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Immortality

Our Beliefs and Dreams on this Subject
Reflect Our Moral Selves

As men are, so are their ideas of immortal life. We may even judge ourselves by this test. We may ask, "What are my thoughts of the After-world? Are they paltry or noble?" Whatever the answer is, it will be as a looking-glass showing what manner of men we are in the present world. The savage, therefore entertains savage thoughts of the soul and its destiny. He will think of his soul as a shadow; or as a manikin, or small copy of his body, or as a spirit that flies off in the form of a moth or butterfly; or as something that may escape from him in a swoon, or be stolen from him by a witch or sorcerer. So also with the peace and occupation of the soul after death. Our beliefs, our dreams, our poetry on this subject reflect our moral self. The savage will think of the future world as a dismal cave; a field for hunting; an ocean on which the spirit paddles its canoe. Other visions will shape into the fires and torments of Tartarus; the cold and dark recesses of Sheol or Hades; the miseries of Hell; the cleansing sufferings of Purgatory; the Happy Islands of rest, or the Gardens of Paradise, or the choirs and golden architecture of the New Jerusalem; or the Ten Heavens of Dante. All through these ideas there runs the sure criterion: if they are mean and selfish, the mind that harbors them is mean and selfish, narrow and individualist; and as they become purer and less egotistic, it is a sign that the mind which creates them is itself becoming purer, more impersonal, more disinterested.

We believe, indeed, that each individual should have full scope for a useful and cheerful life; that every industrious citizen should be assured (and great masses are not assured now) of a decent and orderly family existence; that education should be such as to discover and use for social ends every faculty of skill and genius that hides in the brains of the people. Mr. Bernard Shaw lately used a happy word which defines a reasonable kind of domestic existence—the word "handsome." Life for each citizen should be simple, healthy, ample, handsome. Without this free, strong, handsome individual life, the life of humanity itself is so much weaker and more puny. But while we say this; while we insist on it, and demand that politics, Socialist or other, shall make such an individual life possible for all, we yet believe that the individual life itself has no true value apart from the general life, the general love, the general order, the general progress. We live through humanity. The life that we live is the life of the past humanity, gathered up, summed up, concentrated in our hearts today. All the dead live in us. They rule us by their feeling, thought, invention, art, politics energy. We are the last word in their speech; the last note in their song; the last beat of their heart; and in the movement of the human race today we hear the rustle of the wings of the Past and breathe the breath of our fathers. That is why the study of history should be a loved occupation; it is looking into the face of a mother.

The individual life, then, has no value apart from the general life. The destiny of the individual is subordinate to the collective evolution. Greek and Roman patriots rightly died for city and fatherland, because in so doing, they proved their subordination to the collective existence. The same noble spirit was shown in the loyalty of the Jewish people to their Law; in the loyalty of Catholic saints to the Church; in the loyalty of French Revolutionists to the ideal of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity; in the loyalty of Irishmen, Finns, Poles, Hindus, and others to the ideal of national self-development; in the loyalty of many a humble Socialist today to the vision of his Utopia. And therefore we believe in collective immortality. But nobody will want this immortality until he has learned to love the idea of the splendid general life; the idea of the rich, fertile life of our race all over the planet. Until you learn to love humanity, you are more concerned with personal immortality in the narrowest sense

life of Plato, of Marcus Aurelius, of Joan of Arc, of Cromwell, of Goethe, of Shelley, of Mazzini, and the rest, then the problem may be stated thus,—"Are we, as a community, ensuring this representative of humanity, —this child of a glorious Past,—an honorable place in the great society?" When the question is put to the social conscience in these terms, I believe it will appeal with more urgency, more sting, more conviction, than any question put by the religions of the past or the politics of Liberals and Conservatives today. Such a question reminds us that the Outcast Man (I mean the unemployed, the defective, the so-called fallen woman) is not simply a troublesome person who can be more or less adequately dealt with by Charity Organizations, or Labor Exchanges, or penal farm-colonies. Humanity herself faces us, and asks, "What are you doing with this my son,—my daughter,—who carries some germs, if ever so feeble, of my majestic life? He or she, if ever so decayed and wrecked, is no beast of the field out of all relation to me; but a representative, though ragged and foul, of a wonderful series of past ages; I beseech you, give him the opportunity to act as my worthy servant." Surely, in such a conception of the problem of unemployment and poverty, we have a moral dynamic that is revolutionary in the grandest sense, and that is creative for social order and progress.

