

Selby, Isaac

From Atheism to
Christianity.

STATE LIBRARY OF N.S.W.
MITCHELL LIBRARY

DSM/
239.7/
S

Digitised under the State Library of
NSW's Digital Excellence Program.
Due to the nature of the original
material or digitisation process there
may be instances where the digital
copies are not exact matches of the
originals. If you have any questions or
would like to provide feedback,
please email
collections.library@sl.nsw.gov.au

5
L.687

Dr. Kuhl.

FROM

Atheism to Christianity

AND

WHAT I LEARNT ON THE WAY.

A POPULAR DEFENCE OF CHRISTIANITY AND A REFUTATION
OF THE FALLACIES OF SECULARISM.

BY

ISAAC SELBY,

FORMERLY FREETHOUGHT LECTURER, NOW CHRISTIAN
MINISTER.

1890.

CHRISTIAN PIONEER PUBLISHING COMPANY,
MELBOURNE, VICTORIA.

TO MY KIND AND CHRISTIAN

BENEFACTOR,

DR. JOSEPH KINGSBURY,

THIS LITTLE VOLUME,

WHICH BUT FOR HIS MEDICAL SKILL, WOULD NEVER

HAVE BEEN WRITTEN, IS GRATEFULLY

INSCRIBED.

THE AUTHOR.



PREFACE.

WERE I to make this little volume but a recital of personal reminiscences, it would be but an exhibition of vanity, and devoid of value to the reader. Therefore, in sketching my path from Atheism to Christianity, I have endeavoured to repeat arguments and explanations that assisted me in my mental development. In doing this, I hope to warn the reader of the shoals and whirlpools that lie hidden in the treacherous ocean of Infidelity, and furnish the "Soldiers of the Cross with some little ammunition" that may be useful to them in their combats with Freethinkers. John Stewart Mill wrote the story of his own life, not because he was a vain man and wanted to tell the world of his intellectual triumphs, but because he had received a unique education, and he hoped that in relating how he had acquired it, he might help others in the attainment of useful knowledge. If my Freethought friends grant that this great champion of one of their schools did wisely, they cannot complain of my striving to show men the way of salvation under the guise of an autobiographical topic. In writing this work I am executing a sacred duty that I owe to the cause of Christianity. For ten long years I was associated with the Freethought party; the great portion of this time I peregrinated up and down Australasia as a professional lecturer, administering the poison of Infidelity. Therefore, now that I have more light I feel it incumbent upon me to supply the antidote—hence this book—much what it contains has previously been delivered in my lectures.

August 1st, 1890.

ISAAC SELBY.



CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I—PAGES 9—14.

Some Sceptics who recanted, and why.

The early unbelievers, Paul and Thomas—Benjamin Franklin—Chateaubriand—Joseph Barker—Thomas Cooper—Dr. Sexton—William Hone—Auguste Comte—Mrs. Besant—Robert Owen—Mr Greenwood.

CHAPTER II—PAGES 14—20.

The Creed of the Secularist.

The one world at a time dogma—Father Damien, the Lepers' friend—Samoan Christianity—Anthony Collins and Voltaire—moral effects of Theism—Atheism as a comforter to the afflicted—Atheism at the grave—Christianity the safe side.

CHAPTER III—PAGES 20—30.

Secularism an Ignominious Failure.

The Sectarianism of Secularism—Sensuous and Scientific Materialism—English Secularism—Bradlaugh, Saladin and Holyoake—Free-thought in New Zealand—Failures in New South Wales—Troubles of the elect in Melbourne—Anarchy and Atheism.

CHAPTER IV—PAGES 30—36

Utility the test of Morality.

Christianity the only true Secularism—Lecky's testimony—Morality of Divine Origin—The Testimony of Buckle and Mill—The Golden Rule before Jesus—Utility—Christ a Unique Object Lesson in Morality—Is Honesty a Matter of Policy—A Psychological Basis of Morals.

CHAPTER V—PAGES 37—43.

Christianity the Friend of Progress.

Freedom of Thought the Birthright of Man—Priestcraft the Enemy of Progress—Knowledge the Handmaid of Religion—The Church and State an Unholy Alliance—Christianity a Peaceable Religion—How Christ Dignified Labour—Social Salvation in Christ.

CHAPTER VI—PAGES 43—50.

Obstacles to Belief.

The Nature of Christian Evidence—The Good Physician—The Counterfeit Proves the Real—Meekness a Virtue—Moses, Socrates, and Newton—Non-resistance a Wise Policy—The Evils of Anxiety—Spencer and George—Industry—The Difficulties of Science—Talmage's Illustration—The Testimony of Pagans—Slavery—The Emancipation of Woman—Saints and Sinners.

CHAPTER VII—PAGES 50—55.

Retribution.

The Inquisition and Ingersoll—What is Christianity?—Christ's Instructions not to Resent injury—The Medieval Idea of Hell—The Larger Hope—Thomas Paine—Social, Political, and Commercial Damnation—Evidence of a Just Providence—The Secular Society's Almanac—Faith and Progress.

CHAPTER VIII—PAGES 55—59.

The Verity and Value of the Miracles.

The Freethinker's Method of Attack—The Request for Miracles to-day—An Illustration from Geology—The Dock Labourers' Strike—The Object of Miracles—Hume's Famous Argument—The Contradictions of Atheism—Ignorance and Speculation—The Value of Historical Testimony—His Miracles Labours of Love.

CHAPTER IX—PAGES 59—64.

The Crimes of Secularism.

An Unsavory Task—The Need of it—Slander—Our Solar System—Loose Literature—Elements of Social Science—Phallic Worship—Joseph Barker—Besant and Symes on Marriage—Two Revolutions, the English and French.

CHAPTER X—PAGES 64—72.

Great Infidels.

Gladstone on Great Men—Bradlaugh—Paine—Byron—Shelley—George Henry Lewis and George Elliot—Darwin—Carlisle—Voltaire—Tyndal—Renan—Mill—Lecky—Straus—Gibbon—Colenso—Colonial Scepticism.

CHAPTER XI—PAGES 72—81.

A Leaf from My Life.

My Last Freethought Lecture—My Wife becomes a Christian—The Collins and Selby Debate—Penury and Sickness—Good Samaritans—Enmore—My Career as a Lecturer—Seven Debates with Representative Christians—The Green and Selby debate—Melbourne—Lygon street—My Reply to Symes—Money no Object—Swanston street—Answers to Slanders.

CHAPTER XII—PAGES 81—88.

Primitive Christianity, the Rock on which I Stand.

Our Plea, and how we arrived at it—Our Creed—The Brotherhood of Man—Christian Union with Liberty—Infidelity a Disease occasioned by Corrupt Teaching—Illustration from the lives of Bradlaugh, Voltaire, Gibbon, Gilbert West, and Lord Lyttleton—Human Creeds.

CHAPTER XIII—PAGES 88—94.

The Conclusion: A Summary.

Christ the Light of the World.



FROM ATHEISM TO CHRISTIANITY.



CHAPTER I.

SOME SCEPTICS WHO RECANTED AND WHY?

THERE are many brilliant examples on the Page of History of men who have violently assailed Christianity turning round and becoming zealous defenders of it. More than one-fourth of the entire New Testament is from the pen of the Apostle Paul, and portions of the remainder is devoted to the story of his life. Yet this man in his youth was a bitter opponent of the disciples; he persecuted the early Christians, but at length, realizing that he was in the wrong, he became the "Apostle to the Gentiles," and we now go back to his writings to ascertain the wishes of our divine Master. He said "I obtained mercy in that I did it ignorantly in unbelief." Christ was more lenient with scepticism than with hypocrisy; he strongly denounced the Pharisees, who, under the cover of religion, spent their lives in the ruin of their fellows. Yet in rebuking the Sadducees, he used milder terms saying, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God," and condescended to give to the doubting Thomas ocular demonstration of the verity of the resurrection.

