
From the Bow of the Ship

Book One

If you wish a successful life's voyage to the end, maintain that attitude which prompted your ambition to travel.



From the Bow of the Ship

**A Study of a Point of View
and an Argument relative to
the old, but ever vital Ques-
tion of Immortality and God**

Selections from Volume I of the
series of conversations be-
tween a certain Philoso-
pher and an Atheis-
tic Scientist

By

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Crumbs from a Table Spread,
Etc.



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“Man is only one second in a million years. How can he talk about even the twelve thousand since the stone age? What does he know, with an experience of three score and ten?

Blindfold a man; take him around the world; open his eyes for one second while crossing the desert: then ask him to tell you about the world. He will fight with his life to uphold an argument based on his opinion and experience of that one second.

Is this not absurd?”

(The Philosopher, Part II)

· "I uplift Humanity," exclaims the Scientist, "I build walls for them to walk between. I make rules for them to live by. I discover facts and form conclusions. I am known by all the literary people, in fact by all the world. I will die with a medal upon my breast."

"Yes, you are the flower," the Philosopher replies softly, "the flower, which falls. I work in the darkness, in the silence, unknown: a worm working among the roots. And when I die, I will live in the hearts of my people. It is my people who read your reports. Your followers have roots beneath the soil in which I work. I represent these roots which grow and live, even in the winter."

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I

SCIENTIST—Why do you believe in God, and what proof have you to offer? What proof have you, tangible to reason?

PHILOSOPHER—My dear friend, what tangible proof can you offer me that reason and logic are facts?

SCIENTIST—None other than the result of comparison, of cause and effect.

PHILOSOPHER—Then, dear friend, answer me why the tender little shoots of a flower, and the blossoms themselves, constantly turn toward the sun—and why the faded little flower that has been kept in darkness, colorless and weak, will, as soon as placed in the sunlight, blush with all the colors of its parents.

SCIENTIST—That is very easily answered. The actinic rays have power to alter the chemical reflection through the prismatic law, as well as with its growth.

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PHILOSOPHER—But does this answer how the power is transferred, and how it is possible for the plant to absorb? Why cannot an inert object have the same power? What understanding is there between the plant and the sun, and what affinity do they bear?

SCIENTIST—No more than the Law of Nature, and of Life.

PHILOSOPHER—But, my friend, what is Life? And what is the Law of Nature which will cause this plant to thrive, to adapt itself to circumstances in order to exist? What is the power that is so insistent as to cause it to exist, and to know when it is time to blossom? What power is there in Nature which designates the period of its maturity? If it is the natural law, what governs this natural law if not the hand of some force that clothes each living organism in its own particular woven cloth with a law of understanding that it represents just what its Creator designated.

Can you, with your science, create one living cell that will reproduce itself? When you behold the wonders of this self-creative

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force, be it fermentation or the propagation of species, the predominating life in each cell throws its own particular shadow which is the body you behold. If you are pure in spirit, morally virtuous, your body will give evidence of this fact. And if my soul has beheld the sun of Eternity, it too will blush with all the colors of the God of Creation. It also will be strengthened, and faced with its blossom of immortality—hence will create its shadow, man's spiritual sentiments and moral principles.

This is one reason why I believe in God.

My second reason is, there is nothing else to believe in all existence that is more gratifying to the human senses, than to believe in a perfection, regardless of what point of concentration it may be. There is no belief which carries more power with it for good, for the uplifting and building of science, character, the human race, and love. There is no subject which will better tear the film from the eyes of man, to behold the truth more sincerely, than the belief that we have some goal, the reward of faithfulness to true principles which

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have been tested for two thousand years and are still scattering fragrance, beauty and power.

That is my second reason, because to believe that there is no evolution to perfection, is but to subsist upon your own flesh and blood. And when the little life within your make-up has been digested, you go back to the earth from whence you came, with no monument of efforts made to perpetuate your honor of existence:—and like the tiny plant in the darkness, you are not carrying out the mission for which you were created, and are not recording the beautiful colors and fragrance from the all-life-giving power, the Sun.....

Show me a man who is happy in the belief of a non-existing Creator, and I will show you a man whose mind has been running full speed without a governor of natural reason.

Analyze the make-up of all the greatest men in existence. Though you may say they are past and gone, nevertheless the echo of their deeds fills every man with admiration. You will find that their belief

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was in a God, which illuminated their efforts with the seven prismatic colors of virtue, honor, integrity, unselfishness, love, adoration and benevolence: filling them with courage to dare to uphold their spiritual sentiments, even in the face of Death. They need no proof, except to feel that their souls have received the warmth of a love from their Creator. Therefore, friend, what have you to offer?

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II

SCIENTIST—If there be a God, or a Divine Law of Justice, why does it permit innocent little children to suffer injury and destruction, through the elements, (and lower animals), all of which supposedly are governed by a God, or Divinity?

