

# **A CATECHISM OF LIBERAL FAITH**

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A Catechism of Liberal Faith by Charles F. Dole

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**CHARLES F. DOLE**

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LIBERAL FAITH**



## PREFACE.

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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.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. WHAT MAN IS . . . . .	7
II. ABOUT RELIGION . . . . .	10
III. ABOUT GOD . . . . .	13
IV. ABOUT GOD AS THE GREAT CAUSE . . . . .	16
V. GOD IN HUMAN LIFE . . . . .	19
VI. ABOUT TRUTH . . . . .	22
VII. WHAT AUTHORITY IS, OR HOW WE KNOW . . . . .	26
VIII. THE BIBLE AND HOLY BOOKS . . . . .	32
IX. INSPIRATION . . . . .	35
X. ABOUT HOLY MEN . . . . .	36
XI. ABOUT JESUS . . . . .	38
XII. JESUS' TEACHINGS . . . . .	42
XIII. GOD'S CHILDREN, OR THE INCARNATION . . . . .	45
XIV. CONDUCT, OR THE VIRTUES . . . . .	47
XV. CONSCIENCE . . . . .	49
XVI. THE WILL . . . . .	51
XVII. HABITS . . . . .	56
XVIII. FAITH, OR LOVE TOWARD GOD . . . . .	58
XIX. THE UNIVERSE LIFE . . . . .	61
XX. IMMORTALITY, OR THE ETERNAL LIFE . . . . .	63
XXI. WORSHIP . . . . .	67

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXII. FORMS AND OBSERVANCES . . . . .	70
XXIII. PRAYER, OR COMMUNION WITH GOD . . . . .	73
XXIV. ORDER AND MIRACLE . . . . .	76
XXV. PROVIDENCE . . . . .	78
XXVI. THE PROBLEM OF EVIL . . . . .	80
XXVII. SIN, OR MORAL EVIL . . . . .	84
XXVIII. PENALTIES . . . . .	88
XXIX. THE CURE OF EVIL . . . . .	90
XXX. FORGIVENESS . . . . .	93
XXXI. THE AWAKENING OF THE SOUL . . . . .	97
XXXII. OUR IDEALS . . . . .	101
XXXIII. THE COMMUNION OF THE SAINTS, OR TRUE HUMAN SOCIETY . . . . .	104
XXXIV. THE GOSPEL: A SUMMARY . . . . .	109



## A CATECHISM OF LIBERAL FAITH.

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### 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?

Suppose, for instance, that a man had lost an arm, but had these things, and another man had all his limbs, but had no reverence or no will power, which would be the "all-round" man?

Give instances of men or women who have been thus "all-round" persons.

Can you *see* those things — mind, conscience, etc.— which go to make the real man or woman, or are they all invisible?

What may we call the real man of whom the body is the outward form?

*Ans.* We may call the real, or inner man, who thinks and wills and does right and loves, the soul, or the person.

Can you think of any quite satisfactory name or definition of what we mean by the soul, or person?

*Ans.* No, the simplest facts are often the hardest to describe. Thus it is very hard to describe the common word "matter."

Is the soul, or person, visible?

Is the person less if his body is little, or even if his limbs were cut off?

Where is the person?

*Ans.* He seems to be wherever he acts; that is, where he shows his good heart or his good will. Thus his presence is not only inside his body, but it may fill a room, so that every one else in the room feels it.

What strange fact is there about persons?

*Ans.* The real person, or soul, is not only invisible, but he is one and indivisible. Thus the body is composed of parts,

and it may be cut to pieces; but the person, the more completely he is a person, is a unity at every moment.

What word do we use to express this fact?

*Ans.* We use the word "I." Thus we say "my body," as though it were a tool to use; but, whenever we say "I," we mean the indivisible person, the self.

What difference in their consciousness is there between young children and grown persons?

*Ans.* The young child is not yet conscious of himself as a person.

Do you suppose that any animal has real personality?

What wonderful experience comes to children as they grow mature?

*Ans.* It is a great and new experience when a person becomes conscious of himself as a unity, and, therefore, as master of his body and his senses.

What religious name has been given to the complete and all-round human person?

*Ans.* Such a person has been called a "son of God."

A man is a soul, or person, by virtue of the invisible things,—his mind, his good-will, his good heart. Show how a good, vigorous, healthy, well-controlled body is a fitting house for the real person of a man or woman.

What is the most important question that we can ask about another person?

*Ans.* The great and real question is not about the outside, or how he looks, but what sort of a person is he?