We wander into no vain speculations as to what may be the secrets of realms beyond sunrise and sunset and the evening star. But if a hundred curtains were drawn aside from any such secrets; if veil after veil were lifted to reveal marvels of evolution now inconceivable to us; yet the doctrine of the Enduring Life would still hold true. Even when the theatres of existence and experience were enormously enlarged, still the most precious thing would be the living for others.

Men and histories come, and seem to go. Yet the supreme river of life proceeds. It is a dignity to know we belong to such a river. We and our comrades of love, order and progress are that river. Wordsworth wandered down the banks of Duddon, and as the stream entered the sea, he for a moment sympathized with its apparent dissolution. But on glancing back along the valley, down which the Duddon had led him as partner and guide, he saw the river still flowed; its water lapsing, but its function never dying.

The stately stream of humanity flows on,—to us the fairest and dearest Existence in the universe:—

"I thought of thee, my partner and my guide,
As being passed away. Vain sympathies!
For backwards, Duddon, as I cast my eyes,
I see what was, and is, and will abide;
Still glides the stream, the function never dies;
While we, the brave, the mighty and the wise,
We men, who in our morn of youth defied
The elements, must vanish!—Be it so;
Enough, if something from our hands have power—
To live, to act, and serve the future hour;
And, if, as towards the silent tomb we go,
Through love, through hope, and faith's transcendent dower,
We feel that we are greater than we know."

—F. J. Gould, in London Freethinker.

NO REASON IN RELIGION.

Otto Wettstein Alleges That to Doubt the Bible Means Atheism.

"I have little sympathy with those people who are rising up now, trying to make us disbelieve the Old Testament. If you are going to throw out one of the testaments, it will not be long before the whole will go. We want to believe the whole thing. It stands and falls together. Men say: 'You do not believe the story of Lot's wife or Jonah and the whale?' I believe them as I do that the cross was erected on Calvary. The idea of men reading the Bible with a pen-knife in their hands, cutting out what they don't like! The shortest way is to give up the whole thing."—Rev. D. L. Moody.

There is great commotion and alarm in orthodox circles of late concerning the numerous internee elements of skepticism now prevailing. This anxiety on the part of thought-

ful minds is indeed well founded, for they insist that the repudiation of a solitary word, doctrine, event or sentiment contained in the book upon which Christianity is founded will, if persisted in, lead eventually and directly to atheism.

And this is true: When the church reasons, theology must fall. Protestantism contains within itself the seeds of self-destruction. If a can consistently repudiate a literal hell, B can complacently consign to the realms of fiction the fish, virgin and pillar of salt stories. When Calvin and Luther protested against the dogmas of the Popes, they sowed the seeds which, when Channing, Parker and the new school theologians protested against the dogmas of Protestantism, blossomed into the buds which, if these protestations continue, will in the near future unfold into a purely scientific materialism, and, incidentally, into atheism.

There is no place for reason in the church, and religion and theology are not subjects of reason. When we reason deeply, a God will get farther and farther away from us, and when we analyze the faith we have left we become atheists. "A God known is no God at all," said the pious Coleridge, and a person content to believe in a virgin mother, an omnipresent personal God—and an impersonal God cannot be a God and all it implies—in a local "heaven" and in a continuous personal life in this age of science and progressive thought believes in miracles so profound and so grotesque that it is simply ridiculous to reject a solitary minor incident or narrative recorded in that book. The God conception alone—from the one originating in the savage brain of the fetish worshiper to the lofty idea of Rev. Mr. Savage of Boston—conveys ideas so stupendously unnatural and antithetical to well-known facts that no honest, intelligent theist can reasonably and consistently subscribe thereto and then refuse to believe a solitary thing recorded in his or any other Bible.