Since the time of Thomas, Christianity has had to face many sceptics, and its career has been a triumphal march, as history attests, by furnishing many incidents of converted sceptics. A few examples will suffice. Benjamin Franklin, the illustrious friend of Thomas Paine, was in his youth a Deist. In his autobiography he says he made three great mistakes in his life, and one of them was the scepticism of his youth, and he warns his son against falling into similar errors. When Thomas Paine

sent him the manuscript of a sceptical work he was about to publish, for perusal, Franklin returned the manuscript, with the following letter of admonition—

“Dear Sir.—I have read your manuscript with some attention. By the argument it contains against a particular providence—though you allow a general providence,—you strike at the foundation of all religion. For without belief in a providence that takes cognizance of, guards and guides, and may favor particular persons, there is no motive to worship a Deity, to fear his displeasure, or pray for his protection. I will not enter into any discussion of your principles, though you seem to desire it. At present I shall only give you my opinion, that though your reasonings are subtle, and may prevail with some readers, yet you will not succeed so as to change the general sentiments of mankind on that subject, and the consequence of printing this piece will be a great deal of odium drawn upon yourself, mischief to you, and no benefit to others. *He that spits against the wind spits in his own face.*

But were you to succeed, do you imagine any good would be done by it? You yourself may find it easy to lead a virtuous life without the assistance afforded by religion. You, having a clear perception of the advantages of virtue and the disadvantages of vice, and possessing a strength of resolution sufficient to resist common temptations; but think how great a portion of mankind consists of weak and ignorant men and women, and of inexperienced and inconsiderate youth of both sexes, who have need of the motives of religion to restrain them from vice, to support their virtue, and retain them in practice of it, till it becomes habitual, which is the great point of its security.

And perhaps you are indebted to her originally, that is to your religious education, for your habits of virtue upon which you now justly value yourself. You might easily display your excellent talent of reasoning upon a less hazardous subject, and thereby obtain a rank with our most distinguished authors. For among us it is not necessary, as among the Hottentots, that a youth to be raised into the company of men should prove his manhood by beating his mother.

I would advise you therefore not to attempt unchaining the tiger, but to burn this piece before it is seen by any other person, whereby you will save yourself a great deal of mortification by the enemies it may raise against you, and perhaps a good deal of regret and repentance. *If men are so wicked with religion what would they be without it?* I intend this letter itself as a proof of my friendship and thereby add no professions to it, but subscribe myself,

Yours,

B. FRANKLIN."

Taken from Sparks' "Life and Works of Benjamin Franklin." Vol. X, page 281.

Franklin became a Unitarian by conviction, but he liberally subscribed to uphold Christianity generally, and never gave expression to his dissenting convictions, save under pressure, such was his intense faith in the beneficent influence of that system. He strongly supported a motion in the Pennsylvanian Assembly, to open their meetings with prayer. In his eighty-fifth year, on being solicited to give expression to his religious convictions, he wrote to a friend a letter setting them forth, from which I cull the following extract, taken from John Bigelow's biography of him: "As to Jesus of Nazareth, my opinion of whom you particularly desire, I think his system of morals and his religion *as he left them to us, the best the world ever saw or is likely to see.* I apprehend it has received various corrupting changes, and I have with most dissenters in England some doubts as to his divinity, though it is a question I do not dogmatize upon, having never studied it—and I think it needless to busy myself now, when I expect soon an opportunity of knowing the truth with less trouble, I see no harm however in its being believed, if that belief has the good consequence, as probably it has, of making his doctrine more respected and more observed."

Chateaubriand is another distinguished example of a "Rationalist" returning to the bosom of the Church. He was exiled from France during the perilous times of the great French Revolution. During his expatriation he wandered over America and other parts of the world,

finally settling for a time in London. While there he heard of the death of his mother, who was fondly devoted to him. Her last days were embittered with grief at her son's infidelity. This caused him to seriously reflect on his position, he became convinced of the truth of Christianity, and wrote one of the most eloquent works extant to-day, in the French language—aye in any language—in defence of Christianity. The work is written from a Roman Catholic stand-point, and is entitled "The Genius of Christianity."

In more recent times we have heard of the secession of Joseph Barker from Secularism. He was co-editor with Charles Bradlaugh for some months on the *National Reformer*, and a powerful exponent of Freethought on the platform as well as through the press. In his autobiography, "Lessons of Experience," he gives his reasons for becoming a Christian. In this book he casts serious reflections upon the lives of prominent secularists, and contends that infidelity is the fruitful parent of immorality.

Thomas Cooper is another gifted man, who was seduced by the sophistries of scepticism, and lived to repent of his mistakes. He is well known to the student of Christian evidence as the author of that famous little book, "The Bridge of History over the Gulf of Time." There is a small library of Christian Evidence literature from his pen.

Dr. Sexton, who is even now, or was till recently, doing great work on the Christian evidence platform, was formerly a pronounced Freethinker; one of his poems I remember was introduced into the *Lyceum Guide* for the children in the Dunedin Freethought Sunday-school. His poems I have frequently heard recited from the Freethought platform; but this is not at all surprising, considering the Freethinkers still trade on the reputation of William Hone, and sell his "Apocryphal New Testament," although he renounced infidelity and became a minister of the Christian religion, and regretted the publication of that book.

How Atheism fails to satisfy the spiritual hunger of mankind is seen in the case of Auguste Comte, who for years devoted his life to scientific pursuits, contending

that science had nothing in common with religion. He continued in Scepticism till somewhat advanced in life, when he fell in love with a bright young woman, seventeen years his junior. She died after a friendship of one year, but bequeathed to him an affection and influence that lasted till the end of his days. He went back on his former teachings, and advocated the necessity of religion. He started a new system, called it the religion of humanity, placed man in the position of God, and then worshipped this figment of his own imagination. He felt the necessity for bread, but tried to satisfy himself with a stone. Only recently we heard of Mrs. Besant, who for so long a time had been a partner with Mr. Bradlaugh in the *National Reformer* embracing Theosophy, a species of Pantheism. She tells us that it explains certain problems in psychology that Atheism failed to touch. Pantheism, although resembling Atheism in some points, is really its antipodes, for it affirms that everything is God. Thus, though formerly Mrs. Besant saw God nowhere, now to her he is everywhere. Somewhat similarly the urbane and benevolent Robert Owen, who in his debate with Alexander Campbell affirmed "that all religions of the world originated in error," became in his old age a confirmed Spiritualist. Brief as has been the History of Rationalism in these Colonies, it has not been without examples of this. In substantiation of which I have only to cite the name of Mr. Greenwood. The Sydney *Protestant Standard* of Saturday, February 8th, 1890, gives the following sketch of him: "Mr. Greenwood was an able man, and while a Christian, a Baptist minister, in conjunction with Rev. Dr. John Gibbon and Rev. Dr. Zachary Barry, and others, was one of the leaders of the great agitation, which, after its leaders had fought hard and suffered much opposition and abuse, has resulted in the present unequalled system of National Education in New South Wales, which even Mr. Skinner admires. Mr. Greenwood, full of promise and ability, entered parliament, and being exalted in popular estimation, and triumphant in the fight he had ably assisted in, he fell. Drink claimed him for a victim, and degraded him. He lost caste, his splendid talents were dimmed and wasted, and he sank into a miserable failure, despite the bright

promise of his former years. Mr. Greenwood had then become a Secularist, and lectured for Secularism as a means of livelihood. With his life as a Christian all that redounds to the credit of his memory is associated; with his life as an infidel was associated his lamentable degradation. From the time he lapsed from Christianity, he did nothing for the good of his fellow man, that lives to-day; but the building that he has assisted to erect when he was a Christian, is to-day one of the noblest edifices in the country, the Public Instruction Act; which even Sir Henry Parkes was coerced by public opinion into passing; after he had for years headed the struggle against the principle of national education, on behalf of the Denominationalists. Prosperity was fatal to Mr. Greenwood. When he had been degraded by Secularism, and had lost the former influence he had with his fellow-men, and their confidence; after a thorough experience of Secularism; in his adversity he again turned to the Lord, renounced Secularism, and bitterly repented of his falling away. He re-established daily family prayer in his household; and before his death, he confessed that he had to stimulate himself with spirits before he could go on to the platform at the theatre, and speak against Christ. He died trusting to the redeeming blood of Christ, in hope of forgiveness and of blissful resurrection." When thus we see so many who have missed their way coming back repentant to the throne of God or crying for light in some dark superstition of their own, surely we should cling more closely to the cross of Christ, realising that it is the symbol of life. To do this it would be well for us to be thoroughly furnished with a knowledge of its advantages over all other systems, and to help in this direction, I proceed to deal in my next chapter with the "Creed of the Secularist."

CHAPTER II.

THE CREED OF THE SECULARIST.

