The Open Court
A MONTHLY MAGAZINE
Founded by E. C. Hegeler.

THE POTENCY OF MEDICAL ART AS PANACEA.
After a copper engraving of the 16th century. (See p. 671.)

The Open Court Publishing Company
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Entered as Second-Class Matter March 26, 1897, at the Post Office at Chicago, Ill. under Act of March 3, 1879. Copyright by The Open Court Publishing Company, 1910.
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CHRIST THE PHYSICIAN.
By Gabriel Max.

Frontispiece to The Open Court.
ABOUT twenty years ago a professor in a German University asked me why it was that America, which had forged ahead in scientific inventions and industrial activities, had developed so slowly in its religious interpretations. I replied that when America should make a start in the forward religious movement it would proceed very rapidly.

This prophecy has been more than fulfilled during the past two decades. The so-called heresies of Professor Swing, Dr. Thomas and others, rejected a short generation ago, would be regarded as conservatisms to-day. The right, in this age, to challenge time-honored ideas has emboldened our oldest institutions. Young men are being ordained by the most conservative churches, though they openly deny the very doctrines which a generation ago were taught us, and were declared to be the very cornerstones of Christianity. The church has chosen between the Bible as an infallible guide to faith, and the young men, and has accepted the latter, whereas, formerly it had taken the opposite course.

A hundred years ago, the poet Shelley, an undergraduate student of Oxford, was expelled from the university because of his "atheism." Browning thinks of Shelley's spirit as essentially Christian, because "so unlimited are his ideals and so imaginary his paradises." And yet so radical was his mental protest against the anthropomorphic theism of the Christian theology about him, and against the "aspirants to fat livings and ecclesiastical dignities," that he wrote himself down an atheist. No thinking man is, of course, an atheist in the strict sense of the term, when facing the fundamental
problems concerning life and the universe about him. But myriads have developed sincere atheistic views with regard to the ancient national gods, the triune deity of Medievalism, and all the pantheons constructed by religious imagination.

The treatment of Shelley by the dons of his day stands in sharp contrast with the judgment of our great American universities a century later, which declare that an interference with the intellectual liberty of even our professors is no longer tolerable.

It is but natural that the great thought-movements of the world should be controlled by the universities. Our institutions of learning move slowly with respect to radical changes, and are our bulwarks of conservatism. The newer conceptions generally originate with the laity, and with the poets. A deep feeling, an appreciation of an inner world-impulse, finds here and there an expression and an apostle. It is, however, only when such ideas are appropriated by the conservative university centers, and are clothed with the authority of scholarly sanction, that they become a pillar of light to lead the masses out of the darkness, and out of intellectual bondage.

This is the stage which is being reached in our American world. Our universities are fast becoming the champions of education untrammelled by tradition. It is one of the signs of our times and an evangel of national progress.

What an age-long tragedy that faith and religion, these great virtues of the human race, should have been fettered by a compulsion to a belief in incredibilities! This has resulted in the paradox that the most religious men—a Julian, a Spinoza, a Shelley—have been branded as the greatest of "infidels." Their infidelity has no reference to the universe but is directed against the common melodramatic verbiage of religious books, and against evanescent popular beliefs. Since the earliest Christian centuries it has consisted mainly in the protest of honest minds against lordship over faith.

Myriads of men who have loved the church because it is their foster mother, have withdrawn from its fold because their minds have come into absolute and complete revolt against the doctrines it has imposed.

The church to-day is learning that doctrinal confessions are not an integral part of religion. Essentially religion is a higher esthetic. It is the outery of the soul for recognition in the universe, just as it craves beauty through art, harmony through the musical instinct; an outery as needful to the soul as the ethical craving for the true and pure. The essential principle in religion is the αγαπή.
the love which is the greatest thing in the world, the love which aspires and inspires, which gives, labors, suffers, endures, triumphs. When the church learns this fully, its doors may again be opened and its lost children return, perhaps to save it and link it in completest accord with democracy and modern science. It is sincerely to be hoped that religion will not always remain a separating force, but will become a unifying principle in the human race.

