the change would not have taken place without her. We do not doubt that on some other occasion the true catholicity of his broad-minded recognition of other faiths would have asserted itself. At any rate there is no reason to accuse him of having changed his views for the sake of becoming free to marry his penitent to whom even at the time of her conversion to Catholicism he felt a deep attachment.

At the time when Madame Loyson died Father Hyacinthe sent us a communication concerning his relation to his wife and setting forth the motives that swayed him at the time, telling in simple outlines the history of his development and of his relation to her. In so far as his life had been that of a public speaker and a prominent preacher, he felt it his duty to give an account of his motives which were known to the narrower circle of his most intimate friends, among whom we will mention Abbé Houtin.

It was fully three years after Father Hyacinthe left the Roman Catholic church in 1869 that he married Mrs. Emilie Meriman, and it appeared to the world as if the former step was taken in order to make the latter possible. His friends and those who were acquainted with him knew perfectly well that this was not the case, and yet the two incidents are closely connected. The situation is best understood if we draw our information from the first source, Father Hyacinthe himself. He has communicated the story of his marriage as well as his separation from the church of Rome to a few intimate friends, and since the subject is of more than private interest, since it touches the problem of the celibacy of the clergy, and since the situation has become the subject of several widely read novels, it seems justified to present to readers interested in religious problems the very authentic statement of this typical case.

After the death of his highly cherished wife in 1910, his marriage became to Father Hyacinthe a chapter of the past. At the age of 83 years he looked back upon this most important episode of his life with calm and unimpassioned contemplation, and as he had nothing to regret he had nothing to conceal. So he kindly accorded his consent to have this letter which originated from a definite inquiry of one of his French friends, published in *The Open Court*,

though upon further consideration he desired that it be held until after his death. It has not as yet been made public elsewhere, and is here offered to our readers in an English translation with the hope that they will understand the struggles and development, or rather the hard-won victory, of a noble soul.

You ask me, dear friend, how I came to know and love her whom I mourn to-day, and what the connection is between the meeting of our souls and my break with the Roman church, for the two events were practically contemporaneous. The relation is not that which has been assumed by vulgar or malicious minds, but a true and deep connection nevertheless exists.

I was at the height of a religious crisis. I have given an account of this crisis elsewhere, and its long course may be followed in the papers which I have entrusted to M. Houtin. It was in 1867, at one of the most acute moments of this crisis, that Mrs. Meriman, then a widow, while passing through Paris on her way to Rome, was induced by a convert who was a friend of both of us, to pay me a visit at the convent of the barefooted Carmelites at Passy, where I was then living.

At that time I had never dreamed of leaving the Roman church, but after a great deal of study, much experience and great anguish of spirit, I was advancing slowly and surely towards a more emancipated Catholicism which might be taken for a kind of Protestantism since it included the principle of private judgment. Mrs. Meriman herself was passing through a soul crisis but in the opposite direction; for although Protestant by birth and jealously guarding the liberty of her conscience, she was nevertheless dissatisfied with the more or less narrow sects which she had known and felt herself attracted by the majestic unity and by the poetry of Catholicism as she understood it.

Our interview might have been without further consequence like so many others which I had during my ministry. In the short conversation which we held in the parlor of my convent as well as in the equally short visit which I paid at her hotel, we did not speak at all of the subjects which filled our hearts. But chance—I would rather call it Providence—decided otherwise.

Mrs. Meriman went to Rome to pass the winter, accompanied by her twelve-year-old son who at the time was in poor health. I too was called there by the superiors of my order

who entrusted to me the Lenten preaching of 1868 in the national church of St. Louis of the French. My Paris caller was among my auditors at Rome, and in my preaching she found again that ideal Catholicism of which we had never spoken but which lay at the bottom of the hearts of both.

