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AN OPEN LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF THE OPEN COURT.

BY C. H. REEVE.

YOUR efforts to establish the fact of the existence of a human *soul*, and that it is immortal, have been observed by me with a good deal of interest and care; keeping myself free from the influence of any pre-conceived ideas or opinions on the subject, as far as that is possible, and making a sincere effort to find the elements and evidences of truth. (Mr. Genone's introduction to his article on "Spook Mice," discussing "beliefs," comes in point here; and I wonder if he would say that one *can* free himself from the influence of preconceptions taken for beliefs, or would claim that he cannot.)

As I understand you, while the physical organism is dissolved,—disappears,—its constituents going back through natural processes to the original elements composing it,—combined in other forms and existing in new conditions,—the intelligence it has developed and the individuality that intelligence has created, continue to exist; and become a part of the factors making up that part of the universe which belong to and with the earth and the outgrowths of the earth, one of which is humanity with its animisms and spiritisms. That is, our individuality is impressed upon our time and generation, and as a factor helps to form and develop the growing individuality of others; we live in those who come after and so continue to live, being thus immortal.

I have not been able to learn that you claim that we retain and have individual consciousness and can recognise those we have known in life. It has seemed to me as if you evaded that question, or desired to avoid it, and so far only assert that we continue to live in the future as having been part of the past. There could be no future only as the past creates it. Or better say, perhaps, the ever-present created by the past makes the present of those to come future as to us. That our existence now develops an individuality which will become a part of that future, as the past has become a part of us, and thus we become immortal. That individuality is the soul. It is the outgrowth of our mentality as developed in the physical organism. The latter is annihilated as an organism,

and the soul lives on among the factors creating the future.

I may be a long way from a true conception of your position, and it is hard to define; but this is the substance of your philosophy, as I understand it. Hence, the individual in the future can clasp hands with the individual of the past with whom he may be in sympathy, as we do with Shakespeare, or Plato, or Aristotle, or Homer, whose souls are a part of us.

This you call religion, the religion of science (as relating to soul), teaching that the higher and more perfect the individuality, the more spiritual and perfect the soul. That this is what Christ called "the kingdom of heaven," and said to his disciples, "it is within you."

It is this philosophy, I understand, that Dr. Robert Lewins attacks. I have found its reconciliation with the ideas of a God (in any form or embodiment), a soul, a future existence in any way, very difficult; and as yet I am not able to form any connexion between the ideas of God, soul, and immortality, and this theory.

If we take this view, when we start out in search of the truth we are handicapped by the immortality of the souls that have preceded us. (We are, of course, burthened by the *conditions* made by our predecessors, but that is not the idea of a soul.) More or less they constitute a part of us, and only as our own peculiarities drive or permit us to think and act in directions other than they did, do we make progress toward a higher spirituality, or, drift towards a lower level. A thought once lodged in the mind grows, generating new thoughts. In this, Plato lives in us; and fertilised by new facts, Plato's thoughts in us, with new impressions and thoughts coming to us, in time develops into science.

To make myself understood, we are, first, a physical organism merely. The character of that organism is dependent on parentage and the environments of the parents after conception until birth, and that again is made up of the outgrowths in the shape of immortal souls that have once come from former organisms and created the conditions that made up the organisms—physical and mental—and the environments of our parents; these parents gave birth to our organisms,

the mental within and a part of the physical. Thereafter, environment makes impressions on the physiological organism, and in time comes knowledge and consciousness. With these come impulses and opinions. Last, impressions and impulses made and prompted by knowledge, induces us to regard the opinions as being sustained by evidence, and the opinions become belief. So weighted we begin the search.

The impressions that *can* be made to create knowledge, consciousness, and impulses, will depend wholly on the character of the physical organism; and the impressions that *will* be made depend on the environments. Out of it all, in the course of time, comes what we call mind. We have a sort of dual existence, a physical and mental, and arising out of both a spiritual. Inseparably intermingled are physical pain and mental suffering, physical enjoyment and mental delights, a sense of life, a longing for more, a fear of death; just in proportion as we are constituted, have knowledge, and can be impressed; a mere animal life or a higher spiritual life; a longing for mere creature comforts, or for something "to satisfy the soul"—as we express it, a higher life.