A popular dogma of the Secularist is stated in the words of Ingersoll, "One world at a time and try to

make the most of it." Any system that tries to make the most of mundane affairs, without considering the influence the belief in another world has, in assisting to do it, depends on but a short-sighted policy. Another world has been, and still is, the Archimedean lever for the elevation of this one, just as in material matters, to understand natural phenomena, and to perfect some Secular pursuits, we have to take a wider range of thought than that given us by our own planet; so also must we in the realm of ethics be guided by consideration of a future life. We navigate our ships by the stars; our tides are guided in their ebb and flow by phases of the moon, and our vegetation that carpets the world with green derives its coloring properties from the sun. So in the moral world must we look beyond this life to find man's highest incentive to right living. Christianity, by teaching the immortality of the soul, leads men to make sacrifices here for the benefit of their fellows. Take by way of illustration the case of Father Damien, who went on a mission to the lepers of the Sandwich Islands. He knew full well that while ministering to the Spiritual and secular wants of these unfortunates he was risking his life, sooner or later he would fall a victim to the dread disease; yet actuated by higher motives than present pleasures, and knowing that his reward was beyond the grave, he went forward with his noble work, until disease and death claimed him as their own. Had he believed in one world at a time, he would naturally have sought for worldly advancement, and left the lepers to look after themselves. It is no use telling us that the creed of the Secularist offers the best encouragement for continued work in this life. Our most eminent men have been religious men. The tall trees that have grown up in the forest of mankind, took their life from the sunlight of another world. In music there are no greater names than those of Hadyn, Handel and Mozart. In poetry, no genius surpasses Shakespeare, Milton or Longfellow. In philanthropy especially has the Christian religion played its part by teaching that "Faith without works is dead." The heroes of the anti-slavery party came with books like "Uncle Tom's Cabin," that stirred the pulses of mankind. They taught that we were all one in

Christ. In like manner the Peabodys, Plimsolls, Howards, Frys and Nightingales, all found encouragement in their benevolent work by the belief that their labours were acceptable to a higher power than man. Secularism deals in general principles only. Christianity is vital with examples of its teachings. The literature of the world is full of illustrations of the advantages of having object lessons in morality. When men believe that Christ sacrificed himself for the world, they will make sacrifices of their own ease and comfort, for the benefit of those around them. The moral effects of the atonement appeals even to the minds of the savage. In the March of 1889, the hurricane swept over the island of Samoa, stranding the vessels in the harbour, and causing havoc and ruin to the shipping. Among the vessels wrecked was the German war vessel. At that time Mataafa, the Samoan chieftain was at war with Germany; yet having learnt the simple story of Christ, he, as he gazed on the ruin worked by the hurricane, forgot his enmity to the Germans, and said, "did not Jesus die to save us all, and shall not we try to do something to save these people?" Actuated by these Christian sentiments, he set his followers to work to save the lives of the very men who were at war with him. In that supreme moment in his mind there were no Germans and no Samoans, no savage and no civilised, they were "all one in Christ Jesus." Had these Germans been wrecked on that coast a few years before, the savages might have rescued them; but if they did so, it would have been to fatten and eat them. This change in the savage mind is an illustration of the benefits flowing from a system that puts before its votaries the picture of a model man who is a personal Redeemer.

Secularism claims to be devoid of all supernaturalism, hence it has nothing to do with a belief in the existence of God. Yet this belief is essential to the moral advancement of the race. Voltaire is reported to have said, "If there were no God, it would be necessary to invent one in the interest of morality." Anthony Collins, one of the ablest of English Deists, used to send his servants to church for fear they might rob him. Theism must necessarily have a greater influence for good than Atheism, for it teaches that when no human eye sees, the infinite mind

is fully cognisant of our every act. It teaches that there is a continuous scrutiny of our lives; believing this, we will not sin even in secret. A beautiful illustration of this is given in the old Testament in the case of Jeseph. When tempted by Potiphar's wife to do wrong, he said, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" and he fled from temptation. Had he been a Secularist, he might have seen in this woman's affection a stepping stone to worldly advancement, and blinded by passion have entered on a career of sin. Therefore Theism has an immense advantage over Atheism, in that it purifies the mind, by impressing it with the thought that nothing is done without God's knowledge.

Secularism claims that that only is moral which tends to human happiness. If I can then show that Atheism offers no comfort in the hour of affliction; if it never dries a tear or soothes a sorrow, then I show that it fosters misery, and according to the morality of Secularism, is immoral. How can it further human happiness? The business of Atheism is to bring an indictment against the goodness and wisdom of God; hence it dwells only on the dark side of human existence, seeking in the crimes and miseries of life something to give plausibility to its cold negations. It glories to tell of Cholera, Small-pox, Leprosy, and other scourges that befall our race. It interrogates nature that it may be able to picture her in her morbid moods. It loves to tell of earthquakes, of hurricane, of nature's war between tooth and nail. It even questions the insect and the reptile, and dives down into the darkest and most uncanny places of the earth for weapons for its armoury. Its disciples, living in this atmosphere of censure grow morose and hypercritical; they feel that they are in the forlorn hope, and are ever preaching that man was made to mourn. Therefore they cannot be happy, and not being happy according to their own teachings, are immoral.

How different is the picture of human life offered by Christian Theism. It is sunny and full of social beauties. It fills the atmosphere of our life with the light of love. Its firmament is full of stars of hope and signs of promise. Death is but the portal through which we pass to everlasting day. It comes to us when our hearts are sad

with bereavement, with a handful of loving forget-me-nots, reminding us of a sweet communion beyond the grave. By faith can we in fancy step beyond this globe, look higher than the stars, and see the very beacon lights, aye, hear the sweet hosannas from the headlands of eternity. It explains all, shows us how pain and trouble are but the means to strengthen and discipline our lives, fitting us for that bright abode beyond the shades of death. It interrogates nature for vastly different purposes to those of Atheism. It is to study the handiwork of God, to gaze on His pictures of the sublime and the beautiful, to revel in His treasures of design. Like the bee that gathers from dangerous plants its honey, so does Theism extract from every ill a joy, and scatters roses in the pathway of mankind, from the cradle to the grave. It gives us "sermons in stones, books in the running brooks, and good in everything." It says, "come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

What comfort can Atheism offer to a mother weeping over her sick babe, the first fond pledge of her husband's love; a mother whose affection for her little one surpasses all other feelings; who wakes instinctively at midnight, that she may suckle her child, who if need be would go through fire and flame, contend with embattled armies, and overcome a world of trouble for the life of her infant. Let Atheism go to this woman in her affliction, and try its hand at consolation with its barren negations. Let it tell her that her offspring is only a fortuitous concourse of atoms, controlled by the laws of cohesion, affinity and other properties of matter. With a wise look it discourses on the problem of life, explains to the parent that the youngster has no more immortality than the blown out flame of a candle, and the only comfort it can offer is that when the babe ceases to live, it ceases to weep. Will all this make the woman happy? Is it not a thousand times better to tell that woman that Jesus loved the children, that he took the little ones in his arms and blessed them, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

Atheism has no comfort at the mouth of the open grave; even the eloquence of an Ingersoll, cannot wipe away its dread melancholy, it but intensifies it. Speaking at his

brother's grave, he says, "life is but a narrow vale between the barren peaks of two eternities; we strive in vain to look beyond the heights; we cry aloud, but the only answer is the echo of our wailing cry." He speaks of it in terms of despair. While he melts us with his touching pathos, he holds out no hope. Mr. Holyoake, in his burial service contradicts him, and says, "Death is the soothing anodyne to all our woes." "The end of life's fitful fever." His burial service, written not as Ingersoll's oration was prepared, when the heart was full of grief, is full of the cant platitudes of the Secularistic school, and instead of consoling the bereaved, it but carries the controversy to the verge of the open grave. The depressing influence of Atheism on the mind of the aged is seen in the case of David Hume's mother; carried away by the brilliant achievement of her son, she was led to renounce her faith in Christianity, and wrote from her death-bed the following:—

"My dear Son.—My health has failed me, I am in deep decline. My philosophy affords me no comfort in my distress. I am left without the consolations of religion, and my mind is sinking into despair. You can afford me some substitute for the loss of the hopes of religion. I pray you hasten home to console me, or at least write to me the consolations that philosophy affords at the dying hour."

