

REPLY TO MATERIALISTS

By Guy Fitch Phelps.

In the Silverton Journal of December 18th I find two articles by Free-thinkers; one from Mrs. Biven, and the other from a Mr. Hall, out in Michigan. Mrs. Biven's article contains nothing worthy of notice. It is a childish array of statements from several "prominent" or leading Free-thinker on what kind of a Sunday to set up. I was amused to find that they turn to the church for help. Their plan is to get the churches to divide time with them. The fact is they must do something like that to get a crowd. You see, nobody takes the infidel as seriously as he would like to be taken, and it hurts his pride. The self element in them is quite strong, and to be treated with silent disregard, and to see the millions going to church on Sunday to hear the sweet old story of Jesus and his love makes them feel like saying something very, very harsh. I said in a former article that infidels, to be consistent, should set up a Sunday with everything religious cut out. What do you want to set up a question box for? Why do you want to ask questions about Christianity? I thought you folks had decided that it is only superstition and a fraud, unreasonable and disgusting? Well, if it is, why do you waste your time on the thing? Why don't you set up a Sunday with everything Christianity teaches, and all matters of religion cut out? Come now, don't be hypocrites, make your Sunday just the reverse of ours. Will they? They will never set up a Sunday at all, they haven't moral fiber enough to establish anything moral, and they know it, so the first thing they plan with their Sunday is to head into the Church. Sure, I knew that. What a bunch of bigoted bluffers infidels are! As to learning about Washington and Lincoln ad Paine (more Paine, you see) and Jefferson, we have books which give us the facts regarding them now, and feel no need of getting a garbled hogwash from some infidel who feels the need of respectable associations and seeks to steal a few decent characters from Christianity. Study the encyclopaedias.

Next comes an amusing little article from Mr. Hall. I shall notice a few of his statements. He calls my article the "big push," and then proceeds to reply—mark you, he calls his article a reply. I stated in a former article that life is always constructive. That is true. But I did not say it is always beneficial in its constructions. A wart is constructive, also a cancer, but not beneficial. Of course, being a God-hater and anxious to say something bitter against religion, he could not get that point. Life is always constructive, and the only evidence one has of its presence is that it is building something. The San Jose Scale is an insect, male and female. They form colonies in the bark of trees, and proceed to breed by the million. This is life, and it is constructive. Then Mr. Hall, like the good scientist he isn't, proceeds to confuse germs and insects. I was amused at what he had to say about the syphilis germ. He says it is a "devil of a germ." Mr. Hall evidently believes in the devil, from this. If he does not why did he say this germ is devilish? Does he admit something in the universe that has the nature of the devil? Certainly, he does it in this statement. But does he not know this is fatal to his other views of the universe? I had to smile at Mr. Hall's bitterness against the syphilis germ. He seems to have a special spite at this germ. He says "it is a devil of a germ." Now I don't know much about this particular thing as Mr. Hall seems to — every fellow to his own experience, you know — but I grant that it is some germ, and I can easily imagine such circumstances as would make a man very bitter against it. If Mr. Hall has his own reasons for his feelings in this matter he is to be borne with in all patience. But in passing I would remind him that this germ is not an animal. I had occasion to examine it under the glass recently, and say on the authority of a local physician that this germ is not mobile. If it is, nothing is gained or lost, for where the laws of purity are observed it is never heard of, and a man who sinks to the level of swine should have a swine's reward. I was also struck with his remarks regarding the creation where God said, "Be fruitful and multiply." Mr. Hall seems to be quite angry to find that God did not mean free love when he said that. He practically finds fault because the multiplying cannot go on immorally without evil results. I refer the reader to his article to see that I am not misquoting him. This is a sample of infidel morals. Has Mr. Hall never read: "He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption?" I thank God that men can't play the least and escape punishment. God has nothing to do with the ravages of this germ. If men live purely they will know nothing of it. Those who

live according to Christianity have no need of fear regarding it, unless they should come in contact with some chap who refuses to live a Christian life and sinks in the moral scale. Then after snarling and snapping at my God, as he calls him, because he finds that disease destroys men through transgression, he turns his whole argument upside down by saying that these two forces are necessary in the universe, the god that builds and the god that destroys. It is really amusing to see how these infidels cross themselves.

But I would remind Mr. Hall that if his theory be true that there is no God in the universe, then he is under obligation to explain where these germs he hates came from. Did they evolve? Did his god of dirt create them? He is compelled, according to his own belief, to admit that they evolved with no reference to God. Then why is he mad at my God? Why don't he get mad at his mud god? Just granting, Mr. Hall, that there is no Infinite God, as I believe, will you explain where these germs came from? What was your blasted evolution doing about the time it created this "devil of a germ?" And if the creation of it is sufficient to make you mad at the God of the Bible, why, please, don't you get mad at your god of dirt? The facts are if the laws of righteousness and health were observed, and had they been observed, we would know little of any disease. These disorders are the results of gluttony alcohol, impurity, and general transgression of the laws of health, as is proven by bettering conditions in any given city section. Plenty of ice lowers the death rate of children in the cities in the summer. So this might be carried on to many fields. It shows how little an infidel has to stand on in his contention. And it shows another thing; infidels are not after science or facts half as much as they are after getting God out of the universe. They hate God, and that is the tap-root of all their contention. But here let me ask Materialists a question: What harm would it do science on any line to establish the fact that there is a God? I request that some of the leading freethinkers shall answer this. Is it not a fact that the leading evolutionists have believed in a God? Did Darwin deny the existence of the Infinite? If so, where? Please quote it. Is not the world stocked with the works of the learned who studied every science and yet believed in God?