From the lowest to the highest animal organism each will try to preserve its life and escape death. It has no knowledge of any other life; but with man there is a constant longing for perpetual life, and with that longing has come a belief that he is immortal; and though his body dies here, he will continue to live somewhere as a conscious being. There has come, also, a belief in a Supreme and Infinite Being, to whom man is accountable. Out of it all has come the idea of an immortal soul, which is this conscious being of ours, that is to exist and is immortal.

With the current of years, the acquisition of knowledge, the impulses following impressions, the thoughts, feelings, aspirations, and mental outgrowths of it all in the different individuals, under their differing organisms and environments, has finally come existing conditions, including the physical, mental, intellectual, moral, social, political; and all within them that make up, attend on, and relate to, individual life.

With Dr. Lewins, Mr. Russell, General Trumbull, yourself, and others, we start out to find the truth about this idea of immortality of life and the existence of this soul; each and all longing to live, here or elsewhere, each impressed more or less with the thoughts that have preceded him in others, each possessing such knowledge as has come to him, each limited to a special field of observation and conception, and each moving in the search in such directions as his opinions prompt, and accepting such things as appear to him as truth as evidence, and on that evidence forming—for the time—a belief; and, willy-nilly, that belief prompting and directing further search; opinion

and belief changing as more knowledge and more seeming truths come to him.

Science makes what is believed to be a demonstration, and sets a torch in the darkness to guide the searchers. In the next decade science finds the torch is not in the right place and moves it to another place, directed by a new demonstration—as is thought. More or less truth is discovered as to physical forces with each demonstration, but the object of the search still remains the unknown and unknowable. Finally, "the religion of science" is formulated and promulgated to take the place of the religion of faith and uncertainty, and the effort is made to demonstrate it—for without demonstration it is not science. The outcome of the demonstration is that, the organisms in which life is developed and exists, without which it does not and cannot exist, are dissolved—annihilated—cease to exist, and all evidence of continuing life or consciousness disappears and is never heard of again. A living, intelligent, intellectual individuality—soulful if you like—has passed out and as an entity disappeared. It left impressions on those who continue to live, and as to some they make or preserve a record of what it was and what it did, and that record continues to impress living individualities, and will impress others to come and yet unborn; and the impulses created by those impressions so operate as to change those individuals physically and mentally from what they would—otherwise—have been; and thus, the impress the dead made in their time continues to live.

All this is equally true of the most insignificant and unknown, of whom no record is made, as well as of the most illustrious, of whom records are made and preserved, in proportion to their field of action; and the former constitute the great mass. But how does this demonstrate that they still live or have a conscious existence? That there is what we call God, and that we are a part of the All with this God, whatever may be His form, attributes, or essentials. How does it show that there is an entity—or that which may (and must) be thought of as an entity—called a soul, which still lives and can take cognizance of anything? Or, if it cannot take cognizance—individually—how can it be a soul?¹

Here we are, longing to live. Casting about looking for evidence of immortality for any part, in any form, anywhere, building up within ourselves hope and more or less faith, according to our mentality, nurture, teaching, and environments. Perhaps not over one thousand in one million understand the teachings of science. A large majority are governed in be-

¹Soul must be at least a conscious energy. Human thought can comprehend nothing without the idea of entity and form. If the recent suggestion that matter and energy are one—energy is matter in motion, and matter energy at rest—has any foundation in fact, it harmonises my assertion with truth. In your book on the soul you give memory form in the cortex of the brain.

lief by the evidence of the five senses only, and an undefined hope and fear the exercise of those senses brings; and every one living is in more or less dread of death, and more or less hope—or desire—of a life hereafter, in spite of any belief or in consonance with one. Can this idea of yours of the soul and its immortality satisfy this longing to live? Can it exert such influence on the animal life and impulses as will give moral direction to the impulses following knowledge—which alone brings moral sense—little or much? (All human life is animal life—all other life being an outgrowth inseparable from it.) Can humanity be made to comprehend it and rest content upon it?

Is it a religion at all? Is it not true that, a religion is based and dependent on a belief in the existence of God? A supreme Being who takes charge of man and makes final disposition of mankind? That, it is the idea each believer in a God has of Him, and his own opinions—prompted by his mentality and knowledge—of his relations to God; of his obligations and duties in life in view of the final disposition that may be made of him by God? And has man any other incentive or motive in having a religion, except a hope of betterment or fear of being made worse in condition in that disposition?