Clearly the creed of the Secularists, with its "one word at a time" *dogma*, does not satisfy the spiritual cravings of mankind, nor does it offer the highest incentive to self-improvement. Christianity is the safe side. If the Atheist is wrong his position is terrible to contemplate. If the Christian is wrong he has lost nothing. His religion ennobled his life, and left him as well off at the end of the chapter. To quote the words of Robert Burns:

"If there's another world, he lives in bliss,
And if there's not, he did his best for this."

Religion gives us support, Atheism takes it away. Here is the ivy! it has grown for years over the face of a stout wall, and with its feeble tendrils it clings to the solid mass for support. It is the ivy of mankind clinging to

the stout wall of faith. The sceptic says, "down with the wall, it is useless." The ivy says, "no, it is my sustainer and upholder;" and clings the more closely to it.

CHAPTER III.

SECULARISM AN IGNOMINIOUS FAILURE.

In my last chapter I dealt with the leading dogma of the Secularist. This is not sufficient. I mean to criticise their platform in detail, but here we are confronted with a great difficulty; there is no platform upon which they are unanimously agreed. The Sectarianism of Secularism is unique, inasmuch as Secularists disagree about matters of primary importance. In 1870 a debate was held in London between George Jacob Holyoake, the father of Secularism, and his former pupil, Charles Bradlaugh, to determine whether Secularism was based on Atheism. Mr. Holyoake said, "If Secularism must be based on Atheism, what better helpers of humanity are we than the priests? They have to wait until they have convinced an enquirer of Theism before they can give him a foundation for moral duty; and the Atheistic Secularist has to wait in like manner until he has furnished to the human mind a satisfactory map of the untraceable path to nothing." Clearly Mr. Holyoake does not believe that Secularism involves Atheism. Mr. Bradlaugh says in the same debate,—“Although at present it may be perfectly true that all men who are Secularists are not yet Atheists, I put it to you as also perfectly true that in my opinion, the logical consequence of the acceptance of Secularism must be that the man gets to Atheism, ‘if he has brains enough to comprehend.’” This shows us that the aims and objects of Secularism are differently stated by different champions of it. I purpose, however, dealing with the platform of the Secularists, as stated by the National Secular Society, of which Mr. Bradlaugh was formerly president, and of which Mr. Geo. W. Foote is now president. It is the most representative organisation they have, and that is not saying much. Secularism has always been a failure. The Secularism of George

Jacob Holyoake was but the effort to weld to the organisation the scattered elements of the bankrupt Socialism of Robert Owen. In thus writing against Secularism I am not vilifying my former associates. If I refer to individuals it is to illustrate principles, and to show that this system is incapable of socially saving the world. There are good and bad among Freethinkers as among most classes. Although I am confident that there is more evidence of human depravity in Freethought societies than in Christian churches for this reason that a shady life is a barrier to continuance in the Christian church, but it is not in a Secular Society. Repentance is necessary, before one enters the Christian church, and a continuance in "well doing," is obligatory on every citizen of the kingdom of Christ. I found in the Freethought party two distinct classes of men. The one class had rejected Christianity on what they believed to be philosophical grounds; the other class were anti-theological bigots, many of whom were Atheists, because they were either too mean to pay for a clergyman, or too immoral to be admitted to the membership of a church. Prof. Haeckel, the celebrated German materialist, candidly admits this in his work on the "Natural History of Creation," and designates the two classes by the respective titles of sensuous and scientific materialists. My first introduction professionally to the Freethought platform was owing to the delinquencies of one of these sensuous materialists. One of our lecturers was in the habit of imbibing over freely, and this evening he was too intoxicated to take his usual place on the platform at the Theatre Royal, Sydney. I was asked to act for the evening, and the manner in which I acquitted myself so satisfied the members of the Sydney branch of the Australasian Secular Association that when Mr. Bright vacated the Gaiety Theatre (another theatre then in the hands of the Freethinkers) for a trip to New Zealand, the association took it up, and offered me their platform, which I filled till the arrival of Mr. Thomas Walker in Sydney. There is a danger in young men being captivated by the sophistries of the intellectual class, and then led on to associate with the depraved ones, whose influence for evil would corrupt their good manners, and reduce them to

their own level. Owing to this and the heterogeneous characteristics of Secularists, Secularism has always failed to hold its own as an organized movement. Its history is a record of anarchy and dissension, of follies and of failures. While on the Freethought platform I could not help contemplating this, and feeling that there was something radically wrong. Scripture latterly came to my aid, saying, "If this council or this work be of man it shall come to nought, but if it be of God it cannot be overthrown."

Whether we contemplate the cause of Secularism in England or Australia, it has the same story to tell and the same moral to point. Between the *Secular Review* edited by Saladin, and Mr. Bradlaugh's paper, the *National Reformer* there has been an internecine war. One of the writers to the *Secular Review* (Lara), wrote a pamphlet, entitled "Peter versus Ananias," in which he depicts Mr. Bradlaugh as the champion liar. Another opponent of Mr. B's published a biography of him, composed of such malicious slanders that he was compelled to prosecute him for libel.

Mr. Holyoake, who was noted for his polished method of address, in the debate I have already mentioned, confesses that Secularism was a failure in England. I quote his own words:—"Mr. Bradlaugh wanders through this country proclaiming the principles of Secularism as though they were Atheism, and arguing with the clergy. Why, when I go now to Glasgow, to Huddersfield, to Liverpool, to Manchester, I find the Secularists there unadvanced in position; even in Northampton, which Mr. Bradlaugh knows, I found them, lately meeting on a second floor of a public house, where I found them twenty or twenty-five years ago. In Glasgow they are in the same second-rate position they were in twenty-five or thirty years ago. What have we been doing? Does not this show an obsolete policy? Ranters, Muggletonians, Mormons, and men of their stamp, are superior to acting so; any party in the present state of opinion in the world could, with thought, have done more; the most ordinary sects build or hire temples, and other places, where their people can decently meet. Mr. Bradlaugh, with all his zeal and appeals, finds to-day that all London can do is to put up

this kind of a place in which we now meet, opposite a lunatic asylum, where people, so the enemy says, naturally expect to find us."

Twenty years has made no perceptible improvement in the party in Britain, and now that it has lost its figure-heads, Mr. Bradlaugh having drifted into politics, and Mrs. Besant having plunged into Theosophy, its future existence is a very doubtful matter indeed. The reports of its last two conferences in England were like walls of despair. Its history in Australia contains just as pitiable a tale as that which comes from Britain. I remember the time when in every important town in New Zealand there was a little Freethought Association; now they are as dead as last autumn's leaves. In Dunedin when Mr. Stout (now Sir Robert Stout) was president of the local association, the Freethinkers built a splendid hall on the site of the first church in Dunedin. This was considered ominous, and they boasted that, just as they had erected their temple of liberty on the site of a church, so would the standard of Freethought yet float over the ruin of Christianity. Some of the clergy, however, took a different view of it. Professor Salmond, a Presbyterian divine, shortly after the erection of the building, addressed a meeting in it, and quoted the old saying, "They did not intend the devil to have all the good things." He then predicted that the hall would eventually fall into the hands of the Christians, and that it would make a good mission hall. Since that time the Freethought Association has become defunct, and the prediction of that divine has been fulfilled to the letter.

I have read that the very house that Voltaire lived in has been converted into a book depot for the Genevan Bible Society, and that the printing press employed to print his works has since been used to print Bibles. Surely this and kindred other things should be proof to Freethinkers of the folly of throwing away their ammunition on the Gibraltar of Christianity.

The only hall in Australia that for years Freethinkers could call their own was that in Newcastle, N.S.W., and they would not have had this one if I had not urged it on them, pointing out that every petty sect had a meeting-house except themselves. I invested in the venture a

portion of my receipts from a debate with the Rev. John Evans, Baptist minister. This started the project, and finally they raised sufficient to build a small hall on leasehold property. It is now, however, in a very dilapidated condition, and the Freethought movement in Newcastle is in a flickering state. Freethought virtually received its quietus in New South Wales when Sir Henry Parkes threatened to take away the license of those theatres that were let on Sunday evenings for lectures. It withered and died under this blow. Mr. Symes wrote in the *Liberator* at that time a few words of counsel to the Sydneyites, and he said, "Were there no crowbars?" He says he believes in "reason, not riot," so I suppose he wanted the Sydneyites to reason with crowbars. No wonder that some of the clergy won't debate with him when these are the arguments he proposes to employ. Tertullian said that "the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church." Out of the persecutions instituted by the pagans came a sturdy phalanx of Christians ready to do and to dare all that became a Christian for the cause of Christ. They willingly faced death for their views—

"Dying as their fathers died
For the faith their foes denied."

