

# **IN QUEST OF LIGHT**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649392520

In quest of light by Goldwin Smith

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BY

GOLDWIN SMITH

New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

LONDON: MACMILLAN & CO., LTD.

1906

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Set up and electrotyped. Published May, 1906.

NEWTON PRESS  
J. S. Cushing & Co. — Berwick & Smith Co.  
Norwood, Mass., U.S.A.



## PREFACE

A SECULAR journal in England received, in the course of three months, nine thousand communications from people seeking for light on the religious question. The question, then, is evidently practical.

Never before has there been such a crisis in the history of belief. Never before has man, enlightened as he now is by Science, faced with a free mind the problem of his origin and destiny.

The following papers were penned with the same desire of light as those of the nine thousand. They appeared in different forms, chiefly as letters, in the *New York Sun*, to the courtesy and courage of whose editor the best thanks of the writer are due.

It seems that some of those who read them have wished to refer to them again. They are printed as they appeared, without attempt, which would have been vain, to give the series a literary form.

No theory is here propounded. The writer's aim is to help, if he can, in clearing the position, pointing to the right line of inquiry, and guarding against false lures. To this end inquiry and thought must be free. Reason must rule. It is, as Bishop Butler frankly says, "the only faculty we have wherewith to judge concerning anything, even revelation itself." Its voice, therefore, is that of our Maker. Faith, which is an emotion, cannot supersede or contradict reason, though it may soar above sense. To know what remains to us of our traditional belief we must frankly resign that which, however cherished, the progress of science and learning has taken away. But destruction will not be found to be the object of the writer. Nor, it is to be hoped, will there be found in him any appearance of irreverence. Nothing can be farther from his heart.

G. S.

TORONTO, March 20, 1906.

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