

*From the Useful, through the True, to the Beautiful.—Goethe*

# THE RATIONALIST

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MAY 15, 1914

Volume 3 No. 1

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## *Johann Wolfgang Goethe The Poet of Germany*

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M. M. MANGASARIAN

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REPORT OF A LECTURE DELIVERED  
BEFORE THE  
INDEPENDENT RELIGIOUS SOCIETY

1914  
Studebaker Theatre  
CHICAGO

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## Johann Wolfgang Goethe.

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We are as we think. To understand a man we must know his thoughts. What were the thoughts of Goethe; what was his philosophy of life; what religion did he profess? Our answer to these questions will not only reveal to us the real Goethe, but it will also help us to estimate his influence upon modern Europe.

If we define religion as the love and devotion with which a man protects the things he values the most, then everybody has a religion. Our treasure is our religion, for where our treasure is, there also is our heart. To save the passengers, the captain of a ship will throw all the cargo overboard if necessary—life is more valuable than property. But Socrates parted with his life before he would part with his self-respect. He placed a higher value on truth than on life. He said, “Renouncing the honors at which the world aims, I desire only to know the truth, to live as well as I can, and when the time comes, to die.” Why is not that as splendid a creed as any which claim to be inspired?

A few days ago Germany celebrated—I should rather say, the whole intellectual world celebrated—the eightieth anniversary of Ernst Haeckel. “Religion,” said Haeckel to me when I visited him at his home in Jena, “means the love of the good, the true and the beautiful.”

A creed so generous, so large, so gentle; is becoming to a Haeckel.

By the philosophy or religion of a man, then, we mean the thoughts and convictions which he would under no circumstances part with. Find out the last thing that a man would give up, or to conserve which he will sacrifice everything else, and that is his religion.

Goethe intimates that whoever has art, or science, or culture, does not need a religion. Of course; but it is because he has one already. "Let us live for art," spoke Victor Hugo, and he gave his heart to art. Could anyone give more than that? Giordano Bruno gave up everything—reputation, fortune, freedom, life even, for science. Has anybody ever given up more for Christ or for Buddha? Suppose, then, in answer to the question, What is this or that man's religion? instead of saying, He is a Buddhist, a Jew, or a Christian, we could say, "The love of truth and the service of man is his religion"—would not that be a more intelligible as well as a more universal answer? And why has not our brother man whom we see, and who needs our daily sympathy, a prior claim upon us than Allah, Yahve or Brahma, whom we have never seen and who presumably have all they want and more?

It may be objected that while we may love and serve our fellow man, we cannot worship him, and that a worship of some kind is necessary to a religion. To worship means to idealize, to adore—but what could be more adorable than the cause of humanity; what nobler task could one propose to oneself than social service? To save one's world! Could we conceive of a more sublime or of a more heroic duty? Jesus is reported to have said, "What shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" May we not reply by asking, "What shall it profit a man if he could save his own soul and lose his world?" To contribute to the enlightenment and advancement of humanity the highest gifts, the noblest devotion and the most unstinted generosity are required. Which one of the world's religions has ever exacted from man more than that? Besides, in worshiping the gods we

expect to receive; in serving humanity we expect to give. It is not praying for favors but conferring them that ennobles us.