We take it for granted that the pulpit aspires to be an uplifting and educative power in future society; that it will not submit to become simply passé and forceless in the modern world. But if it is not to die, its prophets must show by their work that they are a part of this age. They must deal with the live present as their text, rather than with a dead past. They must propagate truth in terms of present day needs. The task of the future pulpit must be no less than to teach men how to live.

Under whatever designation the coming religious community will act, its theme will be life. God will be interpreted in terms of life. The pulpit will discuss questions which immediately affect humanity. The present-world issues will be contemplated as eminently religious. A minister who has just abandoned his pulpit makes the following plaint:

"The church has undeniably lost its hold on the people, because for many years it has had no definite policy on any vital problem. It has been interested in its theology, discussing its creeds and attempting to build up its denominations rather than to minister to the real needs of men."

I do not think this can be successfully disputed. In fact, in an editorial, evidently from a Catholic point of view, this minister is called an "infidel," and is declared to have no place in the Christian pulpit, because he does not look upon "all vices of the social system as a part of our inheritance from Adam," and "does not regard life as a preparation for eternity." A prominent Cardinal is startled that the world to-day, struggling for the freedom of woman, is not following the literal views of Jesus with respect to divorce. Every needed political and social reform has to contend with an array of objections based on Biblical quotations. By this persistent method of making the theory or dictum of a far-distant past the final solution of contemporary problems, the pulpit, in the public consciousness, has lost its message to the modern man.

In the light of the hypothesis of evolution, which teaches that we are in the center of an infinite world-struggle, that man must cure his life-evils by unselfishness; and midst the constant bettering
of conditions, the pulpit with only the past dogmatic message, sinks in importance and loses its hold upon the race.

Modern progress is offering to the pulpit a new gospel. If it will accept it, it will again attain to one of the world's great forces. The central theme that our Zeitgeist compels is: How to live so as to fulfil the best individual and social destiny.

* * *

1. Its most rudimentary, fundamental and vital problems center around man's physical well-being—how to live the best physical life. The life of the body is the basis of the life of the spirit. The health of the body is a condition of spiritual health. Formerly sickness and suffering were thought of as a punishment for sin, or a discipline from a father above who chastens whom he loves. Consumption has been seriously discussed as a desirable disease, as it is the least painful and leaves the mind clear to prepare for another world. But all this is opposed to the genius of the modern age in its war upon bodily ills.

Professor Huxley prophesied the day when illness would be considered a crime. To-day the fact is upon us that a sound body is the best condition of a sound mind. The best medical science teaches the duty of stamping out the disastrous maladies which formerly swept away vast multitudes. Physicians agree that "physical health is the basis of mental and moral integrity," and that "the question of public health is the vital question connected with social and moral progress." A community's health is its force. A nation's physique is the first requisite of its strength and effectiveness.

Why is it that the modern pulpit has taken so little interest in the health movement, and even, in instances, warns its hearers against "the danger of the gospel of the body"?

Recently a three months' tour through our middle West, devoted largely to a study of these problems, furnished evidence not entirely encouraging to one who still has faith in the possibilities of the pulpit.

In a town of two hundred thousand people, there was a meeting of the "Health League," which was one of the most interesting of gatherings. Physicians and philanthropic citizens were assembled. Only one minister was there, the Reformed Hebrew Rabbi, who made the main address. It seemed to the writer that every clergyman of the city who was disengaged should have been present. He could not understand why the League should hire a hall when the
numerous churches in the neighborhood stood closed. The strangest fact was that when the sentiment of the evening alluded to the city pulpit, if it showed not a direct enmity on the part of the clergy, there was a reflection upon the indifference of the men of the cloth to the work of the League; and yet, any clergyman could have gained there a splendid text for his next Sunday’s sermon. The unsanitary environments of school buildings, the immorality consequent upon the indiscriminate mingling of the sexes at the outhouses were reported. These conditions lie at the basis of the religious and ethical life of the community.

Then was discussed the question of food, its preparation, the evils of high living, the care of the body, the teeth, etc., as fundamental to the higher life. No pulpit which is keenly discerning the signs of the times, and is awake to conditions which are moulding this generation, can afford to slight such themes.