All men recognise good and evil—or benefit and injury. There is thought and action that will better our conditions or make them worse. Any belief that will prompt the former and suppress the latter is a good belief; and the greater the force it will exert in this direction the greater the good and the purer the belief. Is it not true that men are held in check as to evil, or use licence in the direction of evil, in proportion to their belief as to accountability hereafter, and their belief in an overruling power that will finally make recompense according to good or evil? I speak of the common mass of mankind. If so, is this fact not the first and most important thing to be considered when attempting to create a foundation on which all can safely stand to uphold a religion, whether you call it a religion of science, or by any other name?

Is it not true that one cannot control his belief? With your organism and knowledge you must believe as you do, until cut loose by some new knowledge—however obtained. With other knowledge or more knowledge your belief would vary. So of other mentalities. Suppose, with mine I cannot conceive of a God or find any evidence to found a belief in one on; can I conceive of a soul or its immortality? With more or less, or other knowledge I could not believe as I do now, and perforce would have some other belief.

Jesus Christ started out to reform the religious belief of his Jewish brethren. Setting aside whatever claims he made for himself, his doctrine was simple in

the extreme, and devoid of superstitions or the supernatural. So with the teachings of Paul. The whole doctrine of reformation was in a nutshell. What should be accounted to a man for righteousness was so simple a child could understand it. What should be counted to the Jews for righteousness was more complicated, and requires some knowledge of Jewish laws and customs of the time, to fully understand; but throughout, Christ kept his disciples separate from the rest of mankind, and many lessons to them were not addressed to or intended for the rest of the people. He came to the Jews only; and forbade his disciples, when he sent them out, to go in any way of the Gentiles or into any city of Samaria (an ostracised people), but only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

According to Matthew, the apostles were to make disciples of all nations. To Mark, to preach the Gospel to every creature (or the whole creation, per the New Version). To Luke, repentance and remission of sins should be preached to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. All things written in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and Psalms, concerning him, must be fulfilled. Sin was non-observance of the Jewish laws.

His mission was to Jews only, and the records must be read with this in view. But his was a scientific religion (not a religion of science), because it was a practical religion, based on existing facts and conditions. A mule could not practise it without being a better mule. It was all summed up in his declaration, "the kingdom of heaven is within you." So it is within every man; and there can be no other kingdom of heaven, and no moral practices higher than those he advocated.

It is wholly immaterial on what a religion or church claims to be founded; there can be no rule to guide a man that is above his comprehension, and there can be no man so simple as to not comprehend Christ's rule, unless he be *non compos*.

On this subject of God and immortality, what reasoning can there be other than the purely deductive, from *assumed* premises, to prove the existence of God, a soul, or immortality? What single *fact* can be taken as a premise, or what induction, is possible? And unless induction and deduction can both be used, what is it but speculation, and of what avail is it to try to enter a domain of the unknowable and incomprehensible to lay a foundation for a "religion of science"?

Interesting it is to talk about it, but is it not speculation only, and like wandering in a fog, searching for something that has not been lost? Your scientific conclusions will be analysed by each reader from his own point of view, as by Dr. Lewins and Mr. Russell, and the ideas of each as to God, soul, and immortality, and religion, will be just what his mentality and knowledge will make intelligible and *harmonious* to

him. What is not harmonious will be rejected. Unlike science, which compels acceptance because there is demonstration, demonstration is impossible, and acceptance depends wholly on harmony of thought.

Belief in a rational personal God, who governs by unchangeable laws, such as we see in the operations of natural force, in the conservation of forces, and the maintenance of equilibrium; and belief in immortal existence, in some conscious form, say what Paul calls "a spiritual body"; and belief that none can attain to that existence except such as live lives of purity here, would be a religion that would tend to check evil impulses and acts and encourage good ones in the majority of men; *per contra*, a belief in the annihilation of those living impure lives—among all who are not highly intellectual and of moral tendencies—which must attend unbelievers in a God, would tend to operate as licence, and they would indulge in vices, believing that "death ends all."

Such a belief is not inconsistent with the idea of a "First Great Cause, least understood," nor in any way degrading as a superstition. Superstition is a necessary attendant on human consciousness, resulting from sensory evidence of Nature's forces and more or less ignorance of their origin and causes, and no one is free from it, in some form. As we are divested of such as we have by the deductions of science, others come in their places. Witchcraft, astrology, spiritism, etc., never had more believers than exist now, and in the midst of the highest civilisation.