Next Mr. Hall tells us that molecules create life (ye gods, hear that! where is Darwin, who believed the very opposite) through "HEAT, SUN and TEMPERATURE." Now talk about believing that God created things by the power of all-might! What do you think of this? Life is created by molecules, acted upon by heat, sun and temperature. Will Mr. Hall please tell us the difference between heat, sun and temperature? See what silly statements a Materialist is compelled to make, simply because he undertakes to make a universe without a God. Then he goes on to say that the "battle of the elements is waged between construction and destruction," and that "one is just as important as the other." Well, what was he finding fault about germs for, then?

But a question right here: Has Mr. Hall ever seen a molecule? Does he definitely know that it exists? Is he certain that such a thing as an atom really exists? Are scientists dogmatic on these points? Is this not, after all, a theory? It is claimed that in one cubic centimeter, which is 0.3937 or two-fifths of an inch, there are 25-36 million million million molecules. That means that the whole thing is a guess, for no glass has ever been invented which could detect one of them. Therefore, Mr. Hall is building his theory of life on something which he has never seen, never can see, and does not know certainly that it exists. He tells us that he has much more to say on this line in the future. Really, if what he has is not better than this, we may be pardoned for hoping that the spirit will not move him. For if Mr. Hall is not conscious that he is absurd, others are.

It may not be improper to say that Materialists share in the common traits of the race. They would have one believe that they are candid, thirsting for facts, dying to know the truth, etc. Yet the real truth is they are set to establish their views of different things, and they dread to meet a man who can show that they are absurd in anything, and they usually meet that man with snarls and bitterness. Alpheus Hyatt, a strong materialistic evolutionist, says: "A scientific man who has a theory to support is as stubbornly difficult to convince, even on clear evidence, as any other man." That is certainly true. Like Mr. Hall, he would declare that molecules create life rather than own the

absurdity of such a statement, because, if he does not say that, he might have to concede something that would go to prove the existence of God. Like the scientific professor of Padua, who would not look through the telescope lest he discover the moons of Jupiter, they close their eyes to the reasonable and gulp down absurdities. Is it not true that one scientist undoes by his discoveries the dogmatic theories of another? Do not scientists today reject Darwin's theory of evolution? They have just done so at Melbourne, calling it a **superstition**. Sir William Thompson seriously declared in the presence of the leading scientists of the world that life came to this planet on a meteor from some other planet, and learned heads nodded, and scientists in the amen corner of the god of dirt said Amen, and Amen. Let that have time to soak in. Meantime, Mr. Hall is asked to harmonize himself with his more learned materialistic brother. These are the fellows who worship at clay banks and sneer at God. These are the people who say prayers to bathybius and sneer at immortality; and then they wonder why folks refuse to take them seriously. Since Werner there have been more than a score of geological hypotheses, many of which would excite laughter if mentioned now, and yet these evangelists of mud declared them as profound dogmas to be received in the name of science. Poor word, how many little fish seek to make a respectable swim of it in the latitudes of the term. Some chap like Hall will declare that molecules create life, thereby disagreeing with the leading scientists of the world, and then close by asking for a scientific God. The really sad part of this is that he doesn't seem to know just how absurd he is. One hundred years, or so, ago, the French Institute enumerated no fewer than eighty geological theories that were hostile to the Bible, while not one of those theories are held today, the Bible is doing business at the old stand. The theory of Lavoisier as to respiration "was exploded in an hour." Once heat was said to be matter, now they tell us it is motion, what will they call it tomorrow? Huxley waged war for his theory of live-giving bathybius, but discovered his mistake and abandoned the theory. Sir Wm. Thompson announced his theory of life coming to this earth on a fragment of rock from some other planet (an absurdity considered even in the light of gravity), but abandoned it in one year. Strange that none of those apostles of dirt, who heard him say that, ventured to ask him how life reached the other planet. The theory that man is directly descended from the monkey has been universally rejected. For it has been proved that monkeys and men develop in opposite directions. The discovery of argon has played havoc with many nice little theories of so-called scientific men. Huxley wisely said that all scientists should be killed at sixty because they refuse to yield to new ideas. The whole path of science is strewn with the wreckage of rejected theories, and who may say what that is absurdly believed among them today will be cast to the scrapheap tomorrow. Already science has rejected Darwin's theory. Materialistic evolution can never arrive; it will be a hobo forever.

MATERIALIST COLUMN

Edited by Eliza Mowry Bliven, Brooklyn, Conn.

