

**Some Weak Points.**

EDITOR TORCH OF REASON:

I think all who have read you carefully understood already that you have no belief in a "supreme being", nor in any other supernaturalism. Still, you are too gentle in dealing with the discrepancies of Mr. Wettstein's criticism.

You are not, in my opinion, an Agnostic. In your late criticism of the Truthseeker's position as to the soul and immortality, you laid down a rule of reason and judgment which will not permit you to be an Agnostic. In that article you said:

"Denial of the existence of heaven and hell must be based on the absence of evidence, the utter incapability of all proofs offered; and to be consistent we must apply the same line of reasoning to the dogma of the soul and immortality."

Must we not apply this rule throughout the list of supernaturalisms? If we deny the existence of a god on this ground, we are Atheists, pure and simple. It is true we do not know, of our own personal knowledge, that there is not a god somewhere; and a denial of such an existence is not an assertion of such knowledge. We are led to the denial by the absence of evidence in favor of the supposition and by its absurdity and inharmony with what we do know.

Mr. Wettstein admits this point when he says, "Of course we do not absolutely know that a devil does not exist," etc., notwithstanding his insistence on your declaring that you "do know". This is evidently inconsistent. It is not necessary to assert what is not true in order to deny that which is absurd and unsupported by evidence. This overreaching assertiveness is a matter of temperament in the individual, and not any part of the philosophy of Atheism.

But Mr. Wettstein's weakest point is found in his opening paragraph. He says "we know" that matter acting on matter is the cause of all phenomena, "simply because we know nothing to the contrary". This is granting knowledge by virtue of ignorance. Primitive man knew his gods existed because he knew nothing to the contrary, although every fact in nature is directly to the contrary. This is the essence of assumption and bigotry. The godist always demands that you prove him wrong—he "knows nothing contrary" to his theory. It is never his place, as he sees it, to support his assertion with evidence. All that we know, we know by observation and experience.

It is to be hoped that Mr. Wettstein will be more careful of his statements to the class in Atheistic Philosophy when he becomes professor of that department in the Liberal University.

J. H. MORRIS.

**The Age of Secularism.**

Talking some time ago with a gentleman over the future of Secularism, I was asked by him how old Secularism is. I replied that the answer to that question would entirely depend upon whether he referred to Secularism as an organization or as a set of principles. If the former, it would be confined to our own century; but if his query had reference to the existence of a set of principles that are now recognized as Secularism, then its age would be synonymous with that of humanity. Go back as far as is possible, we can see two forces in active opposition: the one directing man's attention to some fancied world beyond the grave, bidding him kneel at the shrine of some fear-fashioned deity and prostitute his intelligence in the service of senseless superstition; the other seeking to direct human thought to the essential conditions of life, and to the development of knowledge as the sole means of their improvement. History shows these two forces in never-ending conflict—a conflict that can only be terminated by the complete exclusion of the supernatural from human affairs.

It is in the sense of Secularism representing the constant opposition of human knowledge to supernatural beliefs that we may speak of its being as old as history. For Secularism is not so much a series of propositions, or a code of rules, as it is a way of looking at the world, measuring the value of life in terms of present and future possibilities of human happiness, to be realized this side of the grave, and not in some problematical future existence. Nor does Secularism aim so much at creating new forces as it does at developing latent, and directing attention to neglected, ones. Just as the laws of heat, sound and light were in existence long before their mode of operation was reduced to recognizable formulas; just as morality is implicit in action before it is explicit in ethical regulations, so the forces that make for progress have been always with us, though dwarfed by supernatural pressure, and when active, disguised by a supernatural covering. It is the primary object of Secularism to win recognition for the truth, that human life, considered with reference to this world alone, may contain a sufficient incentive to right action and an adequate reward for its realization.—[C. Cohen, in Freethinker.

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