Goethe is too big a subject to be compressed within the limits of an hour's discourse. No man has done more for his country than Goethe did for Germany. For its political rehabilitation, its industrial expansion, its artistic development, and for the philosophical and scientific leadership which Germany commands today, it is under great obligations to the colossal mind of Wolfgang Goethe. From being one of the backward states of Europe, and a borrower, Germany has risen to an eminence which makes her today the envy of her rivals. Not Martin Luther, but Goethe, is the Father of modern Germany. Never did any people have a saner teacher than Goethe was to the Germans. Luther, while supremely in earnest, lacked the intellectual breadth to prevent his propaganda from splitting not only the "Fatherland," but every country in Europe into two hostile camps, each wasting the other to the bone, and converting the world into, I am sorry to say, a bloody battlefield. Goethe's thought, on the other hand, like the refreshing dew from the wings of a dove, fructified the age in which he lived. The Germans lost their heads under Luther; Goethe helped them to recover their reason. Luther made them fanatical; Goethe sweetened the German temper. Under the preaching of Luther the people neglected the things pertaining to this world—the arts, the sciences, the humanities—and became hypnotized by a mirage in the clouds; under the teaching of Goethe the heavenly prospect lost its sinister spell upon the German mind, and then, as if by magic, the world dropped its ugly rags and became lovelier than any dreamland of theology. Mean things put on beauty like a dress, conjured by the music of Goethe. In short, Luther gave the Germans a catechism; Goethe gave them bread with beauty. Luther cowed; Goethe charmed his readers. The star of Luther is setting; the sun of Goethe is rising. As in Southern Italy one meets with a shrine almost at every prominent street corner to some miracle-working

saint, so there is in the mind of every awakened German a shrine to Goethe.

For nearly three hundred years after the Protestant Reformation there was not one original thinker in Germany, if we except Liebnitz, who, to show his disdain for the average German, wrote his book in French. German literature in those days was quite crude and imitative. The Reformation retarded the cultural forces and threw the country into the thick of theological dialectics, as unprofitable as they were unproductive. Italy under Catholicism remained far in advance of Germany until Lutheranism began to lose its spell over the German mind. With the decline of Protestant theology came the German Renaissance. Then appeared Lessing, Schiller, Goethe, who are to Germany what Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio were to Italy. But Lutheran Germany had to wait for three hundred years before it could come up to Catholic Italy. This shows how detrimental to culture was Protestantism with its infallible book. The pope is infallible, too, but the pope dies and the next pope is infallible in a little different way. The Bible is infallibility petrified. Again, one can depose a pope—a number of them were deposed, exiled and imprisoned; there have been rival popes, and popes who were compelled to share their infallibility, as it were, with their competitors; but an infallible book is deaf to every appeal of reason. Where there is an infallible book, there is no elbow room for the intellect of man—and to budge is to die.

Moreover, Catholicism was old; Protestantism was new. "A new broom sweeps clean." Protestantism allowed nothing to escape its Puritanic besom. Catholic Europe had ceased to take Catholicism seriously, but the Protestant, being more serious, more literal, more consistent, was for that reason more effective against culture.

Again Lutheranism helped to give to Catholicism a new birth—a fresh lease of life—bringing all its evil qualities into prominence. The rivalries between the two religions aggravated the disease common to both. As late as

the eighteenth century Prof. Endleman's liberal essay on the Bible was burned by the public hangman in Lutheran Germany; and Prof. Wolff, because of a friendly reference to the ethics of Confucius, was ousted from his university chair, and had to leave the country under penalty of death. It was not until the Voltairian Frederick the Great came to power that the exile returned to his country. In those Lutheran days the University of Halle graduated six thousand clergymen in one generation—six thousand theologians armed with the infallible letter of the Bible! Is it any wonder that Germany dragged behind Catholic Italy for three hundred years after the Reformation? But then came Goethe, and with him the *Aufklärung*—the enlightenment.

At a very tender age, and following a Lutheran custom, Johann Wolfgang Goethe was confirmed. If the officiating pastor had only seen in the twelve-year-old boy the future author of *Faust*—that boldest blow of tongue and pen! Goethe's parents were not so zealously devout as Schiller's. The mother of Schiller made her son kneel daily at her side in prayer. She accompanied him nearly every Sunday after church, to the banks of the Necker, where she opened her New Testament and explained further to the little boy the text of the morning's sermon. Yet this same Schiller became the representative Rationalist of Germany. Schiller, like Goethe, soon tired of the sapless texts and made love to bigger books. In his "Gods of Greece," Schiller's speech becomes golden when he invokes "the glory that was Athens." "Return to us, O charming world!" he sobs. "Where art thou, Greece, thou springtime of nature!" and tears like rare jewels drop from his eyelids. This poem of Schiller so alarmed the Lutherans that they accused him of being a Pagan, an accusation which was also brought against Goethe. "The Great Heathen" was the way some critics referred to the author of "Faust." Lutheran Germany looked upon culture as Pagan. But is it not inspiring to see how the mind turns toward truth and beauty as instinctively and spontaneously as the eyes turn to the

light? These two boys confirmed in church doctrines, groped their way to the forbidden lore of Hellenism! Even Schiller, brought up on bible and prayers, came to be known as one of the leading Rationalists of the Fatherland.