Freethought can never brave persecution. Ingersoll candidly admits that had he lived in the times of persecution, and they proposed to torture him, if they asked if he would believe what was currently taught, he would say "Yes, anything you like, but stop that infernal machine."

Freethought, with but few exceptions, has hid its head before the petty persecutions of Colonial Governments, thus signing its own death warrant by proving its inability to hold its own in the struggle for existence. Here in Melbourne for some years back a most pitiable condition of things has prevailed in the Australasian Secular Association. Some of the members of this body developed different political views to those of Joseph Symes, consequently they were ostracised. They were driven from the executive of the association; their leaders solemnly tried and found guilty of heresy. A dark conspiracy was

unearthed, having for its object the dethronement of the immaculate Joseph Symes. To-day we do not hear of men being expelled from our churches for their political views; that form of refined liberty is only found in Secularistic societies. These rebellious spirits have been dubbed Anarchists. Some of them were so, and formed an Anarchist Club in Melbourne, which Mr. Symes facetiously designated the "den of thieves," "the Melbourne lunatic club." He described the characters of the men opposed to him in his own choice language. I find that he has called them "vermin," "sharppers," "rogues," "wretches," "asses," &c.—in fact, a little slang dictionary or pocket encyclopedia of vituperation might be culled from the vile, unclean pages of the *Liberator*. Yet this man, unable to govern his pen, whose stock-in-trade is slander of the grossest kind, is the champion of Secularism in Melbourne. When Fryer (one of the leaders of this dark conspiracy), in consort with others, left the association, Mr. Symes says they cleared out with a portion of the funds. This act of peculation so incensed the "lionhearted" Joseph, as Mr. W. W. Collins once called him, that he denounced the ringleaders of the "gang" as worse than Judas Iscariot, for Judas after betraying his Master did return the money and go away and hang himself, but these fellows neither returned the cash nor yet did they go away and hang themselves. But why should Mr. Symes object to anarchy? It is but the atheism of politics. If the Universe is run without intelligence, why shouldn't Society be managed without brains? Clearly anarchy is but the logical outcome of Atheism in politics. The Melbourne association continued in a chronic state of ill-health. On Thursday evening, May 29th, the disease came to a crisis and the association took a fit. A pitched battle was fought between ladies and gentlemen of the movement, with such missiles as tables and chairs. Scarcely a month later the anarchist again invaded the Hall of Science; they captured the building, and held it for several hours, but were eventually driven from it after a serious fight.

It is said history repeats itself, and so it seems. In medieval times the Church of Rome was torn in twain by the contentions of rival pontiffs; one took up his residence

at Avignon, in France, and the other at Rome, in Italy. The Pope of Rome ex-communicated the Pope of Avignon and the Pope of Avignon ex-communicated the Pope of Rome. This papal quarrel is known in history as "The Schism of the West." To-day we find the Rationalists trying to imitate the Romanist. And so Mr. Symes denounces those who have set up a rival shop, as "Rogues, Asses, and Wretches," and they retaliate in the same refined spirit. These are the people who are going to teach the world how to settle their disputes by arbitration, and who claim to be heralds of Light and Love.

I have put into the following verses a little of their doings:—

Come list to me, and I'll tell you a story of our times,
 About a savage rumpus in the camp of Joseph Symes;
 They called each other ugly names, they labelled each a rogue,
 They've had a really lively time, for anarchy's in vogue. -
 Hard names were insufficient, for I'm told by one who knows
 They reasoned with each other by exchanging heavy blows!
 With a table did a big one knock a little fellow down—
 A creature of St. Joseph's, by the common name of Brown.
 The room was left in darkness, for some scamp turned down the
 light,
 And anarchist and atheist were in a sorry plight.
 They pride themselves on reason, and loudly talk of freedom,
 The world would surely rue it if e'er it were to heed 'em.
 The malcontents, Symes tells us, are a savage "den of thieves,"
 Composed of rogues and lunatics, he verily believes;
 For in the *Liberator* he calls out in loud complaint
 That compared with these arch-traitors, why, Judas was a saint!
 This fight occurred some months ago, and might have been forgot
 If it were not that fresh troubles are brewing in the pot.
 This new hubbub, 'tis sad to state, commenced with a dear friend,
 Whose devotion seemed so lasting, Joe thought it ne'er would end.
 But there came into this city a rival to their Joe,
 A little tom-tit lecturer, who brought about this woe;
 He came to fill the platform, just for only a few times,
 To let the friends in Sydney hear the eloquence of Symes;
 And while he pranced and shouted here, he won Tom Phillip's
 heart,
 Till with that little lecturer he was very loathe to part.
 But now a dark conspiracy to hoist the iron Joe,
 The mighty man of law-suits, the herculean *blow*;
 So when from Sydney he came back, he found that things were
 changed,
 And some of his old backers, in his absence were estranged.

The loud murmurs of his children, cantankerous and bad,
Quite upset his even temper, and sent him ramping mad,
These turncoats told him to his face, they didn't want him back;
They got on well without him, and he'd better take the sack.

When six or more long years ago he came unto these shores,
He never thus expected to be hunted out of doors;
And he and Tommy Phillips worked together, hand in hand,
Unitedly resolved to sweep the Bible from the land.
For these long years he plodded on, and not a word was said,
For Tommy said his prayers to Joe before he went to bed;
The anarchists he fought against, and did as he was told,
Assisting to extinguish the rebellion in the fold.

But now, alas! 'tis sad to state, no harmony exists,
For Tom no longer worships Joe, but in heresy persists.
The Christian foes of Joseph can now afford to smile
At the way his friends are fighting and have been all the while.
Now sadly Tommy learns that Joe is not the man to clear,
For there's money in the business, and he means to stay right here;
And now they fight and wrangle as to who shall lead the van,
Symes the iron Atheist, or Collins, the foppish man.

Men still love to worship, and adore a higher power,
From savage in his cavern, to sage within his bower;
If they do not worship God, they flatter some poor fool,
Who wastes his time in preaching the vagaries of their school.
How grander far in worship to sing our Master's praise,
By faith to live in Jesus, to imitate his way;
To be by love inspired in a calm and Christian state,
Far from anarchist squabbles and Atheistic hate.

In confirmation of what I have written, I will let the rival parties speak for themselves. Mr. Symes, in the *Liberator* for the first of this month, says: "Poor Phillips has become the head, tail, or one of the heads, or one of the tails, of a gang of larrikins and larrikinesses. On May 29th he broke into the Hall of Science, smashed the door fastenings, and behaved in a most disgraceful manner for two or three hours." How these Freethinkers love one another! Again, in a previous issue of the same paper for April 19th, in an article on "The meanest people in the world," he wrote of Phillips: "No explanation of his sudden change of front has been given; he took one hour and a half to pour out endless streams of Billingsgate upon me, but instead of injuring me he produced blood spitting." In reply to this and other assertions of Mr. Symes, Mr. Phillips and fourteen members of the executive council of the A. S. A. issue a manifesto,

defending themselves, and setting forth serious charges against Mr. Symes. As samples of which I quote the following extracts: "‘Billingsgate!’" You sir, know well the story of the great Daniel O’Connell and Biddy Moriarty. Biddy was more than a match for any man or woman in Ireland before she met O’Connell, and in the encounter with him, it was declared by her backer that she was defeated. Sir, if Biddy Moriarty and the great Daniel O’Connell were living in Melbourne this day, I would back you against the pair of them, for a Billingsgate contest. And as a proof of this I would refer your readers to your *Liberator*, especially the last two months. Sir, my opinion of you is that your mouth is so foul, that you have no right ideas of its out-put." In the same article Mr. Phillips also writes: "If Moses was in Melbourne and was short of *brass*, if he only got you melted down, he would soon have material enough for another *serpent*." Mr. Symes had sneered at the education of those opposed to him, and this is the way Mr. Phillips replies: "I well remember when a boy in the old country, in the Wesleyan Church there was a quarterly collection for Kingswood and Woodhouse Grove school. The poor people who could not afford to educate their own children were requested to put their money into the collection plates so as to educate young parsons, and parson’s sons; after that they boast of their education and sneer at their dupes."