I am glad several are answering Mr. Phelps's unscientific and misleading arguments, so I can more especially help evolution of methods, to develop more intelligence, morality, health, justice, good citizenship, etc.

For 1600 years the Christians' ruling and methods have been swaying the so-called civilized portions of the world. Yet even Guy Phelps acknowledges that the majority of church members are not good Christians. There are bad citizens and good citizens in every church and in every religion, and also outside of all religious beliefs. It is evident that none of the Gods, nor their sacred books, have the power to make all their followers moral, nor wise, nor healthy. What is it that has and does this in some people? What is lacking in the Christians' methods that they do not make all people moral?

Guy Phelps claims that to Christianity belongs all the virtues, morals and all other good qualities of mankind. That is his bluff and Christians' self-conceit. Centuries before Christianity was born, all those qualities were taught and practiced by many wise and good people, especially in ancient Greece, and more or less in all the ancient civilized and half-civilized nations. People could never have built cities and lived together unless they had some justice, virtues, kindness, that made laws or public sentiment requiring regard for others' rights and welfare.

Materialists have just as much right to claim and teach all these qualities as Christians have. And since Christians' methods have failed in making all mankind moral and the majority of church members are not what they

ought to be, some of us Materialists, who believe in evolution of intelligence and morality as well as evolution of plants and animals, are trying to find out the causes of the Christians' failures, and to help toward evolution of better, more effective methods. We are willing to give credit and use whatever beneficial methods the Christians have evolved, while we weed out the "husks" they feed to the people in place of strengthening mental and moral food.

Belief in rewards and punishments after death, forgiveness of sins, the Bible as truth and a moral guide, faith in prayer and belief in any kind of a God or future life, are all husks. They are imaginations, not realities. Morality can be promoted in better, surer ways. (To be continued.)

Eliza Mowry Bliven.

Marshall J. Gauvin is Rationalist Lecturer in Pittsburg, Pa. Selections from his answer to my letter.

Let me assure you that you have misjudged Freethought meetings in concluding that they do not draw women. I have an audience of about six hundred people every Sunday, and when we have Carnegie Music Hall, on the North Side, our audience runs up to about a thousand; and in those large audiences the women are always as numerous and as enthusiastic as the men. We certainly do draw the women. Mothers come with their daughters, and fathers bring their sons.

With respect to the question box at Sunday meetings, I think I am the only Freethought lecturer in this country who has reduced the asking and answering of questions down to a science. At the close of each lecture we have the people place their written questions in the collection baskets. In this way, from twenty to forty are handed to the platform every Sunday. While they are supposed to have some direct bearing upon the lecture of the evening, they frequently deal with most various phases of the Freethought question. These questions are read aloud to the audience by the Chairman; and I make answer immediately. I answer as lengthy and fully as the question calls for, when I can. So far I have been remarkably successful in this work, so much so indeed, that the society, holding that some of my best work is done in the question box hour; have engaged a stenographer to take down the questions and answers in shorthand, and transcribe them in type writing. The object is to publish a selection of the best questions and answers in pamphlet form. A series may appear in "Truth Seeker" in the near future. This feature of our program is so highly appreciated that scores of our members declare that much as they like and enjoy the lectures, they appreciate yet more fully the immense amusement and instruction of the question box. My lectures usually round up in an hour and as a rule it takes me as long to dispose of the questions, and the vast audience remains glued to the seats until the last gun has been fired.

To hand in the questions one week and answer them the next as you suggest, would lack almost all the interest that our system possesses. What gives our method its great force, its tremendous interest and its genuine qualities of instruction, is the fact that there is immediateness and spontaneity about it. The question does not get old. The question does not lose interest. There is no going home to look up references. This question is like a ball thrown by a pitcher and I intercept it on its way and hurl it for me, but I enjoy it, and would not give it up for anything, if I could retain it as a privilege. But there is not the slightest danger of its being discontinued; for it is one of the great sources of our power; it fills our halls; it is a standing certification that we have nothing to hide. It gives the audience pleasure as well as profit; and it is an excellent training for me. I really have my hands full here. My lectures must be scholarly and polished to satisfy not only the audience, but myself. My power depends absolutely on the quality of my work. My work here is a mighty force working for clearer intellect and finer morals. Like you I would love to see a lecture platform-like mine in every city of this vast country. It will come, I am making Freethinkers many. Men and women come with their friends to have me influence them. They come again. The charm seems to be irresistible. I make Freethinkers of them. We have a fine literature table. All in all we are doing a very great work. Then I do some private work. Men have me visit their homes to converse with their wives or friends. Tomorrow night I am to spend a few hours with a doctor's family. I know of no more effective method than this one for the winning of some people. In my address I studiously avoid giving offense to any, but send home the logic, humor, wit and galore.

Yours most faithfully,

MARSHALL J. GAUVIN.

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AND OUR

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5. The cause of poverty and crime and the remedy by the destruction of political trickery and false hero worship and how to establish universal knowledge of the true principles of government on the basis of equality of opportunity and the inalienable right of every citizen to an equal chance to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.
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