

**PHILOSOPHICAL
CATECHISM OF THE
NATURAL LAWS OF MAN**

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G. SPURZHEIM

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OF THE
NATURAL LAWS OF MAN.

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PREFACE.

Man have long been treated as children; they have been taught that ignorance and credulity are virtues, and that fear is wisdom; and that they may glorify God by flattery rather than by moral excellency. Arbitrary regulations of all sorts have been imposed upon them, and blind and unconditional obedience to these required. Words too often satisfy them; and the less they understand, the more do they generally deem it incumbent on them to admire; sensual gratifications have proved sufficient inducements for them willingly to follow the good pleasure of their masters. Even religion, in one or another form, has been an engine to crush the human mind. This was, at all times, more or less the deplorable condition of mankind. Those who even in our days make exception, are comparatively few in number.

The following pages are written with a view to ascertain whether or not the human kind be susceptible of better treatment; and whether or not the arbitrary legislation of man, that has hitherto been, and must always be, but temporary, and of limited application, might not advantageously give place to a code of IMMUTABLE LAWS, which, established by the Creator, and not adapted to a single family, to a particular nation, to an age, but to all mankind, and to all times, are calculated to endure as long as the species remains.

It is of the highest importance to demonstrate the existence of such laws, although it may happen that governments and nations themselves will oppose their

adoption. But this opposition will not annihilate the reality of the NATURAL CODE, and communities will certainly feel disposed to receive, will even demand it, in proportion as they become enlightened; they will also be worthy of it in proportion as they become virtuous.

I shall consider my subject under the form of question and answer, the better to fix the attention of my reader. My sole intention is to contribute to the amelioration of man; that is to say, to combat his ignorance and his immorality, and to point out the means of making him better and happier, by insisting particularly on the necessity of his fulfilling the laws of his Creator.

Some may be of opinion that I might here have avoided the introduction of any question upon religion and morality. I, however, think it incumbent on a philosopher to examine all that enters into the nature of man, and to *'hold fast that which is good.'* Now man being positively endowed with moral and religious feelings, as well as with vegetative functions and intellectual faculties, it was my business to speak of the former as well as of the latter. Nay, true religion is central truth; and all knowledge, in my opinion, should be gathered round it.

I lament the continual war which philosophers, moralists, and divines, have hitherto waged. They have only mutually disparaged their inquiries, and retarded the knowledge and happiness of man. Would they consent to lay aside vanity, pride, and self-interest, they would perceive, and might display, the harmony that exists between the will of God and his gift of intelligence.

PHILOSOPHICAL CATECHISM.

GENERALITIES.

What is the meaning of the word Philosopher?

It signifies Lover of Wisdom.

And what is understood by Wisdom?

Wisdom consists in the knowledge and in the application of Truth.

Who then is truly a philosopher?

He who not only loves, but who applies truth universally. The second part is as essential to the character of a philosopher, as is the practice of morality to that of a christian.

What is the aim of philosophy?

To know objects and phenomena, and to show the possibility of making practical application of the knowledge acquired.

Then there must be many kinds of philosophers?

As many as there are species of knowledge, or subjects that can occupy the attention.— One may be a philosopher, and study entire nature, or a particular district of her domain; as animals, plants, minerals, man generally, or his physical, moral and intellectual parts in particular.

What is understood by a Law?

The word law, among the Romans *lex*, has the same root as the verb signifying, to read; because enactments for the conduct of the community were promulgated of old by being read in public. For a long period, however, the word law has been used to designate a commandment to do, or to abstain from, some specific act, in general combined with a clause expressive of some penalty attached to its infringement, and more rarely of some reward to its observance. The word law is also employed to designate the inherent qualities of the objects, and the determinate manner in which the human faculties, and the qualities of organized and inanimate bodies, act. That is to say:

beings can only act after their peculiar natures, or according to the qualities and powers with which they are endowed. It is a law, that a stone thrown into the air falls again till it reaches the ground; that the stomach digests; that the eye is the instrument of vision, the ear of hearing, &c. Further, the title law is applied to the regularity with which bodies and animated beings act upon each other, and produce certain phenomena. It is a law, that caloric united with water changes it into vapor, that fire consumes combustible bodies, that poisons destroy life; and so on, through the whole circle of natural phenomena.

How may laws be divided?

They may be classed under two heads—the Natural, and the Artificial. The first are imposed by the Creator, the second by individual governors.

What is the signification of the word nature?

Nature is a word to which three distinct meanings are attached:—

1st, It designates the universe,—the heavens, the earth, all that meets sense:

2nd, It expresses essence,—that which char-