It is an incontrovertible fact that mankind at large will have a God if they have to make one of things material. He must be a personal God, must live somewhere, and must have dealings with men in some manner, with power to injure and to benefit. And the God of each will be just such a one as best harmonises with his own ideas, the ideas being the outgrowth of his mentality and environment. If they do not believe in one, they long to, stand in doubt, and more or less fear of one. Even such minds as yours seek a God of some kind, as is evidenced by your searches for soul, immortality, and cause. A few here and there will be exceptions and will be incapable of forming or conceiving of a God; but the great mass must have one. And it will be so, so long as human nature is emotional.

The effort to recognise the operations of natural force in connexion with the existence of any kind of a God, and demonstrating his existence by evidence cognisable by our finite minds, may be a worthy one but will be a lost one all the same. But the influence of a plausible theory in that direction will tend to a higher level among many, to better preservation of social order, and afford anchorage for many who would drift otherwise.

The question really is, whether a religion of science separate from a belief in a personal God is possible. (Winchell, Dawson, and others sought to reconcile science and biblical myths, and orthodoxy, with about as much success as theologians reconcile theology, religion, and Christianity, by a literal rendering of the Scriptures as the word of God through inspired writers.)

Can the minds of the greater number of the peoples be divested of belief in such a God? And if that can be done will not a belief in annihilation take its place and bring with it such licence as will tend to the destruction of social order in all who are not highly intellectual with moral impulses?

THE GOD OF ATHEISM AND THE IMMORTALITY THAT OBTAINS IN THE NEGATION OF THE EGO-ENTITY.

HAVING just returned home from a vacation trip, I find my hands full of work, and behind a heap of unread manuscripts the sight of a number of valiant knights of thought looms up, all in arms against me. There is Dr. Lewins who, in a private communication and in *The Agnostic Journal*, takes me to task for speaking of immortality and God; there is Professor Cook who in the *Ironclad Age* also protests against the usage of the word God; there is Mr. Thurtell who in *The Agnostic Journal* grumbles at me for not making peace with agnosticism and objects to the expression "We Christians"; and at last Mr. Reeve sends me for my perusal a long letter, very kind and appreciative but critical. Well, I am ready for the fray. Every criticism that is to the point is to my mind a debt which I have to pay, and, as I do not wish to leave my debts unpaid, I propose to settle the bill at once. I shall begin to-day with Mr. Reeve's criticism which will afford sufficient occasion for a reply to Dr. Lewins and Professor Cook.

* * *

Mr. Reeve, after giving a *résumé* of the psychology of the Religion of Science as editorially propounded in *The Open Court*, says:

"I am not able to form any connexion between the ideas of God, soul, and immortality, and this theory."

Mr. Reeve correctly understands the proposition that "the soul lives on among the factors creating the future," but fails to see that the ideas soul, God, and immortality have changed their meaning. The old God-conception and the old belief in an ego-soul and its future residence in a Utopian heaven are indeed irreconcilable with our position, which we claim to be a scientific formulation of facts as facts are. We agree with Mr. Reeve that the existence of a God-individual and a soul-entity can only be proved from "assumed premises" and there are no facts that bear

witness in their favor. But while we have always repudiated anthropotheism as obviously erroneous and untenable, we have at the same time endeavored to show that it contains the seed for a nobler and higher God-conception. And in the same way the dualistic assumption of a ghost soul,—according to which the ego-entity, this illusion of the activity of our consciousness, is supposed to be an independent being consisting of some metaphysical or otherwise mysterious substance,—is after all and in spite of its many absurdities a poetic allegory that contains a great truth. For what Mr. Reeve says is true:

"Perhaps not over one thousand in one million understand the teachings of science."

Allegories are indispensable at a certain stage of the spiritual evolution of man, and he who would reach the masses must speak in parables and proverbs.

Mr. Reeve asks:

"Can this idea of yours, of the soul and immortality, satisfy our longing to live? . . .

"Is it not true that men are held in check as to evil . . . in proportion to their belief as to accountability hereafter?"

"Is it a religion at all? Is it not true that a religion is based and dependent on a belief in the existence of God?"

