

Torch of Reason

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A RELIGION FOR ALL.

It has been quite a puzzle for some to understand just how our Secular organizations can prosper and accomplish our objects as long as we have no standard of morality, i. e., as long as we let people join our ranks without making any iron-clad promises to refrain from bad habits, etc., etc.

This is just where Secularism has a great advantage over the orthodox churches. People who cannot believe in the creeds are ostracized and often go to the bad, because they cannot have the society of the moral people of the Christian churches. Now what we want is to get all good men and women to join together on a basis of right living, as understood by the best men and women of all ages, and thus furnish our poor forsaken, mistaken brothers and sisters a place where they will have a chance to become better.

Yes, we want everybody to join us and help to break down the hateful creedism, lift up those who have fallen and save the young from the awful mistakes that make this life such a hell.

Come and join our ranks and do what good you can "while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work."

There are many people who are very detrimental to society and we call them bad, but these are not altogether bad. They have much good in them after all, and standing aloof from them will not make them better. Let us not be afraid of soiling our own characters. We can, if we have the manhood or womanhood that we may have, keep ourselves pure and yet associate with what some would call publicans and sinners. Dear Christian friends they will not come to us, we must go to them. Will you leave your "lofty throne of creedism" and become a savior of men by preaching to the needy the glad gospel of Secularism.

RELIGIOUS REFORM.

In order to have charity for those who are working for what they consider great reforms, people should know something of the history of reforms. There is one fact especially we should know and that is, that every good cause, every cause whose principles when adopted have been a help to civilization, has at some time during its history been in the minority and as a general thing has been obliged to overcome the greatest amount of prejudice.

For centuries, men claiming to have a call from god, have made a livelihood for themselves and families and gained great repute by teaching the most absurd theories imaginable and in such a systematic way as to insure their perpetual success. They have organized and gathered the children together and taught them these doctrines as the greatest of divine truths; and thus taught, the children have grown up and in their turn have become teachers of the same dwarfing, narrowing superstitions. There is no doubt that some of these religious teachers believe these dogmas for it seems possible for man to believe anything, but the result is the same and the time has come when civilized people should teach their children and the poor heathen something better for the foundation of their characters than the old foolish stories and traditions of the ancient Jews. But why should we care, does it harm us? Yes, this superstition is now holding back our civilization with a grip that will take years to loosen and we, as individuals are injured; for, as the book from whence comes these doctrines itself states, the chief hero, the son of god, or as some claim, god himself manifest in the flesh, came not to bring peace but a sword and that he came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother and that a man's foes should be of his own household. This has proven true instead of the contradictory statement that his coming brought peace on earth and good will to men. The churches themselves are a living example of this enmity and hatred for where will you find more direct opposition than between the Roman Catholic or mother church and her daughters the protestant churches?

Think of the blood shed, the hangings, the burnings done all in the name of Christ; both catholic and protestant worshipping the same god, trusting in the same savior and believing the same miraculous story of the virgin mother. And has this war ceased? No, although men who possessed common sense have made laws which protect us from the worst fanaticisms yet the work of hatred is going on today. To be sure there have been many truths mixed with

this mass of superstition, but, from the lack of power to separate these truths from the many falsehoods, people have kindly swallowed the whole thing, Jonah, whale and all.

Most christians say that if we reject part of the bible we must reject it all. What an absurdity! Are we obliged to disbelieve the golden rule which was taught years before the bible was written, or some simple fact just because we can not believe that the first woman was made from a rib of the first man, or that grass and herbs were created before the sun?

When we see widows toiling at the wash-tub to earn a support for their children, paying their hard earned pennies to keep the family of a lazy clergyman in luxury and ease and enable him to teach his ruinous doctrines of blood atonement and submission to the church; when we see men paying hundreds of dollars of their hard earned money to a priest in order that he may prevent the poor man's dead son from remaining in purgatory, compelling his wife and daughters to tell all their little secrets in order to be forgiven, we wonder how long before we can break away from this bondage of priestcraft and become a free people, and we say to ourself, every man who loves liberty of thought should become a Moses and help lead the people out of this dark Egypt of superstition. We ought to gather up the jewels of morality, and, passing through the Red sea of prejudice, enter the promised land of freedom which floweth with the milk of human kindness and the honey of religious liberty.

But someone says, "I believe in this orthodox religion for just see what it did for Mr. So-and-So. He was a drunken good-for-nothing fellow, but since he joined the church, he has been as industrious and sober as he can be."

Does this prove that everything Mr. So-and-So believes is true? If he came to the conclusion that "wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise," and had the courage to stand by his convictions, it would hardly be necessary for him to believe in witches or in the story of the loaves and fishes. In fact he could have been saved without belief in anything supernatural and thus he would also be saved from the degrading servitude of the grossest of superstitions.

The truth is we are personally acquainted with Mr. So-and-So and know the cause of his drinking. When a boy he was carefully kept in Sunday school, and here he had indelibly stamped upon his young mind that he must believe or be damned. At church this was drilled into him by a very powerful preacher, who worked as though his bread and butter de-

pendent upon making the people believe this one thought; but, being a young man of intelligence and reason, he could not believe. When he read in one part of God's (?) word that Jacob saw God face to face, and in another that no man hath seen God at any time, he could not believe both; and so, after much worry and prayer without coming any nearer to a solution of the horrible problem, he sought gay company to drown his thoughts. Finally the social glass gives way to the habitual spree and he becomes a drunken sot. At last one night, his manhood gone, his body diseased, his reason wrecked, he is persuaded to attend a revival and, under the excitement, his poor reason gives up entirely and he believes.

He now goes about his work in a dazed sort of a way, but he is patronized by the good church people for he gives at least one tenth of his earnings to the church, and a good sister, the other day, told the minister that "Mr. So-and-So" was a jewel that would shine in their dear pastor's crown in that beautiful city beyond the skies.

Believing false doctrine may make some men better, but it is not true and it is not necessary for men of this age to be kept in ignorance. Surely no harm can come from knowing the truth and I think there has been but very little good done by believing that part of orthodoxy which we are pleased to call superstition. Christian friends, just think what a mighty wrong you are imposing upon the world provided it is a mistake. Think of the hypocrites you are making; think of the waste of time and energy that could be used in the cause of truth and right or in teaching the laws of nature. Just ask yourself honestly, does it do men any good to believe that one man or being could pay the debt or suffer for another's sins or that all must be punished on account of the first man's sin and that sin, think of it, was taking the advice of his darling wife who advised him to eat some fruit which God had temptingly placed in their reach.

Does it do any good to believe the story of the flood, the confusion of tongues, the sun standing still, the casting out devils, or bringing the dead to life? Should people waste their time any longer in trying to believe these stories? Is the bible the word of God? Why must we believe it when after careful investigation we can see no logical reason for believing that it's not the works of men? Would a kind and loving father place any of his children in such a predicament? Think of it carefully and honestly. Isn't it the work of men who have had an object in view?

Are we obliged to believe that a