In the *Liberator* for April 26th, Mr. Symes has an article entitled "A plain statement," in which he sets forth the condition of Secularism in Melbourne:—"The present condition of things in the Melbourne A. S. A., though far from what it ought to be, is somewhat improved.

"For three years a small knot of *sharpers* have been plotting the destruction of the association, and this small knot of sharpers is backed up by a small *mob of dumb-driven cattle*, with neither will nor intellect of their own. To these have joined a few respectable and sensible individuals who know nothing of the character of the clique they side with, and are quite ignonant of the merits of the gurrrel."

"This central group of persons, incapable of leading and too stupid to follow, whose only talent is a well-

developed capacity for mischief, made a dead set about three months since to get me out of the presidential chair. The post is one of trouble and disquiet to me. I would not fill it for £5 a week; *I know the very existence of the association depends on my doing so.*"

It is evident from the last passage that Secularism in Melbourne has sunk lower than its bitterest detractors would have you believe, when, if Mr. Symes were to vacate the chair, it would dissolve. Mr. Symes claims that it is a one-man affair, and this is the outcome of his boasted six years work in Melbourne. This is Freethought priestcraft! Why, let all our clergy betake themselves from these shores and still Christianity will remain fresh and green, "a thing of beauty and a joy for ever." Mr. Symes says the association has been composed partly of "sharppers and dumb-driven cattle, &c." Then for the past few years he has been using his powers to bring the young men of this city into the company of these questionable characters. No wonder that he confessed in a recent number of the *Liberator* that he had not been able to reform the vicious. It would seem that he was assisting in the spread of vice by upholding an institution composed of sharppers and what not. The word of Mr. Phillips is, in my opinion, more worthy of credence than that of Mr. Symes for these reasons. He has "no axe to grind;" he is not in the receipt, as Mr. Symes is, of £400 a year, for giving one lecture a week; and he faithfully served the Freethought movement for years past, both before and after Mr. Symes' arrival in this country "without money and without price." Mr. Symes has his billet to keep—Mr. Phillips has no such sordid motives.

From what has been written, it will be clear to the reader that infidelity can never have an abiding place in the world's affections; it comes and goes like the plague, and is never likely to exist long in a community that looks well to the mental health of its members. If it is going to reform the world, it would be well for its leaders to make a start at once, and make less row about it.

At present all our educational and benevolent institutions are in the hands of Christians. We have Sunday-schools and Bands of Hope to entertain and brighten the leisure time of our children. Dorcas Societies for

providing clothing for the poor; Temperance organisations for encouraging sobriety; Rescue homes and other institutions designed to make the world better than we found it. The Salvation Army, which as an organisation is several years the junior of Secularism, is yet able to point to a hundredfold more secular results from its efforts for the reclamation of mankind. The true Secularism is in Christianity alone. Scepticism is a failure; Christianity a glorious triumph. It has been assailed over and over again in its infancy. Hercules, like it, had to strangle the serpents of infidelity that coiled around the cradle. Celsus, Porphy and Julian, attacked it with many of the same arguments used against it to-day. Yet still it lives "a thing of beauty and a joy for ever." In no age of the world was there so much religious activity as now. The age of Reason is the age of Faith. Science but aids us to preach the tidings of peace and goodwill to the sons of men.

CHAPTER IV.

UTILITY THE TEST OF MORALITY.

The first clause in the principles and objects of the National Secular Society is, "Secularism teaches that conduct should be based on reason and knowledge. It knows nothing of divine guidance or interference; it excludes supernatural hopes and fears; it regards happiness as man's proper aim, and utility as his moral guide." Secularism in thus denying the divine origin of morals, and concentrating man's attention solely on this world, enters into direct conflict with Christianity, which teaches, "Seek ye first the kingdom of Heaven, and afterwards all things shall be added to you," or again, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul." While Christianity thus places our spiritual affairs before our temporal prosperity, still it teaches Secularism; a Secularism based on reason and knowledge—by making our future welfare dependent

upon our conduct here. To use the words of James, "What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and in lack of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled; and yet ye give them not the things needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so, faith if it have not works is dead in itself." Jesus in his figurative description of the judgment gives expression to the same sentiments. In rewarding the good, the Master said, "I was an hungered and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked and ye clothed me: I was sick and ye visited me: I was in prison and ye came unto me." Then shall the righteous ask, when did they do all this; "and the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me." The Sermon on the Mount is largely an address on Ethics, teaching that chastity, peacefulness, charity and other virtues are indispensable to the Christian life. Thus Christianity embraces all that is good in Secularism, but puts before us a higher motive for right living. Christ insisted on chastity in an age of sensuality. Even Lecky in his history of European morals, said that it was ages after the time of Christ before society, even in the most enlightened centres of the world, regarded chastity as a virtue, yet Christ taught it in an age of social impurity, and explained how its safeguard was in purity of heart. The beauty of Christian morality is that it is subjective as well as objective. It cleanses our desires, and thereby fortifies us against temptation. Clearly a system that does this teaches the true Secular gospel, a gospel that enables us to make the best of both worlds—the one that is and the one that is to come. Secularism contains no lessons in the beautiful and true that are not found in Christianity; while its deformities and vagaries are antagonistic to Christ's teachings. Secularism bears the same relation to Christianity that the moon bears to the sun; its light is but reflected from the Sun of Righteousness. The ethics of Christianity are the ethics of progress, as I will demonstrate in a later chapter. The clause I have

cited from the principles of the N. S. Society says that utility is the test of morality; it endeavours to divorce morality from religion, yet they are as closely wedded as man and wife. The Secularist contends that morality is the science of conduct and like other sciences of human origin. Just as philology is the science of language, Geology the science of the formation of the earth, so is morality in like manner the science of conduct. If this were so, naturally we would expect that it would be subject to the same law that governs these products of man's observation and thought—the law of progress. It would commence from early beginnings and grow with the intellectual advancement of the race. Take Geology and we can trace it back to the time of Cuvier. Prior to his time it was unworthy the name of a science. Similarly in seeking the genesis of any science we can trace it back to simple beginnings. Chemistry goes back beyond the days of Cavendish, until it is lost in the wild superstitions of the alchemist. Astronomy climbed up from the rude astrology of our primitive forefathers, who pretended to divine the destiny of man from the stars. The follower of Hippocrates, can trace the science of physiology back to the soothsaying of the old Augurs. Our ideas on Biology have been revolutionised since the time of Aristotle. But morality has not been subject to these mutations; it is the same yesterday, to-day and forever. The moral maxims taught by Jesus are precisely the same as those taught by the latest moral philosopher. This impossibility to improve on the morality of the New Testament seems to me to demonstrate that it is from a perfect source—from God. If it were not so it would be subject to the same law of change that prevails in other sciences. Henry Thomas Buckle, whose name is included in "Half Hours with the Freethinkers," and is claimed as a Freethinker, says in his celebrated "History of Civilisation in England," "For there is unquestionably nothing to be found in the world which has undergone so little change as those great dogmas of which moral systems are composed. To do good to others, to sacrifice for their benefit your own wishes, to love your neighbour as yourself, to forgive your enemies, to restrain your passions, to honor your parents, to respect

those who are set over you. These and a few others, are the sole essentials of morals; but they have been known for thousands of years, and not one jot or tittle has been added to them by all the sermons, homilies and text-books which moralists and theologians have been able to produce."

John Stewart Mill, in his work on Utilitarianism, concedes that no advance has been made on the golden rule. He says, "In the golden rule of Jesus of Nazareth we read the complete spirit of the ethics of utilitarianism; to do as you would be done by, and to love your neighbour as yourself, constitutes the ideal perfection of utilitarian morals."

It has been objected to this that there are other things we cannot improve on; the multiplication table, for instance. A Freethinker writes to me saying, you cannot improve on a square or a circle. Certainly you cannot improve on elementary truths; but you can improve on systems built upon human endeavour. Elementary truths are from God; when you discover them you are simply finding certain truths concerning his works. A square, circle, &c., is not an invention, but a discovery. We cannot improve on oxygen, but we can on chemistry; we cannot improve on the multiplication table, because it is a statement of facts, but we can on systems for teaching arithmetic. You cannot improve on a square or a circle, but you can on geometry; and we have done so. The argument for the divine authorship of morals is that we have not been able to improve on that system of morals taught by Jesus.