We say, It is true that there cannot be a religion without God, if God means as we define the word the "authority of moral conduct." But our God—our authority of moral conduct—is as much higher than any God-individual, as the Truth is higher than any individual thinker, even he who diligently searches for the truth and having found some important parcels of it preaches the truth. But he whose God is a great Truth-fabricator, whose God is a demiurge, making universes as a watchmaker makes watches, a big world-monarch and universal autocrat, is under the illusion of a gross superstition. The denial of a demiurge, however, is not a denial of the authority of moral conduct.

The key to Mr. Reeve's miscomprehension is found in the footnote on page 4224, where he says:

"Soul must be at least a conscious energy. Human thought can comprehend nothing without the idea of entity and form."

Soul, like matter, is an abstract, denoting certain facts of reality, and there are, indeed, things which are neither energy, nor matter, nor form. Take the *meaning* of the word "logic." Is it matter? No! Is it energy? No! Is it form? No! The word when uttered presupposes material organs which cause a very specific kind of air-vibration. The utterance consumes a certain amount of energy, and the pronounced word consists in a peculiar kind of air vibrations. But an analysis of matter, energy, and form will show no trace of the meaning of the word. The meaning of a word is its soul.

What is this meaning of words? Is it a non-entity because it is not a concrete and material thing? Is it

a mere shadow and an illusion? Is it a ghost made of that airy nothing of which dreams are built? This apparent nothing, this seeming *fata morgana* and *ignis fatuus*, the significance of language, is the most important reality in the whole universe. It is the light of the world, the guide to truth, and the saviour from the evils of sin and ignorance.

While we deny that the meaning of words is either a substance, or an entity, or an energy, conscious or unconscious, we insist on its being the most momentous and most potent reality in the world.

Words and combinations of words are very simple things: they are certain sound-forms denoting objects or qualities of objects, or sentiments, or aspirations to accomplish this or that plan, or ideas, fancies, and hopes. But if you consider the life that is in them, if you weigh in your mind what they accomplish and what potent things they are, you will be inclined to attribute to them very mysterious qualities. Words have meanings because there is an objective world to which they refer, otherwise they would be as sounding brass or tinkling cymbal; and words possess an individuality and an immortality as much so as a human soul. As much so, for indeed a human soul is woven of the same airy nothingness—or, let me rather say, apparent nothingness,—of the same immateriality as the meaning of words. The human soul is as little mysterious and just as wonderful as words; in truth, language is a part of the human soul, and certainly it forms not the least important of its departments.

A sentence is spoken and disappears like an air-bubble that bursts, but the meaning of the sentence remains. The sound of the sentence is written upon the folds of the brain of a man and there it stays as a living memory, ready for revival whenever wanted and conveying a definite information concerning some particular part of the objective world of facts that surrounds us. The man who uttered the sentence dies and the man who heard it dies too; but if it be of any consequence, it has been repeated and perhaps written down; it will be embodied in books, and it lives in many thousand brains the immortal spirit-life of souls.

Words have souls, and books have souls, and books, indeed, contain the most valuable essence of human souls. Hear what Milton says in his brave defence of the liberty of the Press made in his "Areopagitica" concerning the life and immortality of books:

"As good almost kill a man as kill a good book: who kills a man, kills a reasonable creature, God's image; but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were, in the eye. Many a man lives a burthen to the earth; but a good book is the precious life blood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life. It is true no age can restore a life whereof, perhaps, there is no great loss; and revolutions of ages do not oft recover the loss of a rejected truth, for want of which whole nations fare worse. We

should be wary, therefore, what persecution we raise against the living labors of public men;—how we spill that seasoned life of man, preserved and stored up in books; since we see a kind of homicide may be thus committed, sometimes a martyrdom; and, if it extend to the whole impression, a kind of massacre, whereof the execution ends not in the slaying of an elemental life, but strikes at the ethereal and fifth essence, the breath of reason itself, —*slays an immortality rather than a life.*"

Dr. Lewins sends us No. 360 of *The Open Court* with his marginal notes. He comments on the passage "we cannot accept Dr. Lewins's conclusion of the annihilation of the soul in death":

"It is true all the same."

He adds in another place:

"Dr. Carus and his journal are only half-hearted monists."

