



John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)

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**Letter from J. Helder to John Muir, 1906 Jun 18.**

J. Helder

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Personal

Port-Washington, Ohio  
June 18, 1906

My dear Mr. Muir: -

I expected to attend the N.E.A. meeting at San Francisco this summer, & hence, have the great pleasure of paying you a visit before leaving California. But the sad misfortune which befell your city has also caused us to postpone our meeting. I have not seen you for a long time, and I am also very anxious to talk over with you a matter concerning my present welfare. Under the circumstances may I present the matter by letter? - The present wide-spread disbelief in individual immortality has disturbed me very much. I cannot understand why so many great minds have come to the same conclusion as was reached by Prof. Dr. Ostwald in his recent Harvard lecture on Individuality & Immortality - that there is no personal immortality after death. How can the human soul abandon all aspiration for persistence of personal identity after death? How can reason feel satisfied with the belief that immortality consists in the effect each individual has on the advancement of the race? (over)

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I shrink from such a conclusion, and yet I cannot shake off the distress which it brings to my mind. My soul longs to view this great problem in the light of your own illumination. I have long admired your rare mental poise, and profound spiritual insight - the serenity of your soul remained undisturbed. Pray, express your views and convictions as fully as your time may permit. Also please state how you account for the present wide-spread disbelief in individual immortality especially in the Academic circles of Germany. You do not speak from the Chair of Theology - but you speak in the name of the Eternal. Hope I may be able to serve you in return.

In conclusion permit me to express a long-cherished desire. We are very anxious to have your autographed photograph on our walls. It will be an inspiration to students & we will feel highly honored. Pray, do not disappoint us! - May I hope to hear from you at your earliest convenience? Hoping that you continue to enjoy good health, I beg to remain, with cordial greetings,  
Ever your faithful friend,  
Prof. J. Helder.