PHILOSOPHER—I will reply with a question. My friend, in whose care was the little child placed? Was it the lack of love and responsibility, or neglect, which deprived it of its life?—of which, by the way, it was as yet entirely ignorant: so that presumably, had it acquired one day of understanding, there would have been

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one day of knowledge lost. Would there have been any loss at all?—When this acquired knowledge was but the reflection of truth which still exists. And if this child had been neglected, could not the situation be compared to that of those living in some arid country, and who have not provided a receptacle to catch and store the precious rainfall which soon returns from whence it came: causing untold agony, but teaching survival as a lesson of self-preservation. . . . Therefore the loss (?) of the child (who must not have been given love or valuation) has left its impression upon many, under a law of compensation.

SCIENTIST—Then let me approach you from another angle. You believe in immortality, do you not?

PHILOSOPHER—I do believe, because to me it is knowledge.

SCIENTIST—Why, then, do not our loved ones return, as evidence, after passing over the border—thus proving immortality beyond a doubt?

PHILOSOPHER—Before I reply let me ask you if you have visited the school of

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education from which you graduated after receiving the schooling of your boyhood world? Have you returned to your classes to show what success you have attained since passing out of that world of study?

SCIENTIST—No, I have not. Why should I—when I have acquired all the knowledge there was for me to obtain?

PHILOSOPHER—True, but may not your departed loved ones make the same reply after having been freed from this mortal prison? A river has its mission and personality, and carries within its bosom its burden, to level and cleanse. But what becomes of this personality when it deposits its burden into the bed of the ocean, and mingles with its waters?

SCIENTIST—It is difficult to reply to this in terms of science, because science does not recognize what it does not know. But I will ask further, Why is evidence of a God withheld, when it means so much to mankind?

PHILOSOPHER—We seem to be meeting questions with questions, my friend, which proves either your secret agreement

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with me, or that your science is indeed the shadow whereof my spiritual philosophy is the substance. But why do you withhold that susceptibility which links facts with faith? And why do you expose the film of your mind and understanding only at night, instead of in the broad light of reason and logic?

SCIENTIST—Indeed, I claim to do what you just now ask me why I do not do. Perhaps that which is day to me is night to you. But if all that you say is true, then why are we not enlightened at once, or spontaneously, instead of with all this waste of time?

PHILOSOPHER—Really, my friend, I must pause a moment to say that while you are consistent with your principles in asking Why, you in part deny yourself when speaking thus of a waste of time. In former conversations you have admitted that evolution, or the natural course of things, whatever that may be, is beyond our private control and wills. What is this, then, that is beyond our private wills? It must be something. Is it a law, as you

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have sometimes suggested yourself? If you still hold to your belief in natural cause and effect, you would not call it "luck", or "chance", or a "Miracle". I realize that you will not recognize it if you can not experience it, or experiment with it. But have you tried? Man is only one second in a million years. How can he talk about even the twelve thousand since the stone age? What does he know with an experience of three score and ten? Blindfold a man; take him around the world; open his eyes for one second while crossing the desert: then ask him to tell you about the world. He will fight with his life to uphold an argument based on his opinion and experience of that one second. Is this not absurd?

And you speak of a waste of time. All things have a cause, you say. Why not then a purpose?

Is it a waste of time that we sleep, or that we build a house upon shifting sands, so that others may behold the result of our mistakes, carelessness, and indiscretion? Is not a painful, arduous labor of love a pleasure and blessing? Is not that

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which is difficult to obtain, valued and appreciated the more, because of an additional effort to possess it—with value added because of its rarity? In fine, is there such a thing as time? And have you ever stopped to consider what an embryotic and insignificant mental organization we are, to assume to question the magnitude of this great law, when its cycles have been revolving twelve thousand years only, since our stone age brethren? Compare this length of evolution with your acquired knowledge of four score and ten. It is true, we admit our superior mentality, and that we have evolved to a more perfect complexity. Hence, in spite of your opinion, and because of your effort to seek knowledge, you have become more emblematic of that God you seek to deny. What really does your few years of knowledge amount to, compared with the great scheme of life to which you are not even one grain of sand, who presumes to question the Creator of your being. You might better question that you exist at all, and try to prove it either way.

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SCIENTIST—Nevertheless, I must speak as I feel. Your argument is such that I have no reply. In my heart I am not convinced. It is a pretty dream that I would like to believe. But to me, God, Love and spirit, are merely words.

PHILOSOPHER—So be it, my friend. You are then as empty of truth as those words are to you. Words have but the value that our mental conception places upon them. We can create no more than our mental timber can produce. Water your most precious rose-bush with the most ill-smelling water, and it will still reward you with the most exquisite perfume. It can only absorb that which it recognizes, a reflection, or the affinity of itself. Likewise with evidence of the existence of a God to a Christian, who may be watered by filth, hypocrisy, sensuality, refuse, and even death, but will see them not: still will reward you by kindness, unselfishness, charity and love, because they are God's roses, without thorns.

