

A CATECHISM OF LIBERAL FAITH

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649035038

A Catechism of Liberal Faith by Charles Fletcher Dole

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CHARLES FLETCHER DOLE

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BY
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CHARLES F. DOLE

BOSTON
UNITARIAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL SOCIETY, 25 BEACON ST.
1895

189.
From the U. S. Society (1854)

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1895

PREFACE.

THE purpose of this Catechism is to further a thoughtful understanding of the good life. It is the author's conviction that a very profound philosophy — indeed, the only tenable philosophy — underlies religion, and brings it into unity with ethics. The main lines of this spiritual philosophy are simple and beautiful, and are capable of being interestingly illustrated. The very attempt to trace the foundations of religious belief is a great intellectual and moral stimulus.

The wish here is to show that man belongs to an unseen universe; that this universe is divine and beneficent; that a certain distinct and noble type of thought, feeling, and conduct, is in accord with such a universe, and that the highest and largest life grows out of the realization of these facts. In all this, while there is much that may seem new, there is nothing sectarian. On the contrary, the views here presented are coming to control all liberal minds of whatever name. They are intended to furnish a key to the understanding of what all genuine men of different forms of faith have believed in common. There has therefore been very little need of dealing in negations or destructive criticism.

It is hoped that the form of brief questions and answers may be specially useful for the older classes of young people in our churches. The little book may also have a use for Post-

office Mission work, and for persons generally who may be inquiring the way of a reasonable religion. In reading or studying, too great stress should not be put upon the precise form of words. We deal with subjects that are larger than any single form of definition. It will be sufficient if the point of the meaning is reached, and especially if each mind is stirred to think for itself. Let the reader or student try to express the thought in more exact language if he can, or let him make correction or dissent, if the need arises. Our faith is in the freest discussion, if only the truth is sought.

The reader will observe some intentional repetition in the course of the treatment. It is hoped that this will prove to be no more than the importance of the thought requires. The author will be glad of suggestions that may serve to make the Catechism more useful.

CHARLES F. DOLE.

JAMAICA PLAIN, MASSACHUSETTS,
August, 1895.

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A CATECHISM OF LIBERAL FAITH.

I.

WHAT MAN IS.

What do we think of when we see any person for the first time?

Ans. We think first of the dress, the form, the face the body, the outside.

What do we sometimes say, though the body may be good and strong, if a man proves not to have any mind?

Ans. We say that "the man is not all there."

Would you say that the man was "all there," though he had a bright mind, if he had no heart, or kindly feelings? Take the case of the Emperor Nero.

What do you say if one has no conscience, or moral sense? Cite the Pomeroy boy or Tito in "Romola."

What important things go to make a man, and especially an "all-round" man?

Ans. A good heart, intelligence, or good sense, a good conscience, a good-will, and reverence.

Is the man all there,—that is, truly a man,—if any one of these things of which we have spoken is wanting?