

# TORCH OF REASON.



"TRUTH BEARS THE TORCH IN THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH."—*Lucretius.*

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## Triumph.

Nor he who rides through conquered  
city's gate  
At head of blazoned hosts, and to  
the sound  
Of victor's teumpets, in full pomp and  
state  
Of war, the utmost pitch has dreamed  
or found  
To which the thrill of triumph can be  
wound.

Nor he who by a nation's vast acclaim  
Is sudden sought and singled out  
alone,  
And while the people madly shout his  
name,  
Without a conscious purpose of his  
own,  
Is swung and lifted to the nation's  
throne—

But he who has, all single-handed, stood,  
With foes invisible on every side,  
And, unsupported of the multitude,  
The force of fate has dared, defied,  
And conquered silently.  
Ah! that soul knows  
In what white heat the blood of triumph  
flows.

—[Selected.]

## Everything Is Natural.

BY B. F. UNDERWOOD.

THE question is asked: "Would not the world have advanced more rapidly without beliefs in supernaturalism than it has with them?"

As man is constituted he could not be without these beliefs. They were products of ancestral thoughts. They were interwoven with his experience and life. They had their natural antecedents and their natural effects in connection with thousands of other factors which combined to produce the existing mental, moral and social condition with all its evil as well as good.

If man six thousand or six hundred years ago could have reached a degree of enlightenment which admitted of his acceptance and assimilation of naturalistic and rationalistic views as to man and his relation to the universe in the place of superstition, I believe that the world would be far more advanced than it is now; but it was not possible for man to attain to such enlightenment then, and in his condition and environment, and with the influence of the past which had made him what he was, dominating his thought, he could be only what he actually was; and progress was only possible with, even if in spite of, the absurd theological dogmas that prevailed, and with the suppression of science, and the fiendish and bloody persecutions which occurred.

To point out the errors of theological systems and to show that often they have hampered the mind and led to abnormal habits and modes of life as well as to opposi-

tion to progress, is legitimate; but to characterize religion, or belief in supernaturalism as unnatural and abnormal, when religion is and has been for ages almost universal, is found both in savage and in civilized races, and is seen to be an outcome of the mind, a product of pre-scientific thought, modified slowly to meet the requirements of progress in a changing mental environment, is, in my opinion, to treat the subject not from a standpoint of science and evolution, but from a standpoint that indicates the "anti-theological bias" which, in the investigation of this subject, is as objectionable as is the "theological bias".

As for myself, while I reject as unsuited to my mind and untrue, all theological systems and all forms of supernaturalism, I recognize religion as a fact, as a phenomenon in the order of nature which is just as natural as any other fact. In one of my essays, entitled, "Will the Coming Man Worship God?" published a quarter of a century ago, I endeavored to show the evolution of the god idea and the genesis and growth of religious ideas with the tendency and trend of thought away from anthropomorphism and in the direction of divesting the ultimate reality of those qualities, abstracted from man, which have been imagined as the attributes of gods. But the process of investing the cause or basis of phenomena with personality, intelligence, will and emotion was just as natural as is the process (to use Fisk's long but expressive word) of "deanthropomorphization." One process implies abnormality and disease no more than does the other. They simply indicate different degrees of intellectual development and of critical ability, difference of attitude towards theological speculation and the scientific method and the reasoned thought of today.

Many who, although disposed to accept the conception of evolution, are more or less dominated in thought with pre-evolutionary ideas, conceive the evolutionary process as lineal, and whatever is reactionary, whatever is obstructive or retrogressive, whatever they feel like denouncing, they imagine is outside of the evolutionary order and opposes evolution.

The fact is, the process of evolution is one in which forces are moving in every direction. Sometimes a violent or a turbulent backward movement is absolutely necessary, and this movement is as essential

to progress as is any part of the evolutionary order in which the current is onward and unobstructed.

What we like is not the criterion of the natural. Rattlesnakes are as natural as are the most manly men and the most beautiful women. The stationariness or decline of a city that has been boomed beyond the capacity of the surrounding country, is as natural as is the rapid growth of a more favored city.

Shelley says: "Necessity is the mother of the world." Nothing has ever taken place that could have been prevented. The antecedents of the billions of years of the past have produced the consequents of later times. The American Revolution and the French Revolution were very different from the English Revolution of 1688, but were equally necessary.

For the Torch of Reason.

## The Living Christ.

BY CHARLES CLARK MILLARD.

AT last the "Progressive Christians" have come to the beginning of the end, and have agreed upon a definite statement as to "the seat of authority in religion"—it is "the living Christ." This is the conclusion arrived at by a convention of the Swiss Ministers' Association recently held at Geneva. The line of thought expressed at this convention, says The Chronik, of Leipsic, is fairly indicative of the Progressive but not the Radical school, and was as follows (Literary Digest, Oct. 21, 1899, p. 498): "Modern Theology does not place its emphasis on the infallibility of a book, but upon the person of the historical Christ of whom these scriptures testify. In brief, the only Protestant principle of authority is the living Christ, the revelation of God; and the SPECIAL authority of the scriptures consists in this; that they testify of the normal period of Christianity, of the life of Christ, and of believers. Not what is said of Christ—which criticism must freely examine—but Christ himself, by taking possession of us, becomes our authority."

A Presbyterian correspondent of the New York Sun, and many other religious writers assert that the "living Christ" is the highest, if not the only authority in religion. Also, the Rev. E. M. Wheelock says, (in Unity, Sep. 7—see Literary Digest as above): "There is no outward standard of authority in religion; no absolute tribunal; no

infallible scripture; no certified doctrine; no final word. The note of authority in religion is gone from our modern world. God is the God of the living, and we must nourish our spiritual life on the words He is speaking to us now, and not vainly try to live on the echo of words He spoke to men dead centuries ago." In the same article this writer asserts that "it is the God that is here in this nineteenth century and within us that is the authority in religion." Now let us examine this point of doctrine upon which progressive Christians are agreed, and find out what it really means.

Since outward authority, including the Bible, is gone and cannot be coaxed back, and the "living Christ" is the source of authority, it follows that if there is no "living Christ" there is no authority for the Christian religion. In the language of one of old: "Show us the living Christ and it sufficeth us." Living men and women there are in plenty but none of them is Christ.

But since it cannot be proved, we will admit for the sake of argument that there is a person or thing called the living Christ, and that it is "here now within us"—that is within the religious believer. The question then arises: "What is the living Christ?" It is in the believer and it is not in the unbeliever, and therefore it must be a belief—an idea—for there is nothing else which the believer has and the unbeliever has not.

The believer has an idea of Christ as a living person or spirit within him, and he calls this idea, or ideal person, the "living Christ." And this idea—the "living Christ"—depends on the story of Jesus in the New Testament for its existence. It has never existed within any person who has not previously known the story of Jesus. If the story is true (including the incarnation, the resurrection and the ascension), then the idea derived from it may represent a reality; but if it is false, the ideal represents no real thing in the universe. The authority in religion can not be shifted on to an idea or a product of the fancy. The Progressive Christians are driven to the wall, or they would not set up a man of straw to draw the fire of their opponents.

If the same real living Spirit resided in each believer and controlled his thoughts and actions along religious lines, there would

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