The superior of St. Louis of the French at that time was Mgr. Level, an Israelitish convert to Catholicism and a pious and zealous priest. One day he said to me, "You have an American lady in your audience who has frequently been observed to shed tears. You ought to go and see her." I answered that I never refused my services to any soul who besought them but that I had no taste for certain kinds of proselyting. Mrs. Meriman of her own accord introduced herself to me, and soon confided to me all the secrets of her soul, her doubts and her aspirations, her anxieties and her hopes. It must be understood that when a Catholic priest is to any degree worthy of his ministry he has a power even over strangers in his church which the Protestant minister does not usually possess. Mrs. Meriman though still a Protestant was already my penitent.

I advised her to stop in Paris before her return to the United States, which was to take place some time within the year, and there to go into retreat at the Convent of the Assumption, where a sister of mine was stationed. She consented to do so, and it was as the result of this retreat, which was a long and severe one because of the independent and critical spirit of my pupil, that her solemn entrance into the Roman Catholic church (there was none other in France) took place, though with reservations which had no deterring influence on either myself or the bishops whom I consulted with regard to it, Mgr. Darboy in particular.

Great indeed was my zeal to win over this fine soul to Catholicism which remained my ideal in spite of its human shortcomings. But with a woman's penetration she read my mind through our theological discussions and discovered there what I as yet had no suspicion of. "Stop insisting so, Father," she once said to me at the close of one of our interviews, "I feel confident that I shall one day be a Catholic, but you will no longer be there to receive me into the church." "What do you mean?" I asked quickly, and she replied: "The spirit which is animating you will surely lead you to enter upon a conflict with the pope; you will follow your conscience and

you will be right in doing so, but you will leave the church; still that will not prevent me from entering it." I vigorously rejected such a prophecy, but a light had fallen in upon my thoughts and for the first time I foresaw with terror the possibility of a rupture with the church which I had loved so well.

I will never forget this impression. It was evening and I was returning on foot from the Convent of the Assumption at Auteuil to the Carmelite Convent at Passy; I saw the street lamps lighting up along the road one after another in the twilight while higher still the stars were lighting in the firmament. *Donec dies elucescat et Lucifer oriatur in cordibus vestris.*

In the chapel of the Convent of the Assumption, a Roman atmosphere if there was any at that time in Paris, I solemnly received into the Catholic church on July 14, 1868, the woman who was to be my companion and my stay in the church of Catholic reform. In the profession of faith of Pope Pius IV which she was asked to repeat she resolutely suppressed two articles, the one stating that outside of the visible church there is no salvation, and the one which anathematizes doctrines contrary to that church. "It was the faith of my mother," she said to me; "it may have been incomplete, but was never false nor injurious; it is this faith which made me a Christian, and I will not condemn it." My theological subtleties were of no avail against the directness and energy of this Protestant—more Christian indeed than the Catholic priest who served as her guide—and as the profession of faith was recited aloud and in the vernacular this double omission was observed by those present to the astonishment of all and the horror of some.

"If there is anything in earnest in the world," Mrs. Meriman said to me, "it is this step which I am taking to-day."

The sermon which I pronounced in connection with this memorable act of my priestly ministry and in which I had put my whole soul appeared in the great liberal Catholic review, *Le Correspondant*, with an affecting introduction from the pen of Augustin Cochin.

A few days afterwards the new convert left France for America.

Upon reflection I now recall that a great revolution was stirring within myself as within her. As Jacob wrestled in the darkness with the angel of the Lord, so I struggled in the

night against the angel of the Church of the Future; and sometimes conqueror, sometimes vanquished, but wounded and lamed, I was now half-Protestant, while she was half-Catholic. At the same time she, a widow resolved never to remarry, and I, in love with a mystical celibacy which had until then been my strength and my joy and which I had never the slightest desire to renounce—both were feeling joined to each other by a strange irresistible love, which did not possess the character of the loves of this earth and yet was actually love. I remember how we avowed it at the end of one of our interviews while we were listening to the sisters of the Assumption in the neighboring chapel as they droned the affecting chant of *Salve Regina*. "We shall never belong to each other in this world," we said that evening, "but our souls shall be eternally united before God."