In another city a Wednesday evening was given to an observation of the working of this principle. A Christian Science meeting was the first attended. On the very hot night the little church building was almost filled with a very interested group, and at least half the audience were young people. In the testimonies each speaker had some “manifestation” to relate. Since they had taken up Christian Science they had been able to lay aside their eye glasses; and other physical weaknesses and diseases had fallen away, because their existence had been denied. While not accepting their philosophy, we recognized the theme as eminently practical.

Next a great church in the immediate neighborhood was visited, and in a musty basement a very few old men and women with their pastor had for an hour been trying to measure up their spiritual life with some familiar Biblical ideal three thousand years back, and seemed to have had a rather dismal time with the process. To the writer they seemed to be wrestling with a problem disconnected from the present struggles of this world. This seemed to be the difference between the two meetings. It could not be denied that the first gathering had to do with a live theme—the health of the body.

The great Grecian tragedian Sophocles became a priest of Æsculapius, because this god of health was supposed to be his physician and to keep his body in order down to a good old age. The reaction against the old church methods by Christian Science and the systems of Psycho-therapeutics arising everywhere are a sign of the times—a reaction toward the treatment of the contemporary and tangible in life.
We do not mean that the preacher is called on to be a professional physician. Dr. Eliot, President Emeritus of Harvard, received the degree of M. D. from his university, not because the great educator is a trained physician, but because he is a patron of the medical science, and finding "the medical institution brick, he left it marble."

All religions began with the gospel of the body. Every early prophet must prove his call to preach because he was a healer. Both Jesus and Æsculapius were healers, and both were reputed by their followers, also to raise the dead to life. Bodily health is the condition of spiritual health, and in all communities the preacher can have a theme of present vital and eternal interest as the guardian of the physical well being of individuals and of the community.

* * *

2. The future pulpit will teach the people how to live mentally. Pres. Nicolas Murray Butler, in a noted address before the National Educational assembly at Denver, in July, said:

"There are only two really deep-seated and influential enemies of human happiness, and human order—ignorance and selfishness."

The pulpit in the past has not been noted for dispelling ignorance. In fact there has been a deep-seated historical conviction that the purpose of religion has been to keep the people in ignorance. President White's great book on The Warfare of Science with Theology has become a classic. Every scientific discovery in the Christian ages has had its most determined foe in the church, because the new thought was supposed to negative some dogma in "revealed" religion.

In the writer's diligent visits to the churches during a long vacation, he found almost no mental value to him in the pulpit utterances. The traditional habit of taking a text from a pre-Copernican and pre-evolutionary volume and making it the basis of a homily and exhortation is too arid for the edification of a modern man. In one of our cities, after listening for a week to a series of most instructive lectures by a professor, in a schoolteachers' convention, the contrast, when Sunday came, with the dearth of ideas from the pulpit, was positively painful in its effect. To my mind the cause is in the fact that the pulpit message was not inspired with a contemporaneous spirit.

Mr. Hugh C. Weir, in an article in Putnam's Magazine for July, on "The Church Crisis" commends the modern institutional church, in its advance over the old church methods. The old church
sought to compress the world within the circle of the Bible. Instead of this, he approves the method of the institutional church, which makes the Bible the center of a great human circle of activities.

But we need a bolder analysis. One cannot successfully use a book two thousand years old as a central motif in modern thinking.

The writer well remembers the shock which came to him years ago when he was started out from the theological seminary with the Bible as a text-book. He was soon confronted by a very intelligent young man of his congregation who had been reading archeological and other scientific works and asked a question involving the chronology of the Bible, in comparison with the results of modern research. I did not call him an "infidel." He was my friend, and I kept him so. Then began the examination of religious documents, and the revision of beliefs, which led the writer outside of all his theological training, and finally out of the boundaries of the ordinary pulpit, and beyond the pale of "revealed" religions.

The subject of any message truly prophetic must be contemporaneous. For this we have the sanction of all successful prophets of the past. What ancient prophet took his theme from a document crystallized into a text-book milleniums prior to his day? He made the facts of life at the moment of his utterance the basis of his teaching. The future pulpit untrammeled by the past will endeavor, on the foundations of known science, to keep the people on a correct psychic balance upon those questions of life the import of which is self-evident.