When Goethe was still young, Europe was shocked by the terrible Lisbon earthquake. Some sixty thousand people, on a Sunday morning while at church, were buried alive with the most excruciating pains and torments imaginable. The utmost stretch of fancy cannot depict the heartrending scenes of that fatal *Sabbath* day. Naturally enough, all the pulpits made this catastrophe the theme of many a sermon. One of the famous divines who preached on the Lisbon earthquake was John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist church. Another distinguished man to discuss the earthquake was Voltaire. The Frenchman asked, "Shall we worship a Providence capable of such inhumanity?" John Wesley's reply was practically this: "See what God can do to punish misbelievers, and look out—he can do worse still." For many years this appalling calamity continued to be discussed, and naturally enough it interested also young Goethe. He could not reconcile such unconcern for human beings—the suddenness and brutality of the blow, or the deafness of the heavens to the shrieks of the dying—with the first invocation in the Lord's Prayer—"Our Father!" We may safely infer that from the day of that great shock to his moral sense, he began to look elsewhere—to art, to science, to music—for help. The old faiths may manage to dodge a Haeckel or a Darwin, but they become tonguetied before an Iroquois Theatre fire, a sinking Titanic, or a "General Slocum," packed with Sunday School children, burning to the water's edge. It is such tragedies, enacted daily under the very eyes of heaven that compelled Shelley to exclaim, "Is there a God! Is there a God!"

It was not long after the Lisbon earthquake that Goethe was discovered raising an altar in his sleeping room in Frankfort to the sun. That was a very early indication of his Paganism. I wonder what his boyish



thoughts were when he lifted his eyes to the great orb of day! We are apt to look with pity or contempt upon people who bow to idols. The Pagans worshipped the sun, the Hindus prayed to the elephant, the Assyrians to a bull, and the Africans to trees; but is it more sensible to bow to an invisible power that will not hear the prayer of a drowning man or of a burning child, than to the sun that kisses us all upon the cheeks every morning and floods farm and field with his radiant presence, or to the stout elephant that bears our burdens, or to the fruit laden tree that blossoms at our doors? Look at the almond tree, or the peach, or the apple, or the orange tree in blossom, even though in a barnyard, and what god was ever more glorious! "O Allah!" I cry, but no one answers me; "O Yahve!" I call, and there is the same silence; "O Christ!" I pray, but neither does he answer. Yet call upon the sun, and he greets you through every window; call upon the elephant and he bends under your burden; call upon the tree, and it bursts into beauty at your very door, and the air becomes fragrant and the branches nod and dip with luscious fruit. Is it not wonderful? Why is it idolatry to pray to the tree, without which, in all probability, primitive man would have starved to death—the tree that preserved our race and sheltered the first man amid its thick branches from the prowling beasts—the tree, the first nest of man and bird,—why, I repeat, should tree-worship be considered idolatrous, and praying to an invisible Being, whom we neither see nor hear, be considered the height of wisdom? Mind you, I am not advising anybody to pray to the sun or the tree, but would it not be more sensible to look for help to these than to the deaf heavens?

Do you not remember the exquisite lines of Omar Khayyam, the poet of Naishapur?

And that inverted Bowl they call the Sky,  
Whereunder crawling coop'd we live and die,  
Lift not your hands to *It* for help—for it  
As impotently moves as you or I.