This, my dear friend, is the mysterious bond—mysterious in my own eyes, for I confess it is more than I can explain—which has connected my entire theological emancipation with my religious love. Thus ended the violent crisis which stirred me for so long a time and which was to have in one sense or another a fatal issue. God saved me, I believe, by sending into my life at the decisive hour and in an unforeseen manner the extraordinary woman who has been my inspiration upon earth and who awaits me in heaven.

As we have said, Father Hyacinthe began upon reflection to doubt the propriety of publishing this memoir during his lifetime. While the subject was under consideration he wrote as follows in a personal letter to the editor:

I have come to the conclusion that it is better to delay the publication of the notes which I have entrusted to your care. Those which are strictly personal with reference to myself may see the light before my death but never with any idea of justification in reply to those who have claimed that my religious attitude has been inspired by my desire to marry. I scorn such imputations and give no heed to such malicious slanderers.

What I desire before all is to make the truth clear in relation to those of my actions which concern the public.

I desire to indicate the close bond which I have always considered as existing between religion and love when these two great words are taken in their loftiest and deepest meaning. Love and religion in their true sense are not only recon-

cilable but identical, and man must love God and the cosmos in wife and children even if that man is a priest, and especially if he is a priest. This doctrine of the identity of religion and love I had already formulated when in charge of the pulpit of Notre Dame at a time when, in the celibacy to which I had very freely but too lightly bound myself, I had not the remotest idea that I was one day to marry.

Since that time, throughout the changes which have taken place in my conscience and in my life, I have preached this truth in all its brightness and in all its scope. I have not been content to preach it but I put it into practice and I have felt myself to be more of a man and more of a priest than before. The religion of Saint-Simon or of Auguste Comte is certainly not my own, but I think there is something profoundly true and of great possibilities for the future in their glorification of the priestly couple. *Et prudentiores sunt filii tenebrarum filiis lucis in generationibus suis.*

Such truths seem to me to be eternal truths, but I do not know whether they would seem opportune in America because of the concessions which many among you think it is necessary to make to the *ultramontaines*, who are, however, more dangerous to the United States than anywhere else because of the *comparative* liberalism which they practise there.

Philosophy is like love; it must not be placed in opposition to religion but reconciled and identified with it. It is the aim of our noblest efforts and I hope, my dear friend, that you may come into the full attainment of it.

In the last speech delivered by Father Hyacinthe Loyson in an extempore address before a French society of Ethical Culture, he spoke on the subject of marriage. It happens that the publication of the stenographic report of this address in the *Revue moderniste internationale* (II, Nov.-Dec. 1911) comes to our desk at the same time as the announcement of his death. This report is presented in English translation on another page of this issue.

In referring to the marriage of a clergyman who in a former period of his career was bound by a vow of celibacy, one more remark will be in order which may help to point out the significance of such a step. We often hear derogatory comments on cases of a similar kind, especially in France, where sympathizers with reformers express dissatisfaction and declare that when such men stand up for a broader interpretation of their religion, they ought to abstain from entering into a marriage relation and adhere to their

vow of celibacy. This may have been right in some cases where the reformers continued to believe in the meritoriousness of a single life, but where they came to the conclusion that the union with a noble woman would rather tend to enhance their devotional as well as their intellectual life, it appears to us that they should possess sufficient manliness to have the courage of their convictions and not be prevented by the fear of giving offence from taking this step and entering into the state of matrimony which even in times of ancient ascetic tendencies the church has always called holy.

The weight of these comments can only be increased when we consider the significance of Luther's marriage. In his days public opinion was even narrower than now, and after he had separated from the church he still clung to the old ideas with regard to many of the externalities of the Roman church. Timidity might have prevented him from marrying, and there is no doubt that he had reason to believe that his marriage would alienate from him many of his supporters. His marriage, therefore, was an act of courage and it contributed not a little to infuse a new conception into the Reformation.

World movements are determined not only by declarations and confessions of faith but also by the very acts of their founders and leaders.