* * * * *

3. The future pulpit will teach men how to live socially, economically, politically.

We have gone far enough for our argument to be perfectly plain. To say nothing of the early world of the Greeks, Hindus, Chinese, Egyptians, we all know that the great Hebrew prophets were practical sociologists, economists, politicians, according to their light and their day. Hosea, Amos, Isaiah and Micah took no texts from past history. They were absorbed with the present social, economic and political problems with which every one of their contemporaries was conversant. They made their age and its issues their text and theme and plunged into the task of their solution. To-day they would choose for their subject the burning questions of the hour and care very little for ancient Hebrew history, except for occasional illustration. The habits of the people before their eyes, the excesses, the ornaments, the extravagances of the rich,
also the relation of the nation to the surrounding world-powers—these and similar live themes were those with which the effective prophet dealt. The plaint of a minister who left his pulpit in order to come into contact with the present world, has a serious indictment:

"The church is neither for nor against the enforcement of law; it has no opinion whatever on the labor problem. It is not back of any organization of men to get their rights, etc., etc. The minister must not preach about socialism. He must withdraw himself from the active affairs which should claim the attention of a clergyman, as well as every other man."

It is indisputable that the ordinary minister either lacks opinion or the courage and energy to express it. Some ministers, and this is the temptation of the professorial preacher, often hide their opinion behind some ancient Biblical chapter, which describes similar conditions, and thus make the Bible voice the opinions which would give offense if uttered from the standpoint of the personal present prophet. This is better than nothing, but it is cowardly, ineffective and lacks the true courage of the live teacher.

There are here and there exceptions. One minister gave up his Sunday evenings to social, economic and political subjects, making these, instead of the ancient text, the central theme. His audience soon increased from sixty to six hundred. Socialists, trades-unionists and other interested modern minds, trooped in to learn, and immediately a vast opportunity was opened to him. He was, however, severely criticised for using "world-methods," as sensational and as apart from his spiritual calling; and it is a question how soon he will be forced to sacrifice his post. But the pulpit is to learn that right thinking, as well as good health are necessary to the higher life, and are the legitimate and true method of prophetic work.

The old method of text-taking, often led to genuine jugglery. A pulpit orator of the past generation became a great adept at choosing a text. Desiring to preach on the relation of the Blue and the Gray, he had only to look in his concordance to find the words of Isaiah xliii. 6: "I will say to the North, give up, and to the South, keep not back." Such choices of text were looked on as ingenious. But in reality a true exegesis of the text would make it inappropriate, and at best the method is tricky and undignified.

There is a realm in higher sociology, economics, and also in politics both national and international, where society needs competent guides. This is a great field for the pulpit. The writer will yield to no man his respect for the Bible as an ancient literary
document. He has given to it more years of study than to any other one book. It is, however, because of its antiquity, a book for the scholars to dispute over, and not a book in whose thought, habit and environment the people are living and thinking to-day. Long scientific study of the ancient Scripture teaches that it can not be understood except by life-enduring critical work, and that when you have finished your life-task you will find that other scholars as diligent, sincere and efficient as yourself will differ radically with your conclusions. For this reason the man who is not a specialist and has no time for investigation is not in a position to subscribe to any special theory of the Bible.

But I was impressed with the themes in which the masses of the American people are interested to-day. At eight o'clock in the morning, in the cars which skirt the west bank of the Mississippi river, I saw the men and women devouring the contents of our Chicago Newspapers, hurried to them with such astounding enterprise—the news of divorce courts, the automobile accidents, the growing skill in air-ships, the sport world, the markets, the tariff problem, the latest scientific discovery, reports of travel, national and international politics—these are the themes which are riveting the people's attention. They need wise interpreters to understand their meaning. In these complex and strenuous times the eight million women of the International Union are even abandoning the solution of the obscurities of Browning, for the cleaning up of our world, the education, sanitation, exercise of children, and the betterment of society. The people need wise readers of the signs of the times, and this, in our view, is the call of the modern pulpit. 'Religion is the cry for satisfaction, which rises to our ears from the world's children.' Sin, in this age, is looked upon as a pathological condition—a hurt of the mind—to be healed not by any ancient world-saviours, but by present-day altruism, by education, and this is the opportunity of the wise and advantaged classes.