As to funerals "Dr. Lewins would advise that silence should prevail at a grave, open or closed," (this serves as a note to page 4157, first column, last paragraph but one,) and he sums up his opinion of the whole article on immortality as follows:

"A fine study, yet illusory. The finest things can always be said on the wrong side."

Dr. Lewins protests against our view of immortality; because he argues like a materialist. To him that apparent nothingness, the soul of a word, is a non-entity, to us it is of paramount importance. Dr. Lewins would say that if a copy of a book were burned before our eyes that the book is utterly destroyed. We would say, one copy of the book is gone, but the book itself, the soul of the book, that which is the most important part of the book, is not gone. It can be resurrected in new editions of the book.

Suppose that a tyrant in Sicily had collected all the manuscripts of the Pythagorean theorem and had ordered them to be burnt, or that he had burned Pythagoras too, at the stake, would he thereby have destroyed the theorem itself? He would have hindered its propagation for a long time; but sword and fire can as little touch an idea as a chemist can by a chemical analysis of paper and ink distill the ideas out of a book in his crucible. Ideas that are true are immortal and man's aspiration must be to build his soul up of truth.

This view of the soul is unorthodox if orthodoxy depends upon the assent of the dogmatologists of the Church; but they are more orthodox than one is inclined to believe, if we regard the Bible as the standard of orthodoxy.

Man's essential being is not his bodily existence but his spirit. Says Jesus (John vi, 63):

"It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing."

And while saying this, he must have read in the faces of his disciples the question, "What is spirit and the life of spirit?" for Jesus continues:

"The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."

Can the theory of the non-existence of an ego-entity be expressed in plainer terms? "Spirit," Jesus says, "is not a metaphysical being, but the words that I speak."

And on another occasion, in reply to the temptation of Satan, Jesus is reported to have quoted the scriptural sentence from Deuteronomy viii, 3:

"Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."—*Matth. iv, 4.*

Words are the food of the soul, and of words souls build themselves up; indeed the rational part of the soul consists of and is embodied in words. This is forcibly expressed in the Christian doctrine that Jesus Christ, the Saviour, *is* the Word. When John speaks of Christ as being the Word, it is understood that he means the truth, viz., that word which represents the real condition of things, for of the true word alone it can be said, that it is eternal and divine, without beginning and end.

The essence of Christian ethics is to crucify our individual, and by many people so highly cherished, ego-entity, and let it die, but to renew our being by receiving Christ as the essential part of our soul. If we—viz., our original individuality—be dead, and Christ alone live in us, what is the Christian doctrine of the immortality of the soul, but an immortality of the Logos, of Christ, of the truth?

Mr. Reeve thinks that:

"We are handicapped by the immortality of the souls that have preceded us," and "are burthened by the conditions made by our predecessors."

It is a puzzle to him how we can be a soul and how our soul can be the dwelling place of so many other souls who continue to live in us. The briefest answer is given in the little story "Karma," which appeared of late in *The Open Court*. The Buddhist Nārada says:

"To him whose vision is dimmed by the veil of Mâyâ, the spiritual world appears to be cut up into innumerable selves. Thus he will be puzzled in many ways concerning the transmigration of soul-life, and will be incapable of understanding the import of an all-comprehensive kindness toward all living beings."

Dr. Lewins finds a champion of his views in Prof. J. H. Cook, who says in an article addressed to the editor of *The Open Court* and published in *The Iron-clad Age*:

"Neither science, progress, nor humanity need 'the super-personal God of science.'"

"To me a God of science or anything else, and the immortality of each personal form, or ego, are unthinkable and impossible, or else I am too stupid and ignorant to comprehend or understand nature's plan of evolution."

That feature of the world which makes it possible that souls can originate, that sense impressions can become representative of things, that sound-symbols can acquire significance and thus be changed into

words, that language can describe and classify the facts of experience, that rational beings originate with ideals of progress and morality with high aspiration and noble sentiments, we call God.

Is this God a person? No! God is more than a person; God is the creator of persons. God is that which makes personality possible. Is God a substance? No! But God is more than substance. God is that which moves in all substance according to what naturalists call natural law. Is God natural law? No! God is not the natural law as formulated by naturalists, but the formulas of the naturalists, commonly called natural laws, describe parcels and special aspects of God's being.