It has been urged that Christ was not the first to teach morality; that in some respects he was anticipated by Guatama Buddha, an Indian sage, and Confucius, a Chinese philosopher. The golden rule, it is said, was taught before Jesus uttered it. This is true. Christ never claimed that it was an original utterance, but distinctly and emphatically says that it was taught by the law and the prophets—"Do unto others whatsoever ye would that others should do unto you, *for this is the law and the prophets.*" This spirit of reciprocity was taught by Moses; he said, "Thou shalt not avenge or bear a grudge against the children of thy people, *but thou shalt*

love thy neighbour as thyself." Again it is taught in regard to strangers—"But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself, for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God." The golden rule was therefore taught in Judaism before it was taught in any other system. A study of the history of India and China will show that the Hebrew traditions and morality were introduced at the dawn of their life, and it is probable that from these traditions their sages got their inspiration. Christ was the first teacher, because even the morality of Judaism came from him—"Before Abraham was I am." He was the contemporary, in his divine character, of all ages.

When we come to contrast the ethics of Christianity with those of Secularism we discern that its great weakness is that it is content to enumerate certain broad principles of morality that it borrowed from Christianity, and then leaves their application in individual cases to the untutored intellect of man, thus making morality simply a matter of expediency and of public opinion. The Utilitarian says that "we must judge an act by its results; bad acts lead to misery; good conduct to happiness." This is really only another way of stating the Pauline aphorism, "As a man sows so shall he reap," or the statement of Christ, "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." Christ and his servant Paul, however, did not leave the matter there; they were not content to indulge in mere generalities, but they specified the nature of those acts that led to misery. They taught morality in details as well as in generalities. They not only told us of the favourable and unfavourable winds, but they gave us a chart of the sea of life, specifying the whirlpools and hidden shoals upon which our frail barques may be wrecked in our voyage through it. They gave us an abundance of moral maxims, beautiful pictures and parables, illustrating the evil of wrong and the benefits of right living. Christ himself is a glorious object-lesson in morality, a perfect model of what a man should be. Strange it is that although his teachings and conduct as a teacher are so minutely described, there is no record of his personal appearance left us. We know not whether

he was a tall man or a short man; whether he had silken tresses of white, or the dark hair of the Oriental; whether his eyes were of azure blue, or brilliant brown. His outward appearance is left undescribed, but we have a perfect photograph of his moral character. Had it been otherwise, the woman with her golden tresses would have said (had such been like our Saviour's) to her less favoured sisters, "I am more like Jesus than you are;" the boy with his blue eyes would have grown vain of qualities not the outcome of his will; the man of tall and sinewy frame would have imagined that he was especially blest for having a form like that of our Master. Now, however, he only resembles Jesus whose life is devoted to the welfare of his brother man.

Christianity therefore puts before us an unfailing and unfluctuating guide to morality; while Secularism offers us a mere "will-o'-the-wisp," that can be endorsed as readily by the sensualist as the saint. Of what use to the masses of mankind are the elaborate treatises on morals written by Spencer, Mill, Bain, or Clifford, replete with ponderous sophisms and uninviting abstractions? Nor are the popular tracts of Bradlaugh and Besant of any more advantage. These speakers recite to their congregations the aphorisms of Bentham, "The greatest good for the greatest number, with the least injury to any." But this maxim to the majority of people is utterly useless to them. If I go to the savage of the Pacific Islands, with his views on polygamy and marriage by capture, and preach this doctrine to him, he will tell me that he regards his method of living as consonant with human happiness. Buchner in his work on "Matter and Force" tells a story of a savage who was asked to define the difference between right and wrong. The savage at first seemed unable to make any distinction, but after further explanation he said, "It is good for me to steal wives of other men, but very wrong when they steal my wives." Let Atheists explain their Utilitarianism to him and he would say that it was the principle upon which he always acted. It was the pursuit of happiness that led him to adopt marriage by capture. The polygamist upholds polygamy on the same grounds. Therefore, leave morality to this test, and it will be dependent

for its basis upon the changing character of human caprice.

Robert Ingersoll advises us to say to our children, "Honesty is the best policy; I have tried both" That, after all, is only Mr. Ingersoll's opinion. Many a thief has tried both, and has come to the opposite conclusion. Christianity teaches that honesty is not a policy, but a principle enforced by divine authority. It does not leave each individual to settle the expediency of it, but insists upon it as a matter of conscience.

At the last meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science a paper was read by Mr. Sutherland contending for a physiological basis for morals, and maintaining that the accepting of such would necessitate the giving up of the popular belief in the divine origin of morality. The writer seemed to overlook the fact that Revelation had long before taught what Science is only now revealing to us, that every ungodly act is attended with physical as well as spiritual ruin. This idea of a physiological basis of morals is no new thing, but a crude rendition of the teachings of Paul—"As a man sows so shall he reap," "For he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." The law of inheritance was taught in the Old Testament—is, in fact, among its earliest instructions. Is not this a powerful argument in favour of the claims of Christianity when we find, although it was established in an age of superstition, yet it is abreast of all the latest discoveries in Science? It teaches, as Science teaches, that righteousness tends to life and happiness, while sin brings death and ruin to the race. The highest aim of Utilitarianism, it is said by its advocates, is to perpetuate and improve the species. This was first taught man upon the day of creation by God when he instructed him to "Be fruitful, and multiply and replenish the earth." Secularism is like the proverbial jackdaw. When it appears in a presentable costume, it is because it has decked itself out in the plumage of another. Naturally it is an ugly bird that tries to hide its hideousness under the ethical drapery of religion.

CHAPTER V.

CHRISTIANITY THE FRIEND OF PROGRESS.

“Secularism affirms that progress is only possible through liberty, which is at once a right and a duty, and therefore seeks to remove every barrier to the fullest equal freedom of thought, action and speech.” “Secularism declares that theology is condemned by reason as superstitious, and by experience as mischievous, and assails it as the historic enemy of progress.”

“Secularism accordingly seeks to dispel superstition; to spread education; to disestablish religion; to rationalise morality; to promote peace; to dignify labor; to extend material well-being; and to realise the self-government of the people.”

Each article here set forth in the platform of the National Secular Society, I now proceed to examine and show how Christianity has anticipated Secularism in every theme of practical good contained in its programme, and has gone further than Secularism in promoting the material well-being of mankind. Liberty of thought is the birthright of humanity. Christianity encourages it; it asks no one to surrender their reason on accepting it. It declares that the “truth shall make us free.” Let us see if it does so. Did freedom of thought exist in the primitive churches. I contend that it did from the aphorisms that have come down to us. Paul said, “Prove all things, hold fast that which is good.” Peter in the same spirit said, “Be ready always to give to every man that asketh you a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.” Paul in his Epistle to the Romans pleads for liberation, and deprecates making the observance of the Sunday and other questions matters of faith; he said, “Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.” The most pronounced Freethinker could not demand more than this. Who have really been the men who have done most for liberty. Has it not been men of the Martin Luther type, who came forward with the Bible as the charter of liberty,

and with that book in their hands, they pleaded for the rights of private judgement in matters of religion. When Secularism affirms "that Theology is condemned by reason as superstitious, and by experience as mischievous, and assails it as the historic enemy of progress" it makes the mistake of confounding theology with priestcraft; let it substitute for the word theology, that of priestcraft, and I will endorse its statements.

The history of priestcraft has been a history of tyranny and crime, and the world will never have done its duty till it has purged itself of the last vestige of it. "For there is blood upon the hand still and all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten it." Christ fell a victim to its treachery, and it has ever stood in the way of the extension of his kingdom upon earth. Christianity as taught in the New Testament only mentions one priest to whom we are to bow the knee and that is Christ, who demands from us no surrender of our manhood but who explicitly teaches, "Call no man your father upon the earth, for one is your Father, which is in heaven; neither be ye called masters, for one is your Master, even Christ, But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant." Among the early Christians this instruction was respected, priestcraft was unknown among them, they enjoyed the fullest freedom having equal rights as citizens of the commonwealth of Christ. There were in the church then men of the most diverse characters from the Ethiopian Prince to the Roman proconsul—from the slave to the wealthy merchant. Yet they met around a common table, broke bread together, and enjoyed the fullest freedom compatible with the like privilege to others. Paul said in his epistle to the Galatians, and in effect affirmed the same in nearly all his writings, "There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither bond nor free; there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ." Christianity, in an age of superstition and dark oppression, by the affirmation of the brotherhood of man, commenced to sweep away all unfair social distinctions in the human family even of race, color, country, class or sex; it proclaimed unity in Christ, teaching as emphatically as could be taught the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God, and

in pleading for Christianity, I plead for it as it was in the beginning. I have not come out of infidelity to uphold any creedal crudities, but have engraven on my banner the words "In matters of Faith Unity, in matters of opinion Liberty, and in all things Charity." When the aim of Christianity is to promote brotherly kindness, how can any man who has rationally examined its claims declare it to be the enemy of human progress? No, the truthful verdict must be, it is its best friend.

