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THURSDAY, JAN. 12, E. M. 299

A Friendly Combat.

Having had a very friendly private argument with our friend and fellow citizen, Mr. Pottorff, of this city, we thought it might advance the cause of truth, for which we both profess to be working, if we gave the readers of the Torch the benefits of some of our opposing ideas. We were, therefore, very much pleased to receive the following from the hand of our Christian friend:

MR. EDITOR:—I have been kindly invited to write an article for the Torch of Reason, setting forth my views of the Christian religion. In accepting this invitation, I will only make a few statements on a single line—that of science. There are many sciences, all of which may be classified under three heads, physical, biological and spiritual. First, physical sciences relate to matter, either in an organic or inorganic state, and, second, biological sciences treat of life in its various forms, wherever found.

The word life is variously used, and many times confusingly so. To illustrate, let me refer to a couple Greek words. But first I will say that the Greek language was extensively spoken at the beginning, and before the beginning, of our era. The Romans generally spoke and wrote in that language. It was carried into the far east at the time of the Alexandrian conquest. The New Testament was first written in that language, save probably Matthew. The Hebrew bible was translated into Greek at Alexandria about 280 B. C. for the use of the Egyptian readers. Now for these words. Take a Greek Lexicon. I have one published by Hinds, Noble & Co., N. Y. City. Turn to the

word *Psucha* (I avoid the Greek letters), "the vital breath, animal life, the life of animals."

The word *psucha* is found more than 100 times in the New Testament, and always translated life or soul, according to its declension. This word, as we have seen, refers to animal life—that possessed in common both by man and the lower animals, down to the worm. It is the same in kind. This life we may call "co-ordination of complex movements," or "of adjustments of inner to outer relations," or "the inter-action of brain molecules," or by whatever name we may think makes it plainer. At least here is the point that materialists make and pronounce all material. And by stopping here, with them we have no dispute. Man, in this state only, can have no more conception of a God than the brute.

Now, the Greeks had another word that they applied to man, and I believe never, or seldom, to animals. Here, take the Lexicon again and turn to the word *pneuma*. (1) "The wind or air in motion." (2) "The human spirit as distinguished from soma (body) and *psucha* (soul)." (3) "Any intelligent, incorporeal being, as the human spirit." I believe these two words, spirit and life, or soul, are distinct in all languages, and should never be confounded. He who ignores this fact will be surely crippled in arriving at the truth.

This word, *pneuma*, is found in the New Testament at least 400 times, and translated "spirit" that many times, never "soul" or "life," and I believe never applied to animals. The spirit, or a spirit, being possessed by man, or infused into his animal life, constitutes his crowning endowment. This brings us to our third division, "Spiritual Science." In this science, or in man's spiritual nature, lies the germs of religion. Through this spiritual nature, man is allied unto God, and through it he apprehends the divine in nature, the infinite in the material, the biological and the spiritual world.

This sanctifies all the field of science that lies within human reach. Here man is raised above its holy plains where all pour their treasure at his feet. At this spiritual height man feels a yearning—a longing for a better life—a life immortal, where he hears the call and receives the promises of a Father in heaven. Was this idea begotten in ignorance, born in ignorance, nourished and developed in ignorance? If so, ignorance is bliss.

Intelligent Christians love science, because it reveals an infinite power at work. They read between the lines, "The hand that made us is divine." Many Christians are the most profound scientists. Though as yet all is not science that is claimed to be. The science of one age becomes obsolete in the next.

I am aware that some of your readers will not agree with me on some of these points. But with them I have no quarrel. I cede to all the right to accept any, all, or no religion, as they may elect. I esteem many Liberals as gentlemen of a high order and could trust them with any amount without fear of being deceived.

G. R. POTTORFF.

OUR ANSWER.

Our friend is somewhat our senior, has read much, and is very kind and moderate in his spoken and written opposition to our ideas. This makes us feel humble and very friendly toward Mr. Pottorff, and as we point out what we honestly believe to be his mistakes in the above, let it be understood that we do it with respect, hoping to discover the truth, which will be a benefit to all.

The first mistake which we discover is a very fatal one. It destroys the value of the whole article. It is this: There is no such thing as a *SPIRITUAL* science. No modern scientist of any note thus classifies science.

What is science? It is classified knowledge, or, as the Standard Dictionary says, it is "knowledge gained and VERIFIED by exact observation and correct thinking."

The absolute facts that are known to scientists by years of observation in regard to the earth's crust is called the science of geology, and one may actually demonstrate these truths satisfactorily to Mr. Pottorff and all of us. We can go to many cabinets and there actually see the proof of the great discoveries made in this science. The fossil trilobite, orthoceratite, crenoids and other forms, proving the facts of science, may be seen, handled, examined and compared; but not so with spiritual things. Nothing is known in regard to even the existence of a spirit, the existence of a god, the existence of a heaven or the existence of a hell.

What if, as our friend says, the Greeks believed in and had words to express life and spirit? They were not infallible, and probably built their theories on others farther back in ignorance, as he is now trying to have us do. They believed and had words to express many things that none of us now believe. Why, then, should their belief in spirits have any weight with us?

In regard to real science, then, we have no dispute with Mr. P., and we claim that there is no spiritual science. Many facts of science are known to us, and when we come to our limit we say we do not know; but he lets god, spirit, heaven, etc., stand for an imaginary science—unclassified ignorance.

It is all very well for our opponent to say that "man in this state

only, can have no more conception of a god than a brute". He could say the same of a man who does not believe in a Santa Claus, or the Irish Banshee, but his statement in either case proves nothing and is only an unscientific assumption.

Instead of saying that "in spiritual science or in man's spiritual nature lies the germs of religion", as our friend has it, we would say that in our ancestors' belief of spirits, ghosts and gods, lie the evil germs of all supernatural religions which curse the world.

Some may think they see by their imaginary spiritual nature that man is allied to a god, but the study of nature itself reveals that man is allied to the monkey and other lower forms of life. Our imperfect but ever-increasing intellects have created gods in our own image and given us, while we were too young and ignorant to have classified knowledge of things, vain fancies and yearnings for undesirable and unprofitable immortal existences. A longing for better conditions here while we live and for better conditions for the people who will live here after we are dead, is profitable, but the immortal-life yearning is injurious, a source of contention, an absolute hindrance to true science and progress.

"Was this idea begotten in ignorance," etc. "If so," says our friend, "ignorance is bliss." Ignorance may be bliss for those who believe in "spiritual science," but not for a true scientist, one who loves truth more than all else beside—even his own comfort. "Intelligent Christians love science," and we might add that the more they love science, the more liberal and scientific they become until they are no longer Christians. To be sure some "read between the lines" things that are not there, even before they can read the lines themselves. We can not find any such between-line readings in the works of any of the great scientists of our time excepting now and then in the works of some lesser one, who tries to cater a little to the popular myths.

Science is not changeable. The theories given as theories by scientists of one age may be proven wrong, but two plus two will always remain four as long as the universe stands. The square on the base plus the square on the perpendicular of a right angle triangle will always equal the square on the hypotenuse; but spiritual science—this reading between the lines, is always changing. A few years ago we read between the lines that heretics should be hanged and burned, but what a change! Even in our time, brother Pottorff, what a change in "reading between the lines!" No, indeed, "all is not science that is claimed to be," and especially is this true of what is