

Torch of Reason

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THURSDAY, JULY 5, E. M. 300.

FEAR, HOPE AND DOUBT.

Quo Vadis, the popular novel, represents Vinitius, a Roman convert to Christianity, when speaking of Lygia, his betrothed, who was to be cast to the lions by the order of Nero, as saying: "I will believe in His (Christ's) loving kindness even if I see her in the jaws of the lion." The author says that Vinitius feared, not to hope; he feared only doubt. We who claim that belief in gods and their sons is very injurious to the individual and to the world, can see in this the key to the truths of Secularism and the overthrow of all supernatural religions. The word fear is often used to express that which is not real fear. We should fear, abhor and fight death and love light and life, and yet we should not superstitiously fear death or anything else. The natural fear of death has been a great factor in civilization. It makes us think! It urges us to take care of our bodies. It has made us study the laws of nature, prolonged our lives and given us aid and comfort in many ways, and will, with the natural fear of pain, finally give human beings a longevity which will be worth much more than the Christians' old-fashioned idea of the immortality of a soul part of man. But superstitious fear is very bad, and should be banished from the minds of men, women and children as soon as possible. But belief in supernatural religions, the stories of Christians to the contrary notwithstanding, does not lessen this superstitious fear of death. In the long

run it increases it, for, being false, it prevents the introduction of those TRUTHS which alone can bring the mind into a TRUE and right condition, so that death is simply looked upon as any natural phenomena, there being no glorious heaven in the sky to gain or lose nor an awful hell to avoid. When this ogre of Fear is banished from the world, a heaven worth a thousand times as much as the little, selfish, gold-streeted one in the sky for the elite will have come to earth, and every one can then afford to be a happy, freethought Secularist.

Then men will really live. They will be brave to overcome evil, but when they have done their best, instead of "resting on the mighty(?) arm" of an imagination, they will bravely let come what will come. Nothing can harm him who fears neither men, gods nor devils and has that wonderful talisman, the approval of his own conscience. Away with superstitious fear! We will have none of it in the walls of our new and glorious Temple of Humanity.

We Secularists have hope, but it is a reasonable hope. We have a "future hope," but it is the unselfish, future hope for our race. It is a hope that gives us immortality, but it is the possible and, to those who try, the very probable immortality of good works. The human family must be adjusted to truth. But some ask, "What harm does it do for one to believe in the immortality of the soul; if one is good and honest in his belief, why destroy his hope?" The people who ask such questions need to become broader. The little circle of the individual man or woman is not the great question, and saying nothing about the fact that no good man exists who might not be made better by receiving and giving out more truth, we must remember that truth is the only creed on which all can finally unite and that UNION IS NECESSARY for the establishment of RIGHT CONDITIONS, which alone can bring out the highest and best in man.

The fear to doubt is the most damnable thing in the Christian creed. No mind can conceive the evil that has come from it, because no mind can form a correct idea of what we "might have been" if this subtle serpent had not crawled into the garden of human thought. But in order to secure the undivided services of their flocks, the priests propagated, cultivated and nourished it; and today, everywhere we turn, we are either met by its glaring eyes and hissing tongue or behold the cowardly thing crawling away into the dark holes which it has dug beneath the tree of life.

Doubt—not the fear of a god—is the beginning of wisdom. A reasonable faith in our triumph over

evil and the ultimate perfecting of humanity, based on Evolution, is good, because it makes us happy workers in its accomplishment, but from childhood our race has been taught that to doubt the priests' stories is a great evil, and so we have scarcely begun to have wisdom. But the serpent of darkness cannot stand the sunlight of truth nor the searching light from the torch of reason, and we can now begin to make of our garden, the earth, an Eden without a serpent, a heaven without a hell, a paradise of equality.

"Where love the air with music fills,
And calm content and peace abide."

THE GREAT ALL VS. A GOD.