As has been said in regard to the Old Testament, so I would say of the character of Jesus—I yield to no man in reverence for the exalted picture which has been painted upon the antique sky. But the average man or woman to-day has no possibility of judging its reality. The problem of Jesus is becoming more and more the dispute of scholars, and it is most tragic and pathetic to make any opinion of it a test in religion.

"Who is Jesus?" was asked of a savant who had spent a lifetime in studying the original historic foundations of Christianity. His reply was: "He is the very God, the second person of the
divine Trinity.” “Who is Jesus?” was asked of another specialist in a long study of Christology. He answered promptly: “He is a mere man, born not supernaturally at Bethlehem, but the natural son of Joseph and Mary at Nazareth.” “Who is Jesus?” was asked of a third life-delver in ancient histories, documents, languages, criticisms of evidence. Still more earnest came his answer: “Jesus is a myth. He never existed. There is no place for him in history. He is the creation of the imagination of the early centuries of our era.”

These answers, we must admit, are all sincere, by equally earnest and trustworthy students. They each come to the modern pulpit and advocate their claims between which there is an impassable gulf. What is the merchant, the professional man absorbed in present-day problems, or the busy housewife to do, except to judge by the character of the advocates or the eloquence of their arguments, or else resign the entire question as valueless, so far as the essential, or test of religion, is concerned?

* * *

4. The pulpit has also a mission to help the people to live esthetically. A smaller but an important number of persons in refined communities are interested in art, in music, in literature. Here also the preacher should serve as a guide. Within this realm is included the Bible as art and literature—its poetry, mythology, its world-views, its prophetic messages, its narratives, its epistolary utterances. But it is only one of the world’s books. It is one of the best of the antique witnesses to the cry of the soul. The Hebrews adopted and adapted the ideas of the further Orient, as well as of the Egyptian and Greek thought, and were adepts in their exclusions. The translation of Jahwe by “The Lord” in our English version has peculiarly singled out the national Hebrew divinity from all the old-world pantheons as the one object of universal worship, in the liturgies of our Western world.

The New Testament writers mingled Greek philosophy with Hebrew mysticism. The stories of Jesus, written after the Pauline epistles, and according to the most conservative estimate a half century to two centuries after the character existed, present as nearly a perfect personality as it was possible for the pens of the age to construct. They even made John the Baptist declare that not he but his successor was the Messiah. The preacher has here a critical and delicate task. If he interprets all this character-perfection as an evidence of deity, the people may be kept in ignorance.
To make this body of ancient writings, admirable but misunderstood, disputed at every point by scholars, authoritative in religion, a rule of faith, or a test of piety, is one of the tragedies of the ages!

The question is asked: "What will take the place of the Bible?" Who in modern days can write a new Bible to substitute for the old? We answer: No one book need hold such a place, and no one could compose or compile such a book. The entire past and present, and each new day in the fast growing world, each fact and object, adds a new verse to the world's Bible. No other department of human inquiry has crystallized into one book, and surely the idea of one book in religion limits and stifles this most universal aspiration.

It is evident that this conception will enlarge the sphere of studies in the training of students for the pulpit. All such students should have the benefit of the post graduate work in the university. Young men who are to cope with the present age must be adequately prepared. Some will specialize in the ancient and classical languages, documents and the books of past religions, in preparation for scholastic research and teaching. Those intending to enter the pulpit should specialize in sociology, in economics, in international politics, in literature and in the interpretation of world events. The mind of each man will be left free to formulate its own ideas, new every day, different, higher as the years grow on. The constant cry of the soul is the religion, the hunger which can only be satisfied with an ever newer higher supply.

Two veteran Americans, as representative as any two men on our continent, have recently outlined the negative and positive elements of the religion which the thinking Western world has long cherished, and to which the future pulpit may find its effective appeal: The eminent ex-president of Harvard, the conservative university man, the teacher of American teachers, says: "In the new religion there will be no supernatural element. In all its theory and in all its practice, it will be completely natural." And Mark Twain, the veteran American humorist, also the practical American philosopher, gives a sound religious formula, with which every preacher may begin: "Diligently train your ideals upward toward a summit where you will find your chiefest pleasure in conduct which while contenting you, will be sure to confer benefits upon your neighbors and the community."