Goethe was about sixteen when he was sent to Leip-

sic to study law, but instead of becoming a lawyer he fell in love with art and literature. Shakespeare was one of the earliest acquaintances he formed. He became passionately fond of the English poet's dramas. He pored over the pages of *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* with the enthusiasm of a lover. It was the daring in Shakespeare's verse that he admired. Goethe made Shakespeare a power in Germany, and today there is not another country in which the bard of Avon has a more appreciative and a more intelligent audience. Voltaire was another of Goethe's early tutors. The latter has exhausted the richest vocabulary in paying his tribute to the poet and philosopher of France—whose smile was the unfailing disinfectant against superstition. Says Goethe, speaking of Voltaire: "If you wish depth, genius, imagination, philosophy, originality, art, music, an eagle's sweep of vision, pathos, eloquence, magic, behold Voltaire." And as if he had not said enough, he added, "After having given birth to Voltaire, Nature took a rest." Compare Goethe's generous *éloge* of Voltaire with the Chicago preacher's recent abuse of him, and you will see the vast difference between the mind of Goethe and that of the Methodist exhorter.\*

While Goethe was still a student in Leipsic, Lessing, the author of *Nathan the Wise*, one of the most liberal and liberalizing books of the century, paid that city a visit. Although Goethe and Lessing never met, nevertheless the modernity of Lessing and his prejudice-proof mind charmed the young poet. The kind of Germany that Lessing's tolerance and hospitality would create appealed to the young poet. The next man who helped to steady him in his youthful and eager pace was the philosopher, Herder, a man with decidedly Rationalistic tendencies. It was really Herder who introduced the works of Shakespeare and Voltaire to Goethe. It was he also who taught him the secret of mental sovereignty. His rule read: Free yourself from all preconceptions and judge men and ideas on their merits alone. This is splendidly true. Not until

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\*See lecture on "Voltaire."

we have divested our minds of prejudice can we understand life and the universe. The first and last lesson to master is that of intellectual and moral independence. Can we divest ourselves of partiality? I sincerely believe that Goethe possessed the rarest of all the qualities of the mind—impartiality.

The next powerful mind which helped further to expand Goethe's sympathies and to give to his accents a remarkable daring was Spinoza. With a narrowness that would be unbecoming even to a village barbarian, both the Jewish and the Lutheran clergy represented this sage of Amsterdam as the very incarnation of the devil. In words unmentionable the rabbis expelled him from the synagogue. A lighted candle was held upside down to show that even as the candle was consumed they were praying to God that Spinoza may be consumed. Jew and Christian writers alike had made a caricature of one of the gentlest teachers of modern Europe. But generous minds, as a rule, fly to the help of the abused and the oppressed. Goethe was drawn to Spinoza at first through the same motives that attracted the beautiful Desdemona to Othello—he loved the persecuted philosopher for his misfortunes. Let us hear what Goethe says of Spinoza:

"This man, who had wrought so powerfully on me, and who was destined to affect so deeply my entire mode of thinking, was Spinoza. After looking around the world in vain for the means of developing my strange nature, I met with the ethics of that philosopher. Of what I read in the work, and of what I read into it, I can give no account; but I found in it a sedative for my passions, and it seemed to unveil a clear, broad view over the material and moral world. But what especially riveted me to him was the boundless disinterestedness which shone forth in every sentence. . . . The all-equalizing calmness of Spinoza was in striking contrast with my all-disturbing activity; his mathematical method was the direct opposite of my poetic style of thought and feeling, and that very precision which was thought ill adapted to moral subjects

made me his enthusiastic disciple, his most decided worshiper."

And this was the man upon whom the Amsterdam Synagogue had pronounced the following awful curse: "By the sentence of the angels, by the decree of the saints, we anathematize, cut off, curse, and execrate Baruch Spinoza, . . . cursed be he by day, and cursed by night; cursed when he lyeth down, and cursed when he riseth up; cursed when he goeth out, and cursed when he cometh in; the Lord pardon him never; the wrath and fury of the Lord burn upon this man, and bring upon him all the curses which are written in the Book of the Law. The Lord blot out his name under heaven. . . ."