The following letter, with its questions, we believe we can answer to the satisfaction of the emancipated; and it will certainly do no harm to those who are still groping in the darkness of metaphysics. Kindly notice each question and each answer, for they lie at the very door of truth and the solution of the greatest problems of human affairs. Here is the letter:

EDITOR TORCH OF REASON:

In your issue of May 3, 1900, I read an editorial entitled "The Truth vs. Old Theories," in which you say: "Science teaches us that space is occupied by matter, and that one of the general properties of matter is impenetrability. Where, then, is there room for a god? If he(?) is immaterial, he is nothing, and if material, he must be either in organic form, like men and women, or in inorganic form, like an invisible gas, as oxygen."

Then you say: "The great, eternal laws which govern matter have evolved the universe as it is and the life forms therein."

Then further on: "The idea of the eternal forces is as easy to rest the mind on as the idea of an eternal god, and much more so when we consider that it solves the whole question."

Let us admit that there is no god and no place for one in the universe. After that admission would you kindly answer these questions?—

1. "The great, eternal laws." If "space is occupied by matter" and matter is impenetrable, "where, then, is there room for" these laws? If they are immaterial they are nothing, and if material they must have form. Isn't there as much room for God as there is for a law or laws, in a universe of impenetrable matter?

2. How do these laws, necessarily (on your theory) neither material nor immaterial, acquire the wisdom and power to "govern matter?"

3. From what did they "evolve" the "universe as it is and the life forms therein?" And what were they doing before they evolved it?

4. "The idea of the eternal forces is as easy to rest the mind on as the idea of an eternal God." Perhaps. But isn't the reverse of that proposition true, also? If you cannot imagine a god without a god-maker, how can you imagine force without a force-maker?

5. You say that the idea of "the eternal forces . . . solves the whole question." How so? If the whole question is solved why do I

ask you five questions here and now? And why are books and books issuing from the press continually on this very question?

One point has been gained by the labors of centuries of Freethinkers, viz.: The idea of a god external to the universe, who set the thing going and then went off and left it, except for a few miraculous interferences—that idea of God has been banished from the minds of most intelligent persons, together with the idea of a God who gets angry and slams people into hell if they do not salaam properly to him; but when you say that intelligent people are satisfied as to the origin and purpose of things by being told that "eternal laws" or "forces" "govern matter," and "evolve" the universe and run it, I think you are mistaken. It seems to me that laws or forces, that can do what has been done and is doing in its heavens above, the earth below, and the waters under the earth; and in the brain and heart of man constitute precisely the kind of god I am willing to take off my hat to. I'm not afraid of the word God, nor of the thing itself, if you will only give me the right kind of a god; and whoever or whatever does what is being done, and is what is, suits me very well, lumping all the "evil" you speak of into the bargain.

HUGH O. PENTECOST.

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1. Mr. Pentecost knows that there are laws of nature, but he does not know that there is a god. Laws need no room. They are neither material nor immaterial things. They are not things at all. They are "uniform occurrences of natural phenomena," and it is as absurd to ask where is there room for these laws as it would be to ask our friend Pentecost where is there room for the uniform occurrence of the earth's turning on its axis. A stone needs room to fall, but it needs no room for the law (the uniform occurrence) that it falls sixteen feet the first second and gains a velocity of thirty-two. A god, if it were possible for one to exist, would be a thing, not a process nor a law, and would need room. Laws of nature need no room, and there is no room for a god anywhere. Space is all occupied with the stuff of which THINGS are composed.

2. There is no wisdom, nor human-like power, which governs matter. All matter follows the line of the least resistance, because it can't help it. These laws of nature are simply what uniformly takes place under uniform conditions.

3. Not being things, they did not evolve the universe in the sense that they slowly created it. The universe has always existed as far as we know, for the matter of which it is composed is indestructible and eternal. The universe "as it is" now, has been evolved by these laws, or, perhaps, it would be better understood to say that matter is changing all the time, and that it has reached the condition in which we find it, and the laws, i. e.,

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