

Be a Moral Example.

Editor Torch of Reason:

In the Torch of April 8th, under the heading "Are You With Us," is the question you ask the Freethinkers of Oregon. I answer yes, with all the little mite of ability and influence I may possess. I have been a worker in the cause of mental freedom from the slavery of superstition for the past twenty-six years, and I have had the pleasure of seeing some good fruits from it in different parts of the west where I have been.

It was with pleasure that I read of the work done in the late convention at Silverton. I regret very much that we were unable to send a representative from our little band of Freethinkers in this far away outpost of Freethought in Oregon, but times are very hard here and we could not raise the needed money for expenses.

As to the question of morals, I confess that it is a delicate question to handle if we attempt to draw the line. Even among the orthodox Christian churches, what was one or two hundred years ago taught as morality and a Christian duty, such as slavery, burning of witches, persecution of Quakers, etc., is now repudiated. A correct and true knowledge of morality is of slow growth, and my observations have been that even among Freethinkers—with many—it takes years to fully understand it in its natural and logical sense. It is an easy thing for humanity to go to some extreme, and often change from one extreme to another.

Do not misunderstand me. I am not finding fault with the doings of our last convention; I am only contemplating what chances there may be at some future time to misconstrue its intent and meaning. We can see that some religious and political parties are always trying to misinterpret the Constitution of the United States to make it mean something different from what it was originally intended.

My own view is that Freethinkers should strive to be a moral example to the world in all their actions, as well as teaching morality, and at the same time we should be willing to stoop down and with a friendly and outstretched hand assist the fallen ones of both sexes, and raise them up, and place them on a higher level, both in thinking and living. Do not expect that such work can be accomplished in a day or a year. It takes time to grow from the bad to the good. Of course this can only be accomplished where the persons themselves are willing to do something for their own betterment and to accept help to do it. If we pass by such and only seek those that are according to our own views of a high moral standard, we may find that our own morality is defective;

and yet, on the other hand, as you have wisely provided for in the revised constitution, those who may be called upon to proclaim the glorious gospel of Freethought and Truth should, and must be such as practice what they preach—and we should never advocate anything but what we practice.

We have been accused of being destructive and not constructive in our teaching; that we take away, but do not give anything in return. We know this is not true. For, although we may have to clear away the rubbish before we build, we must always remember to build more than we tear down. Give more than we take away. No one has more, nor as precious gifts to bestow as we have. We have truth, reason and all the known beautiful parts of Science and Natural Philosophy on our side. No one has ever offered their time, life and energy for a better purpose than we do. Therefore allow me to say to all Freethinkers, especially in Oregon, let us be united. If there should at times be something that we cannot fully endorse, do not for that reason become discouraged and break ranks. Anything may be changed when it is found best to do so. It is not in the nature of things that we should all see and think alike in all things. Therefore let us not demand more of others than we are willing to give. Never at any time let a small difference of private opinion become a barrier to separate us, nor use it as an excuse for inactivity. Come to the front! If we all do this we can accomplish anything we undertake, and our children will some day look back with pride and gratitude for what their parents and grandparents have done for them. Many of the noble ones in the past considered the same noble cause and work that we are engaged in today, worthy to suffer and die for. They have paved the way for us and thereby given us greater liberties and security than they had. Then why should not we take up the battle where they left off? We have an easy task compared with theirs and we should honor them by carrying on the work which they undertook, that for which they suffered, and that for which, in many instances, they gave up their lives. MICHAEL JOHNSON.

Vale, Ore., April 16.

The will of the present is the key to the future, and moral character is eternal destiny.—Horatio Stebbins.

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