The strength of Romanism lies in the blind and abject obedience of its subjects to the authority of pope and priest. Reason is scorned; understanding, evidence and facts are ignored, and a blind faith in the infallible authority of the church imperatively demanded for the "salvation of the soul." Therein lies its power, and in the humble acquiescence of the people alone rests its security. Protestants should heed the warning. Religion is not progressive. It is either pure Bible theology, a la Calvin, Edwards, Talmage, Surgeon, Moody, the Popes and ignorant but consistent divines or its claims fall to the ground. We have no new Bible, no modern revelation, and not a solitary fact to base a "new theology" upon. It must stand as it has for 16 centuries (since the first Bible was compiled) or fall. Said Rev. Dr. Hatfield of your city: "Theology is not a progressive science; the revelation is made once for all, and the book is shut, the hsp is upon it, and it is sealed." Therefore the church can pursue only one course consistent with its safety, and that is to adopt the methods of Romanism, which makes it incumbent upon its members to suppress all doubts, every tendency to reason, by refusing them the right to think and reason for themselves.

I admire Mr. Moody. He possesses the true, uncompromising spirit of all religions, and unless the apostates from the established schools can maintain their new faith upon a basis of science, logic and reason—which they cannot—their several new theologies, "new interpretations," "new revisions," must be as peremptorily rejected as they have rejected the old. There is absolutely no compromise, no half-way house, no stopping place between a solitary doubt in the infallibility of the Bible and radical atheism, between Calvinism and naturalism. Those who still cling to, embrace and hold sacred the idea of a heaven, an immortal soul and of an omnipresent being in an infinite universe—among a cosmos of soaring, seething, incandescent bodies, countless billions in number and most of them as large as a million worlds—have no logical right to reject the other infantile stories of the Bible, because their God, and their heaven, and their "spirits" tower as far above the miracles they have rejected as a mountain above an ant hill.

OTTO WETTSTEIN.

THE GOSPELS EXAMINED.

We can hardly expect the pious fathers to pass over such an important event as the hanging of Jesus without a prophecy to back it up, and here it is. The Matthew writer

says (26:53) that "He had but to pray to His heavenly Father to receive the assistance of twelve legions of angels." But he said, had he taken this means of deliverance, how then would the scriptures be fulfilled that "thus it may be." We are referred to Isaiah, chapter 53, the whole of which is a lament on Israel and the captivity in Babylon.

The statement about the twelve legions of angels was simple brag, for judging by the effect of his prayer, in which he three times requested that the bitter cup might be taken from him, his Father would not or could not send him even one angel. The result of his prayer, if it were ever offered, was similar to what is seen every day with regard to the prayers of other people—nil.

RELIGIOUS TRUST BEING FORMED.

A few weeks ago at New York City—Uncle Sam's Gateway—article of incorporation were filed in the County Clerk's office for a religious organization to be composed of all Christian churches, including Protestant, Roman Catholic and Greek churches. The incorporate name of this giant Trust is "A Christian Unity Foundation," and "its aim is to do for Christianity what Carnegie and Sage Foundations do for education."

Now, if this is not enough to make non-Christians "sit up and take notice," then they ought to be hit with a landslide or cannon ball. Let this octopus get his numerous claws fastened into our land and we will have to go to Europe for a whole regiment of Tom Paines to put him out.

The leaders of this movement are men prominent in the Protestant Episcopal Church, and we can read between the lines the supreme effort of the Episcopal Church to get back to the Catholic Church, where she has long wanted to be—provided she could do so without "unconditional surrender." The Episcopal was the only large denomination that refused to join the Federal Council of the Church of Christ in America formed a few years ago. This poor old aristocrat is just itching to be remarried to Rome, and in order to bring about this without humbling herself has framed up this big compromise. The passage in England only last month of the King's Accession Declaration Bill shows a gradual receding of the Episcopal Church from its antagonism to Catholicism, and some now born may live to see a Catholic on the throne of England.

There is not much probability that all the Christian churches will get along any better together than those cats we've heard about, or the inhabitants of a city tenement, but this organization shows that they are awake to the fact that "in union there is strength," and that great strength is needed to overthrow the trend of intelligent freethinking.