But this fearful malediction, while it kept away the orthodox Jew from Spinoza, it attracted to him the Pagan Goethe. Did we not say, a moment ago, that impartiality was the road to truth? Goethe had no prejudices. He was magnificently impartial. He possessed the courage to side with the despised philosopher against the whole of Europe. He valued truth above race, party, family, creed, and country. "The first and last thing demanded of Genius," he said, "is a love of truth." This love of truth was the *passion maîtresse* of his whole life.

What Goethe desired for himself, he admired in others. His enthusiasm about Bruno, for example, shows that Goethe lived by love and admiration. The sacrifices that the Italian philosopher made for truth filled Goethe with joy and pride. Think of it—Bruno was feasted in every European court for his learning; he could have become pope for Christendom, but he gave up all this and embraced death at the stake for love of science. Who among the gods stands taller? Goethe must have taken Bruno, towering like a Titan above the flames encircling his body at the Compo di Fiori in Rome, for his Prometheus—calm, serene, defiant, triumphant, and smiling at the threats of darkness and hate!

The *Prometheus* of Goethe is only a fragment, but in this fragment he has given eloquent expression to the noble independence of his own spirit. In this little poem,

Goethe, like Shelley and Byron, asks for nothing that can be had for kneeling. It is with ringing accents, and a toss of his head—his eye bright, his voice musical, his thought splendid, that he summons Zeus to judgment:

Curtain thy heavens, Zeus,  
With clouds, with mist!  
And like a boy that crushes thistle-tops,  
Loosen thy rage on oaks and mountain ridges.  
Yet must thou leave  
Me my earth standing;  
My hut, which myself built;  
My hearth with its bright flame  
Which thou dost envy.  
I know naught so pitiful  
Under the sun as ye gods!

These are bold lines, and they show how much more Goethe thought of Man than of Zeus. Continuing, the poet suggests that it is children and beggars who keep the gods from starving:

Scantly nourishing  
With forced offerings  
Of tremulous prayer  
Your divinity!  
Children and beggars,  
And fools hope-deluded,  
Keep ye from starving!

Then again he lifts his eyes to Man, to *himself*, as the author of all that is good and great in life:

Who gave me succor  
From the fierce Titans?  
Who rescued me  
From slavery?  
Thou! thou, my soul, glowing  
With holiest fire!

Then in Promethean accents he sings his challenge to the Lord of the Skies:

I reverence thee! Wherefore?  
Hast thou lightened the woes  
Of the heavily laden?  
Hast thou dried the tears  
Of the troubled in spirit?  
Who fashioned me man?  
Was it not almighty Time—  
And Fate eternal,  
Thy lords and mine?

What wonder that Lutheran Germany shuddered at Goethe's *Prometheus*!

Here I sit and shape  
Man in my image;  
A race like myself,  
That will suffer and weep,  
Will rejoice and enjoy,  
And scorn thee,  
As I!

Do not these lines of Goethe suggest Robert Buchanan's Promethean prayer, with which all Rationalists are familiar?

If I were a God like you, and you were a man like me,  
And in the dark you prayed and wept and I could hear and see—  
The sorrow of your broken heart would darken all my day,  
And never peace or pride were mine till it was smiled away,—  
I'd clear my heaven above your head till all was bright and blue,  
If you were a man like me, and I were a God like you.

Goethe cherished exalted opinions of the poet as prophet and critic: "Now Fate has exalted the Poet above all this as if he were a god. . . . From his heart springs the fair flower of Wisdom. . . . And thus the poet is a teacher and prophet and friend of gods and men. . . . Nay, if thou wilt have it, who but the poet was it that first formed the Gods for us—that exalted us to them, and brought them down to us?"<sup>1</sup>

But Goethe's philosophy was as winged as his poetry. "Ever higher" was his motto. He says:

"I should not have the least idea how to get along with everlasting felicity, if it did not offer me new tasks and difficulties to overcome."