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III

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PHILOSOPHER—Does not the belief in a God have more tendency than any other belief to encourage a society of human beings to create a fraternal bond of friendship, which naturally leads to harmonious competition, and active development toward the arts and sciences? The more minds, the more new faculties are discovered to evolve: proving again by that longing for companionship, that there are many members that are all striving to form into one body—as many drops of water, but one ocean.

If it is impossible to annihilate matter, how can one annihilate that which controls matter by mingling with and through it, as a medium of control such as the human mind. Surely the essence of power is greater, as with the shepherd and his flock.

Why do we hope for immortality, and all try to deny the existence of God, if there is not some cause for this natural opinion? What is it within our make-up that longs to live, and dreads to die?

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SCIENTIST—If there be a subconscious mind that knows all, why does it not teach us of immortality?

PHILOSOPHER—Perhaps it does, and we are not aware of its code. We have no record in our memory by means of which to make a comparison with the new order of things. How can it acquaint us with this new condition, if we do not know its first principle? How would we be able to converse with the inhabitants of other planets, unless each teach the other one principle, one law, one alphabet. Were I to request you to play a sheet of music, and the instrument upon which you intended to interpret the same had but three keys, could you interpret my melody? Upon your feigning to do so would I be justified in saying that you were not able to play it—or could you, because of your incomplete instrument, say “It is not a true melody”? The missing string represents the key of comparison.

If harmony be the natural growth of perfection, is it not logical to believe that at

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every testing, in every known system, spiritual or otherwise, we find the most gratifying mental peace, security, faith and love, in the belief in God, Christ and Immortality.

Has any atheist ever offered any idea or order of things that brings to humanity that peace of mind, that heart-felt want of the continuation of loved ones? Or does he actually believe that a half-circle is complete? Still I doubt if there be any man in existence without a conscience. If so, however, then there is a possibility of an honest, sincere atheist.

Has not an intellectual architect, or sane builder, a greater purpose in the building of a superb mansion than just to let it decay after it is complete? Does he not expect some reaction for his labors and efforts?

It has given him pleasure to build it, but greater pleasure to live within the fruits of his labor: as it is with the building of the human race—and when complete, to live within that mansion not built with human hands.

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SCIENTIST—Well, let us suppose for the moment that there is a soul of immortality existing within a body which dies. If the soul has been divested of its temple, how can it exist, or be shaped into its individual personality?

PHILOSOPHER—Let me ask you, have you ever considered the protozoans—that when their condition of existence becomes unfavorable, and the waters evaporate, the amoeba dries up and shrinks, a condition resembling death? Should it receive no moisture in this condition, it could not regain its life of activity. But let it be placed in water many days later, and it will once more take up its active duties, as heretofore. Where then was its “mentality”? Under what conditions its life? What awakens its “memory” into activity? Is it “brain-cells”? — the storage batteries of thought, which cease their activity for want of fluid? Is it like the individual flavor of apricots, prunes, and dried fruits in general, that may be revived by the addition of water? If so, are its active elements, which constitute the active elements of

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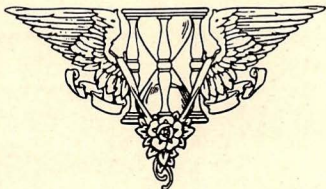
thought, material elements created by blood and food? And if true, what attraction of power creates this involuntary process between one affinity and another? If the cell therefore be inactive, could not the life still be active elsewhere, and return at the call of its active affinity?—as would be the case with an electric magnet, or armature. When a switch has been turned off, the magnet fails to attract the armature, the current being active elsewhere. And as the current is once more turned on, it will produce the power of attraction.

But, in turn, let us suppose there be no immortality. As the human efforts are toward perfection and survival, then we are still subject to that law. And there is no food with more nutrition, no water that more quickly quenches the thirst, than belief in the blossom of the hereafter, the crowning efforts of mortal man's achievement. Therefore, whether you believe in the things after we ourselves have passed away, or not, and yet have lived in that unselfish expectation of the future generations, then you still believe in the immortality of achievements.

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So, dear friend, if you are unable to give anything that bears strength in the support of the argument as an atheist, and if you are not able to construct that which will give credit to human efforts, why is it necessary to vainly attempt to destroy or remove that light which enlightens the believer in God? Their joy in their belief, your agnosticism and aggressiveness in yours, sufficiently proves who has reached the heights of truth, contentment and perfection.

In trying to prove immortality with the help of material science, we fail entirely. But in proving and demonstrating science from a spiritual stand-point, we find success. And this in itself proves which of the two includes the other, and is therefore the Bow of the Ship that explores the Truth.



If you are in doubt of immortality, try to cultivate self-control and adaptibility, so that no matter what death may offer you, you will profit even though you find nothing: for then you have at least given mankind a good example how to be happy on earth—providing you seek happiness.



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By JOSEPH A. SADONY

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