

Torch of Reason

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Which Do You Believe?

At a revival meeting a short time since we listened to a sermon that, in its power to capture the ignorant and disgust the thoughtful, could not be equaled by any of our local priests or prophets.

The theme was music, and some of the anecdotes were certainly worth listening to, but the reasoning was very poor, so poor that it would hardly answer to the name. The smooth oily talker led the mind of the listener up to see how beautiful a thing music is, and, by stories well calculated to interest the devotees, completely captured them; and now and then some wrought-up saint would grunt his approval in such a manner that had it not been for the solemn place and hallowed appearance of the man of God, one would have been tempted to laugh "right out in meetin'."

When the minds of the listeners were lead way back as far as they could go in the history of music, they were then told that it originated with God. God was said to be the great musician and all music originated in his mind. How easy a thing it is to make such a statement, but, did it once occur to the poor, deceived christians that the preacher was making stock of their ignorance and that he knew no more about it than the most ignorant among them, they would soon demand something more than mere statements and would condemn as we do, such bold-faced deception.

Truth, sculpture, painting etc. were in like manner traced back with many an interesting story, as far as the mind can go, and then this wise agent of the Almighty said that they originated in the mind of God; simply letting ignorance be represented by a mystery. How long, Oh how long will people worship at the feet of priests, being kept in thrall by superstition? "The angelic choir came down," said the preacher "when christ was born." Why does he make such statements? Does he know this to be a fact? Does he know that there are such things as angelic-singers?

Does he know that such messengers come from God? Does he know that there is a God? Ah, my credulous friend he knows no more about it than you or I and we have not one proof that these things are true.

One of the anecdotes told by the revivalists was about a certain piper of Ireland that had such power with his music that the fish came out on the beach and danced when ever he played his pipes. This and others similar stories were told as fables, but the story of the angelic choir coming from the skies and singing at the birth of a god, was told as the gospel truth.

No one can estimate the harm that the christian church is doing by these monster deceptions. Many parents who are not altogether orthodox seem to think that these churches do no harm, and at the same time they would not allow their little children to be told witch or ghost stories or read dime novels for fear of the bad, deceptive ideas that might be impressed upon the plastic minds of the boys and girls.

But the moral teachings of the church is thought to be good and therefore many cling to the idea that we could not live without it. We admit that some ministers of the christian church incidently teach the golden rule given to us by pagan philosophers and repeated by the writers of the new testament and that many of them are sincere and working in part for the good of humanity but this only helps to deceive people into believing the great deception, the great chimera of the blood atonement and the promised land beyond this life. Let the Christians teach of earthly things and Secularists will join hands with them in every good work.

On the evening mentioned, the blood atonement was celebrated and as the devotees with solemn mein knelt before the ministers, we could not help thinking what a splendid scheme this is to get people to worship at the feet of their priests. The priests of today have not the power that those of old had and can not get the people to kneel to them directly and so they use a mystery. In the background, in the secret place of the most high, in the holy of holies, somewhere, somehow in the poor mind of the worshipper is this mysterious thing called god, christ, ghost; and down he comes upon his knees at the feet of the priest, and, as the priest in solemn, tremulous tones says, "This is the blood of Christ who died for you; this is the flesh of your saviour whose precious blood was shed that you might have life," the poor awe stricken, mystified one, not realizing what a falsehood has been told him, swallows the wine (bad example for the young) and eats the bread baked for the

occasion, and imagines that the rapid beating of the heart caused by suppressed excitement, is the entrance of the holy ghost.

A very fine figure, and one well calculated to deceive, was that of representing Christianity as a plant, and music, painting, sculpture etc, as the branches; but could not the mormons, the mohammedians or any other sect use the same figure? We believe that a better illustration would be to let science or philosophy (freethought) be represented by the tree and music, sculpture, painting, mathematics etc. etc. be called the branches. Superstition is a parasite which would destroy the life of the tree, and at times has nearly done so but the pruning knife of Secularism is now in the hands of humanity and the tree will live.

The Secular Church.

Our friend, Mr. James R. Allen of Cincinnati, Ohio, in his communication which may be found in this issue of the Torch asks us to support the idea of calling our organizations Secular Churches.

We hasten to respond, because we honestly believe that it is right and that it will help our grand work to succeed. There is no principle at stake as far as taking the name is concerned any more than there is in calling our school a Liberal University or the school we hold on Sunday, a Secular Sunday school.

The orthodox people would like to rob us of the priviledge of having any names at all and one christian lady wrote an article trying to show us that we had no right to have Sunday schools and giving us what she thought good advice in regard to names. She says, speaking of the Secular Sunday school, "Why is it called a Sunday school? Why not call it a Tom Paine school, its rightful name, and avoid deceiving people as the name Sunday or Sabbath school has until lately had a sacred meaning and should have no other."

Now my Liberal reader can you not see the point? If we wish to knock the sacred, holy, humbug ideas out of the church, the surest way to do it is to establish a church without any of the old mythical ideas in it. If the orthodox churches were purified of their superstition and could get down to the work of making this life what it ought to be, there would be no necessity to organize Secular churches, and we could all join their church for it would then be secular; but they will not give up the "ghost" until we compel them to, so the only way is to organize a church of our own.

The Secular churches of Oregon were named after much debate but no one can say that the name has not been an advantage and many old warriors who at first thought they could not work under the

title, are now working with a renewed energy for the true salvation of the world.

If our work was entirely of a destructive nature, or if we were only trying to influence or hold in check the law-makers of our country, then it might be absurd to call ourselves a church, but if we wish to teach and work for the upbuilding of happy homes, if we wish to help each other to learn self-control, self-respect and to be pure, noble men and women we have a perfect right to call ourselves a Secular church and feel no pangs of conscience for we will be the true church, the church toward which all enlightened people will turn and help to make a great power for good.

Nearly all of our names are taken from organizations, beliefs and ideas which are no longer recognized by civilized people. Should we refuse to call the first day of the week Sunday because it is the day on which heathens worshipped the sun? Should we refuse to answer to the name John because it originally meant the gracious gift of God or because some people of that name have very foolish ideas? The word church does not mean what it did fifty years ago and if we adopt the name we will soon loosen its present hold upon the poor, superstitious minds of the ignorant and thus do much good that could be done in no other way.

The protestants came out from the catholics and called their organization a church. Protestants have divided but all have kept the name church even in the face of opposition. The Unitarian church comes into life and has as much right to the name as Congregationalists or Presbyterians and now we certainly have the right, and it is to our advantage to keep the same name and make it mean something better than it ever has before.

We say good-speed to the First Secular Church of Cincinnati and heartily congratulate the Secularists of Ohio in having such a worker as Mr. James R. Allen. We hope that every one will immediately lay aside any little prejudice he may have and do what he can to make the work a grand success.

Can Secularists Sing?

Our Methodist brother the other evening said that Infidels can not sing for they have nothing to sing about. Mistaken again brother. Your emotions get away with your common sense and your love for the truth. Infidels can sing and they have much to sing about.

The best musicians of this city are Infidels and they far out number the christian singers and players. We sing about our homes, about our mothers' love, about liberty, about the bravery of our soldiers, about the beautiful things all around us and the good that we may do.