"Ever higher, ever farther," describes the daring as well as the craving of Goethe's mind. According to him, salvation does not consist in attaining a goal, but in ever pressing forward. *Ever pressing forward* is Goethe in a nutshell. When Faust enters heaven the angels and other celestial beings are heard whispering, "He has already surpassed us." He conceived of life as a march and not

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<sup>1</sup>*Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*. Book 2. Chapter 2.

as a station. "The solution of a problem," he says, "if it halts us, becomes a falsehood." He was interested in truth because it led him to renew his quest daily for more truth. To accept a thought or a revelation as final was to bury the mind alive. There is more of this soldier-like attitude in Goethe's *Prometheus* than in his *Faust*. Faust should never have yielded to Mephistopheles. That compact with the devil was an esthetic as well as an intellectual *faux pas*. What? Shake hands with the devil! What? Enter into a partnership with Mephistopheles! What? A Prometheus that defies a god, bending to the devil!

But Goethe was above all superlatively practical. He abhorred metaphysics. I do not know whether there are seas on which the fog never descends, but I know that Goethe's mind was wonderfully clear. He confined himself to the visible—things that he could touch and hear and explain. The unknown and the unknowable were not permitted to take his time. "The sphere of earth is known to us, but the view beyond is completely cut off," he says. The *next* world had no fascination for him, but he was keenly interested in everything that belonged to this world. Not a plant, not an insect, not a star escaped his caressing and searching thought. He loved to walk in the sun instead of peering with blinking eyes into the dark. Instead of begging for a place in the skies, make for yourself a place here, was his advice. "This world means something to the capable," he shouts; and without self-laudation he believed that when finally man succeeded in turning the earth into a Garden of Eden he would himself be admitted into it as one whose thought and music helped to change the earth into a Paradise.

The subjective or the subconscious did not interest Goethe. There was not the faintest suggestion of mysticism about him. He looked at things with the naked eye. His mind was as transparent as crystal. There were no corners or coils in his mind to prevent the free influx of air and light. It may be stated of him that he never said anything which his readers could not understand, nor would he ever listen to anything that was obscure or per-

plexing. "If I am to listen to another person's opinions," he says, "they must be expressed in plain terms."

His sanity is also shown in his mental balance. He avoided all extremes. Common sense is the salt that preserves thought from corruption. "The real freedom of man," he writes, "does not consist in asceticism, but in the rational enjoyment of all the world produces." When he was in Rome he preferred the pre-Christian art, which showed man in all his physical and mental vigor, to the Christian paintings, among which appeared shriveled bodies, and virgins with flat chests and sunken cheeks. He could not understand how, under those translucent Italian skies, so soft, so sunny—people could be so sad—living in dread of some impending catastrophe. He attributed this impoverishment of life to the fear of the hereafter—of hell fire, which he pronounced an Asiatic and imported fear, and quite alien to the genius of Europe. Goethe sighs like Shelley for the Pagan world which cradled a Plato, produced a Phidias and created Athens—the City of Light!

While Goethe refrained from participation in the political agitation of his day, and while he wrote no war songs as Koerner did—for Goethe does not so much represent the storm and stress period in Germany as he does the *Aufklärung*—his self-possession and philosophic serenity during that period of storm and stress contributed more than all the fighters did to the progress of ideas. In his *Conversations with Akerman* Goethe explains why he could not urge his countrymen to fight. In his opinion no man should give advice to others which he was not himself willing to follow. Not being a fighter, he was not interested in the political readjustment of Europe. Art was his country, Truth was his god, and to the exaltation of these he devoted all his efforts. It was really Goethe who gave to the German mind its scientific bent which has emancipated and enriched that country beyond anything that king or soldier ever achieved for his country. By discouraging the pursuit of chimeras and international hatreds Goethe helped to concentrate the attention of the



world upon the good, the true and the beautiful. He opened the closed ears of the soul to the music of life. He made of joyous laughter a medium and a weapon against pessimism, the besetting sin of the advanced races. He prepared the way for Nietzsche's *Superman*, the man unafraid, the European man!