God, like the meaning of words which are the revelation of God, is of too subtle a nature to be localised here or there, or to be found by an analysis of matter, or energy, or the forms of things. Yet is God the all-important reality of the world, for he is in matter, he moves in energy, he reveals his presence in the changes of form, and he is the significance of the world.

It is natural that people who still cling to anthropotheism (which is the belief that God is an individual being and an ego-entity as man appears to himself) should look upon this purified God-conception as atheism. And it is atheism if atheism means the denial of an individual God-being. But let me add that anthropotheism is after all a childish view of God, which degrades God and presses God down to the rank of a creature, albeit very great and all-powerful. If there were a man-like God-being, a great ego-deity, and individual cosmic consciousness, would not the God of atheism, who is the unalterable order in all existent realities and the eternal law in nature's transient phenomena, be superior to the God of anthropotheists?

The God-problem can be put into a nut-shell, as follows:

If you can prove to me that $2 \times 2 = 4$ is true because the individual God of a cosmic ego-consciousness made it so, I shall bow my knee to the Baal of anthropotheism. I call him Baal, for it is a heathen notion, and all who worship him are pagans.

Should you however come to the conclusion that $2 \times 2 = 4$ is intrinsically true and must be true, that no God and no vicar of God could alter it, I see no escape from denying at least the divinity of any individual God whose existence we may assume.

From our standpoint the statement $2 \times 2 = 4$ is a parcel description of the being of God himself; and so every truth, be it relevant or comparatively irrelevant, is a revelation of God: every scientific truth is a general formula describing some feature of reality which abides; and the totality of all truths—which, as we trust, forms a harmonious whole without contradictions or

discrepancies, in one word, Truth—is the Christian logos or the revelation of God in man.

We trust that any one who will take the trouble to base his religion upon the facts of experience will find that the God of atheism, or as we better had say, the God of science, is a reality and he after all is alone God and there is no God beside Him.

We say further, in reply to Mr. Reeve, the belief in a hereafter is a very powerful spring of action and we wish men, therefore, to understand the true nature of their hereafter, which is not in a Utopian heaven and hell, but takes place here in this world of ours; it is not a vague dream of doubtful certainty, but a reality and a scientific truth.

And finally we say that our conception of immortality will satisfy the longings of every one who seeks his soul not in his bodily existence but in the ideas and aspirations of which it consists, of every one who identifies his self with truth and makes the cause of truth his own.

Science is not so unstable as Mr. Reeve attempts to make us believe. He says:

"Science makes what is believed to be a demonstration, and sets a torch in the darkness to guide the searchers. In the next decade science finds the torch is not in the right place and moves it to another place, directed by a new demonstration—as is thought."

Any one familiar with the history of science knows that the evolution of science marks a steady advance. Apparent reversions of statements, formerly held to be scientifically true if they were truly scientific statements and not mere theories, or hypotheses, are only corrections, improvements, and further advances. Science is not a vain and senseless groping about after the unknowable,¹ but an investigation of the data of experience and a constant adding to and clarifying of the knowledge already gained, having always in prospect the inexhaustible material of an illimited world, so that the more we know the more problems rise before us and we become conscious of how much—infinity much—will always remain unknown. But the greatest amount of the unknown does not render the actual knowledge we possess worthless. We might on the same reason argue that the few acres which a farmer owns have no value because there is so much more land which he does not possess and never will be able to buy. The actual knowledge we have, if it be real knowledge and not mere imaginings, little though it be, is of great importance to us; and the more knowledge we acquire, the better shall we be able not only to make steady advances in practical life, but also to free our minds from the bondage of superstition, and make our souls a habitation of the truth. P. C.

¹ We have no room here to enter into a discussion of the idea of a "First great cause, least understood," but refer the reader to the *Primer of Philosophy*, pp. 146-147.

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE NAMES OF THE DISCIPLES OF TRUTH.

To the Editor of *The Open Court*:

In your reply to Mr. Alfred W. Martin's plea for pure unsectarianism, you state that "the truth is one, but the names which the disciples of truth may choose to be known by are many." Will you please state what you mean by a disciple of truth? Do you mean to infer that all the diversified schools of religion are presided over by teachers of truth? If "the truth is one," how can its disciples logically and consistently call themselves by any other name?