Mr. Stebbins in Blade of July 10, is right in his statement that "we are approaching the abyss of a bloody revolution." We may try to deceive ourselves into the belief that we are approaching a bloodless era—that we will gain freedom by evolution and not by revolution—but history shows that liberty has always exacted blood as its price, and it always will. While we dream of freedom the religious Trust is forging the chains to bind us down to ignorance, superstition and slavery of mind, if not of body, and we will have to fight hard to regain what we are idly allowing to slip away from us. That bloodless era is not at hand and so long as there are Roosevelts to encourage, and Popes to demand the ignorant to rear 15 to 25 children per couple, there will be wars to rid the world of this surplus population and make way for the "survival of the fittest." Thinking friends, shall we get together and make ourselves of the "fittest," or shall we look to Europe to send us her Paines and Ferrers?

MINNIE PAUL.

ABOUT REV. DABNEY.

Editor Blade: I see Minnie Paul gives an account in the Blade of a preaching trip in an automobile of Rev. T. H. Dabney, his wife and grandson.

I know something of this outfit. Mrs. Dabney is my wife's sister. Miss Paul need not doubt that Jehovah will look after them. She little knows to what extremes this preacher will go for Jehovah. My wife overheard him preaching against evolution to her other sister's boy. He said as far back as history reaches, which was six thousand years, a horse had been a horse and a cow had been a cow, etc. Species hadn't

changed a particle. My wife then intererred (like Satan, who came also) and said that scientists claimed to have evidence that the horse had made wonderful changes; and that he once was a five-toed animal not larger than a fox. The preacher said no leading scientist takes such a position, and they all deny the doctrine of evolution. My wife asked him to name some of the leading scientists who denied it, as she had along heard the other way. But he could not exactly do that, but it was rather the schools that were frowning down upon it, and among others he named Yale and Harvard. But it so happened that at very time Prof. of Paleontology, Lull of Yale, was reconstructing an ape-man of 600,000 years ago, and excursionists from all over the state were arriving to see it. And his predecessor Prof. Marsh, of the same institution, had reconstructed the ancient horse, now in the museum there. I wrote the boy a letter giving these facts, and the boy sent it to the preacher. The preacher came back on me—he and the Lord in partnership—like mad hornets. He gave me no proof, but told me I was conceited and I had better be careful what I teach other people's boys.

Yes, Jehovah will look after this outfit, but it is hard for him to provide for his servants when the people believe in evolution.

A. A. SNOW.

Lineville, Iowa.

SKETCHES OF THE

CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS.

There is every reason to believe that the story of the Crucifixion, as given in the New Testament, was an invention of the second century, inserted for the purpose of making Jesus a Savior, like other Messiahs, and of giving a divine aspect to the gibbet of a common malefactor. The statement that he was released by the Roman Governor, flogged and handed over to the Jews, was a fabrication for the purpose of making certain records of current events in the Hebrew Scriptures appear as prophecies, and in order to present Him before the public as a valid Messiah, and not as a criminal. This view is corroborated by the discrepancies and the contradictions to be found in the different gospel accounts, and by the silence of contemporary history.

SOME CURIOUS INSPIRED BIBLE TEACHINGS.

In the 6th chapter of Genesis, 6th verse, we are told that "it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth."

"We find no less than a score of instances where the Lord is represented as saying and doing things, then repenting for them. Now, we ask: Are we expected to believe, or even to imagine that an Infinite, All-wise God ever did or ever will be guilty of doing or saying anything, then repenting for it. The very thought of such a thing would be a shameful slur upon his dignity. To what throne would He go to ask forgiveness. That would be bringing the Lord of Heaven and Earth down upon an equality with man.

But why should the Lord repent for making man? This would have been a curious world without a man in it. Did not the Lord know what he was doing when he made man? It would seem not, at least.

Why should he repent for making man and nothing else. What had the man done to displease Him? He pronounced it all very good at first look, but soon got vexed at the man; then destroys the whole business.

In our opinion, the creation theory as reported in Genesis, is one of the greatest frauds and deceptions ever put in print. It is too far below the dignity of any god to be guilty of such work. Then, it is too silly, too contradictory, and too unreasonable for any intelligent, honest and truthful person to contemplate for a moment.

The question is asked: "If a man die, shall he live again?" (Job 14: 14.) We answer: In case he lives again, it will be through a birth into life, the same as the present one, and it will be here on this earth, with no more mystery connected with than the first. Such a future life as that we would be willing to tolerate; but one that is to be gained through fear, with the promise of an endless punishment in case we don't get it, is more than we can allow.

One world at a time is all that is needed. All the rest are inside of that.