But nothing is gained by either exaggeration or suppression. Let Goethe's shortcomings in conduct as well as in art be condemned. No one claims infallibility for him. What we want is an impartial estimate of Goethe and his qualities of mind and heart. He deserves to be censured for his prodigal *amours*. At one time he was also misled into Orientalism—making love to Buddhism, like Schopenhauer. But Goethe, like Burns, like Byron, like Shakespeare, like Voltaire, like all his peers, was part clay and part gold. It is a pity that he allowed glory to make a spoiled child of him in some things, or that he should have permitted the social pleasures to interfere with his great work. Goethe has more fragments than completed works. At times his thought swings when it should be steady. But then, like the trees in Valparaiso, which are so luxuriant that no storm can make the least impression upon their wealth of foliage, Goethe is so dowered that no criticism, however unsparing, can unseat him from his throne. The admiration and gratitude of his countrymen and of Europe is his throne. To this Poet of Germany, who helped to universalize man, whom Carlyle hailed as the incarnate Wisdom of modern Europe—to this Goethe, the sincere, the courageous—this Prometheus, this Titan, this Teutonic god—we say, as his stately figure rises before us, what his own Faust said to the charmed and charming moment that saw the realization of his highest hope—"Stay, thou art fair."

## LETTER FROM ITALY

A letter comes addressed to me, dated Milan, Italy, from a leading newspaper, the *La Giovane Italia*, asking my opinion about the advisability of the Italian nation requesting His Holiness, the Pope,—Pius X, to vacate Rome and seek quarters in some other country. The question broadly stated is this: Whereas the papacy has helped to retard the progress of Italy, and whereas the complete emancipation of the country will be indefinitely postponed as long as the pope continues to reside in Rome, resolved that the Italian nation is justified in resorting to legal measures to bring about the removal of the papacy from Italy.

It appears that *La Giovane Italia* has written similar letters to Rationalists in other parts of the world, praying for an expression of opinion on the practicability of the above proposition. Our answer follows:

Editor, *La Giovane Italia*:—In reply to your favor of February, 1910, I beg to thank you for the honor you have conferred upon me by wishing to consult me on a question of such vital importance to the future of your country.

I agree with you that the papacy has not been a blessing to Italy. Indeed, it has not been a blessing to any country. Rome under the Caesars, with all the religions of the world represented, and with its absolute liberty of conscience, was infinitely superior to the Rome of the popes, with only one religion tolerated, and all the others persecuted as much as *the law will allow*. Yet, notwithstanding that I would be delighted to see the power of the papacy broken, and its victims set free, I am, from principle and, therefore, unequivocally, opposed to denying to the pope a single right which as a Rationalist I claim for myself, or of treating him as if he were not entitled to the fullest liberty of thought, speech and action.

I believe in fighting supernaturalism, Catholic or Protestant, with intellectual and moral, rather than with legal or physical weapons. The missiles I would throw at the head of the pope are arguments from history, science and common sense. Persecution is the policy of despair, and the twentieth century is the century of sense and science. The persecutors of today might become the persecuted of tomorrow. No one is safe as long as anyone is persecuted. In self-defense, therefore, if for no other reason, let Rationalists protect the rights of the

Catholics with the same enthusiasm that they defend their own. "Think and let think," is the gospel of Rationalism.

Besides, to drive the pope from Italy to some other country would be uncharitable to the other country. What advantage is there in changing the location of the papacy? A better way would be to *educate* Romanism out of existence. In Chicago some devout Christians are denying to us the use of a certain public hall. But that will only lead us to build a hall of our own—a Hall of Reason. How could that be a gain to orthodoxy? We can do as much mischief in one hall as in another; and so can a Vicar of Christ be as much of a menace in one country as in another. At any rate, do not let the pope leave Italy until you have rationalized him. Then we will all be glad to welcome him, and you will not want to part with him.

Respectfully,

M. M. MANGASARIAN.

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*The Advocate of what is false has every reason to make his advances stealthily and to curry favor with the world. The man who feels that he has truth on his side must step firmly. Truth is not to be dallied with.—Goethe.*

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