

Chapter IV -- Dry Rot (Continued).

Agnosticism, which in America took the form of "nothingarianism" or Secularism, embraced qualities of both naturalism and pessimism. Its adherents said: "I am capable of knowing something, maybe, but I don't know, so I am not going to let it bother me." Naturalism and pessimism opposed Christ directly, and consequently Christians opposed them. Agnosticism tries to ignore Christ and by being "broadminded" causes Christians to fall in line.

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Its power is practically unlimited at the present time. In religion it is called modernism. It is the principle upon which charity, business, literature, art, everything is carried on today. Religion is missing, and the soul and heart that inspired the writers of old is missing.

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Literary criticism has followed the same course. If literature reflects life and life ends with death, you can accept the literary judgment of any sport writer like Heyward Brown; but if life goes on through eternity you must look to the judgment of some one who knows something about God and believes what God says about eternity.

A Useful Digression

The following letter needs no apology:

"Dear Father O'Hara:

Several of us have been talking about your pointers on the authors to avoid. Would we be helping if we sent in two or three line reports on books we have found worth reading? These are samples:

'The reading of Bishop Spalding's Education and the Higher Life marked a turning point in my life.'

'I have always wanted to know what was wrong with me and I found out by reading Father Cavanaugh's The Conquest of Life (at the bookstore 10¢).'

'Conrad's The Nigger of the Narcissus is one of the first, if not the first book I have read which was not full of love scenes or murders.'

'I like Longfellow's poetry. He is essentially Catholic. I do not mind sophisticates high-toning his fireside verse. Not only Lincoln, but many men, gained their ability to do things thus:

'The heights by great men reached and kept  
Were not attained by sudden flight;  
But they while their companions slept  
Were toiling upward in the night.'

--The Ladder of St. Augustine.'

'I am glad you gave us Ideals of Youth at the Convocation because, if we recall the truth of Bishop Spalding's statement, 'Life is not what to young eyes it seems to be', we realize at once the necessity of adopting the right ideal. By glancing over the essay any one can see what that ideal is.' "