

An Argument.

We are indebted to our friend and coworker, Eliza Mowry Bliven, for the following excellent letters:

TO MR. TIBBETTS.

To James L. Tibbetts:—

It is a pleasure to have such a gentlemanly and good natured correspondent as you are, therefore I take delight in answering your questions.

I assure you Brother James, that there was nothing remarkable about the inscription on that pyramid. The vegetables were indeed grown by me. Webster says that the verb grow means to cause to increase, raise or cultivate. All these things I did. The vegetables as exhibited would never have existed if I had not caused them to increase by cultivation. I will say also, that they were grown "with all his secularism," for the "power" which was back of my effort was wholly secular—natural. Indeed I cannot comprehend anything which is not natural. To me nature is the sum total of all things, and sufficient unto itself. Nature is a mystery, I admit, but it is made more so by introducing a supernatural factor to account for it.

I am glad, James, that you have doubts. Doubt is the beginning of wisdom. Doubt leads to investigation, and investigation reveals truth, and a knowledge of truth is wisdom. The great doubters and investigators have discovered nothing but matter, in motion. From data secured by scientific study the Secularists believe that matter is eternal; that it did not "come by chance," for it had no where to come from; that it was always where it is now, everywhere filling endless space. He believe that it was never created and can never be destroyed; but that whatever happens to it, it always exists in some form, but he sees no natural basis for a belief in the eternity of the individual, while the matter of which those vegetables were composed continues to exist, the individual specimens are gone forever, and next year the same matter may appear in the form of birds or flowers. So it is with us. We may hope to see our mothers after death but there was never a more gay deceiver than hope. Men often hope for happiness and life but find only misery and death.

Brother James now that we are men let us put away childish notions and indulge in no hope which is not founded upon reason. When I take away a man's religion I would put a knowledge of the universe in its place, and advise him to adjust his habits to the natural conditions of happiness and when life comes to a close calmly submit to inevitable annihilation (of personality).

JOHN A. WILSON.

TO MR. WILSON.

My Dear Brother John:—I can hardly let your communication pass without a short rejoinder.

You cannot possibly wish to be understood as saying that by annihilation of personality you place yourself on a level with the beast that perishes. Man made in the image of God and co-worker with him, in raising that endless variety of vegetables, and the wonderful skill in its arrangement, called forth the admiration and praise of the whole county of Essex. Have you a hog in the sty; or a horse in the barn, or a cow in the stall that can do these things? If not, then John Wilson has been endowed with faculties superior to the brute, and for what, and by whom?

Now, Brother John, if I had no other evidence of immortality but the wonderful strides of man in education, science, arts, astronomy, and last but not least, agriculture in growing vegetables, and the vast possibilities that lie before him, I should have to acknowledge a power higher than I, to which I am accountable. Our hope to enjoy personality and meet the dear ones gone before has a good illustration in the following quotations:

Blessed is he who has not fallen from his hope in the Lord.—[Eccles. xiv. 2.

A forlorn hope.
Hopeless, destitute or without hope.
Her last companion in a dearth
Of love, upon a hopeless earth.
—[Woodworth.

Finally, Brother John, you may have but little respect for the church, and less for the bible, but I tell you, with all the bible's imperfections and errors, and I believe it contains them, it still remains the most wonderful book that man possesses today. Commencing with a barbarous people, every page is an advance, keeping abreast of the civilization of the times in which it was written. Don't fight against it, for peradventure you might be fighting against God.

J. L. TIBBETTS.

TO MR. TIBBETTS.

Dear Brother James:—It would not be right to leave you at this point with a misunderstanding of my position, therefore I write this to assure you that I do wish to be understood as saying that I do, so far as my physical existence is concerned, place myself on a level with the beasts that perish; and I challenge the world to produce a fact to prove that my position is incorrect. The principles of conception, life and death are practically the same with beasts and men. If in some respects man is superior to the beasts, it is because he is more highly developed. Some beasts, however, are more richly endowed by nature than some men. The fact that men can raise vegetables, print newspapers, sell real estate, and do other things that beasts

cannot do, does not prove that men are superior, only along special lines. The mechanical and artistic productions of beasts are often marvels of ingenuity, the equal of which man has never been able to produce. There is no evidence that these superior endowments in either case are for specific purposes or that there exists a superior person to confer them. The trouble with you, Brother James, is that you have fallen into the common error of believing that you are immortal because you desire immortality. Why not take life as we find it, instead of continually trying to make it appear what it is not? Because we must all perish shall we be any the less ready to help? Such a condition should make us more helpful. One scientific fact to prove immortality would be better than a dozen pages of scripture. Quoting bible to substantiate a belief is a dangerous thing to do, for it cuts like a two-edged sword; for instance, "For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth the beasts, even one thing befalleth them; as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that man hath no pre-eminence above a beast * * * All go unto one place." (Ecl. 3: 19, 20) Of course I recognize this truth even though it be in bad company. You admit that the Bible contains many imperfections and errors but still think it a most wonderful book. I fail to see in it anything wonderful. If I could forget all the bloodshed it has caused I should say it was laughable. It certainly isn't wonderful that it should be full of errors for the priests who wrote it were very ignorant. Their ideas of the universe, which every intelligent man now repudiates, are no plainer an indication of their ignorance than are their ideas of a God, and it is indeed surprising how a man of your intelligence will cling to that barbarous God idea, the father of all superstition. For the sake of politeness I would like to accept your advise, but I cannot on account of principle, therefore I must, to the extent of my limited ability fight against the church and the bible for I believe they stand in the way of intellectual and material progress. Don't worry for fear that in so doing I shall fight against God, for creatures of the imagination can neither help nor harm anyone. I have long since ceased to have any fear of phantoms.

JOHN A. WILSON.

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