Can a learner in the school of mathematics logically call himself after the name of his teacher? Is not a learner justified only in naming himself after his master, or teacher when a problem is unsolved and different opinions are taught in regard to it by different teachers?

You think that "people have a right to call themselves Christians." How can people logically and consistently call themselves Christians when they do not know what Christianity is?

You state "that the great mass of Buddhists are much more superstitious than the worst Roman Catholic saint worshippers. But shall we on that account forbid those few Buddhists whose views are purified and elevated to call themselves Buddhists?" If they are following the teachings of Buddha, no; but if they are professing to follow him and do not know what his doctrine is, yes. We of the assembly of science cannot truthfully allow such duplicity. The man who follows the teachings of science must "call a spade a spade." You seem to infer that people of all denominations can enter the assembly, or church of science?

Such an organisation is utterly impossible. When a man enters the temple of truth he must leave superstition at the door or else he will not be at home when he gets inside. In such a temple the truth is one and the names that the disciple of truth will choose to be known by will be one. As Unitarianism stands in its relation to Universalism, and the latter to orthodoxy, in the order of evolution, so must the church of science stand separately from them all. It is the order of nature for "birds of a feather to flock together."

JOHN MADDOCK.

[Names are not as definite as Mr. Maddock seems to think. I see a child's toy in the garden which may be used either for digging or shovelling: one calls it "a spade" and another "a shovel." People as a rule stick to the names that they are accustomed to using, somewhat about as they are in the habit of preferring their mother tongues, and I do not intend to interfere with them. I have no inclination to quarrel about names. If the abolition of the name of his religion helps a man to reform his religion, let him drop the name and adopt another name. I have no objection. But unless his mind be changed too, it will be of no avail. However, if a man's religious conception be reformed, I maintain, that he may still retain the old name, and supposing he adopts a new name, it is a matter of little consequence.—ED.]

NOTES.

Hermann Ludwig Ferdinand von Helmholtz, the eminent German scientist, died at Berlin on September 8. He was born on August 21, 1821. At seventeen he entered the Berlin Royal Military Institute where in 1842 he took the degree of M.D., and thereupon was immediately made assistant physician at the Charité Hospital in Berlin (not, as the *Nation* has it, "attached to the service of charity"). In 1847, he published his famous memoir on the *Conservation of Force*—a doctrine, which, though anticipated and previously asserted by other inquirers, is still largely associated with Helmholtz's name, especially in the domain of electri-

city. (This essay may now be had, with the author's latest notes, in Ostwald's *Reprints of the Classics of the Exact Sciences*, H. Engelmann, Leipzig, 1889; price, 20 cents.) Successively professor at Königsberg, Bonn, Heidelberg, and Berlin (here for the first time Professor of Physics) Helmholtz's subsequent activity was almost wholly taken up with the relations of the physical with the physiological world. He enriched almost every branch of this subject, and has put his chief results in two great works, the *Sensations of Sound* and the *Handbook of Physiological Optics*. He also busied himself with the foundations of geometry, and published, it seems, independently, papers which re-discovered the results of Riemann and the rest. He worked at the theory of vortex motion, and the results of his researches have been employed in the establishment of the kinetic theory of matter. In electricity, too, he did much. From him started the impulse to Hertz's researches, of which work he himself gives us a brief account in the preface which he wrote for Hertz's *Mechanics*, just published. His productiveness seemed incredible. Of nearly all his researches, however, he has given us brief popular *résumés*, now accessible in English dress (two volumes) under the title, *Popular Lectures on Scientific Subjects*, in which the general reader will find Professor Helmholtz's views clearly portrayed.

We are pleased to see that the United States Department of Agriculture has published a brief pamphlet by Mr. Edward Atkinson on *Suggestions Regarding the Cooking of Food*, with introductory remarks regarding the nutritive value of food materials by Mrs. Ellen H. Richard. The pamphlet deserves the attention of every householder. Mr. Atkinson's ideas were discussed four years ago in *The Open Court* (No 161) by General Trumhull in a review of Mr. Atkinson's *Aladdin Oven*.

In the *Memoir of John Le Conte*, by his brother Prof. Joseph Le Conte, we have a delightful appreciation of one of the first and most deeply regretted of American scientists. John Le Conte comes of a distinguished family and is a fine example of the heredity of high talents and noble character. This *Memoir* should be widely read. (National Academy, April, 1894.)

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