Let us now pass on to the education question, the next item in the Secularists programme. Here I find that Christianity has also been before it. Solomon taught "Train up a child in the way he shall go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Solomon advocated the education of the young ages before Robert Owen. Scattered throughout his Book of Proverbs are copious and profuse instructions to acquire knowledge. It is one great plea for education. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction;" "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom and the man that getteth understanding." The commission given by Christ to his disciples was "Go and teach all nations." They were to become the spiritual schoolmasters of the world—and when they went forth in accordance with the Master's instructions they visited the most enlightened centres of antiquity. They wandered over the populous portions of Asia Minor, Northern Africa, and Southern Europe. They preached where Homer sang, where Euclid worked out his problems in Geometry, where Socrates had discoursed on Philosophy. Paul visited the famous City of the Seven Hills, and taught on the verge of the Forum that had echoed with the voices of the masters of Roman oratory. Science and Learning have been the handmaids of true religion. Follow down the history of this faith, and you find that just in proportion as mankind became enlightened they became Christianised. The great Reformation of the sixteenth century was heralded by an intellectual upheaval. The study of Astronomy received an impetus from the works of Copernicus and Galileo; Geography from the discoveries of Christopher Columbus,

Vasco da Gama, and Ferdinand Magellan. The Renaissance in art was helped forward by the genius of Michael Angelo and his contemporaries. The new learning, headed by Erasmus, revived the study of the Classics. Politics began to be studied even by the peasantry. And with all this revival in the intellectual world came the invention of the printing press, that sent all this new knowledge throughout the civilised world, carrying light and love alike to the cottage of the peasant and the palace of the king. Right in the midst of this intellectual revival came Martin Luther and his brother reformers preaching the Bible as the rule of faith, and denouncing the errors of priestcraft. He and his colleagues were educated men. Froude calls him the Shakespeare of the German people, and declares that his Bible has been translated into such beautiful German that it is now the criterion of that language. Was there nothing in this wondrous combination of circumstances that seemed to conspire to bring the Reformation to a successful issue? to render rational the belief that "there is a divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will?" The Reformation was the sweetfaced babe of the Gospel, and Knowledge was the tender nurse who waited at its birth. To-day we live in an age of Science, and although Christianity has been bedimmed by the glare of the sun of knowledge, and at times the timid theologians have taken alarm at the destructive criticism of Science: yet as Newman Smyth in his "Old Faiths in a New Light" aptly observes, it is the rising of the sun which in the morning creates a mist that it dispels later on in the day, so with the rising sun of knowledge at times it seems to have beclouded our mental vision, but only that we may have clearer light later on. The Bible to-day is read more and discoursed on more than at any other time. It has been translated into 250 different languages, and the account of the yearly output of our Bible societies reads like a romance. The British and Foreign Bible Society alone issue 10,000 Bibles and parts of Bibles every day. From what has been written the reader can see that Christianity is the friend of learning.

Let us now pass to the next article—the Secularist's Confession of Faith, "To Disestablish Religion." If

by this is meant the separation of Church and State, again I say Amen. Christ said, "My kingdom is not of this world," and it has always suffered from introduction into politics from the day when Constantine sought to make it the dominant religion in Rome. This ambitious, cruel, and vicious monarch saw in the growing power of the Christians a force that he might utilise for his own cause: so he patronised them, and then commenced that paganising of Christianity, with all its concomitant evils, as illustrated in the Church of Rome to-day. Even Dr. Draper in his "Conflict Between Science and Religion" grants that Romanism is but a caricature of Christianity, begotten of this contact with paganism. To make it acceptable to a people habituated to priestcraft, with all its pomp and ritualism, the very statues of the gods were converted into images of saints, and the statue of Venus made to do duty as a representation of the Virgin Mary. Therefore we can join hands with the Secularist in divorcing the Church from the State, and making it self-supporting.

"To Rationalise Morality." This I have treated with in my chapter on "Utility the test of Morality." The next clause is "To Promote Peace." This of all things is taught by Christianity. The Quakers were before Thomas Paine in the advocacy of a peace policy. That well-known infidel compared a commercial nation that went to war to a shopkeeper who put a dog at his door to frighten away his customers. When he uttered these sentiments he was preaching a gospel that Christ taught at the very dawn of our era—"Blessed are the peacemakers." Isaiah and Micah in the self-same words predict that the effect of Christ's teachings will be "that the swords will be beaten into ploughshares and the spears into pruning hooks, nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they war any more." On Christ has been conferred the title of the "Prince of Peace." When he was born the temple of Janus was closed. This was only done in times of peace. The Romans for the first time for centuries were at perfect peace with their neighbours and themselves. The mission of Christ was essentially and thoroughly one of peace and goodwill to men. Let the authority of Christ be recognised

and the day is not far distant when the words of Tennyson will be fulfilled :

“When the war-drum throbs no longer, and the battle flags are furled,
In the parliament of man, the federation of the world.”

No monarch could enter into aggressive warfare if he realised the import of the teaching, “Love your enemies,” &c. He could never address his soldiers on the eve of battle with words culled from the Sermon on the Mount. Of all things, Christianity is a peaceable religion.

“To dignify labour, to extend material well-being.” Was not labour dignified when the Monarch of the Universe was incarnated as a workman and the son of a peasant? Did he not dignify labour when he chose working men for his apostles. All of them were working men with the exception of Judas, who proved to be a traitor. Paul was a tent-maker, and worked at his trade while preaching the gospel. He indicted the words, “Let him that stole steal no more but labour with his hands,” and again, “For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work neither should they eat.” Clearly Christianity teaches that everyone “should be usefully employed for their own and the general good.” Paul in his Epistle to the Colossians, chap. 4, says, “Master render unto your servants that which is *just and equal*; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.” He also gives splendid advice to the servant. “Servants obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart fearing God.” Clearly Christianity teaches diligence on the part of the workmen and justice on the part of the employer.

The closing clause is “to realise self-government of the people.” Christianity imposes no barrier to this. It says, “honor all men,” thus preaching the rights of man. It inculcates submission to the powers that be, thus pleading for constitutional reform and not revolutionary upheavals of society. I think I have thus far step by step examined the creed of the Secularist, and demonstrated that it contains nothing that is for the perpetuation and improvement of the race that is not taught by Christianity, and the elements in it that are

antagonistic to that system are fatal to human welfare. It emphasises the gospel of benevolence, liberty, industry, education and good government; but it teaches that they are but divisions of the great gospel of Christ, and, to insure their unanimous acceptance, ours is the task to labour, to hasten the day when the beautiful shall be the true, the good, the Christ-like, and when our Divine Master, enthroned upon the intellect and affections of the world, shall be universally adored as the King of kings and God of gods.

CHAPTER VI.

OBSTACLES TO BELIEF

There are three important lines of Christian evidence, each of which are invulnerable—the External, Internal, and Experimental. This kind of evidence one would expect would satisfy the mind of any truthseeker on any topic, and ought to be sufficient to convince the most rabid unbeliever. But however satisfactory evidence is, there are always some who, being insufficiently educated in it, or coming to it with diseased judgment, decline to acknowledge its force, and will submit many objections. We need not wonder at this when for a long time some of the most learned of men declined to accept our established conclusions in regard to the heliocentric doctrine of our solar system. Amongst the objectors to it we find no lesser lights than Francis Bacon and Martin Luther. Knowing this we need not be surprised at the number of apparently intelligent men who to-day are opposed to Christianity: and it is with a few of their objections that I purpose dealing with in this chapter. I would illustrate Christianity and its evidence in this way:—An excellent physician provides an infallible cure for a certain complaint, but some of the patients decline to take it until conclusive evidence is advanced that it will do them good. The good doctor is Christ; the medicine he provided, Christianity; the doubtful patient, the Sceptic. To con-

vince this sick man that the medicine is good, I first of all introduce him to an analyst, who has analysed it, and found it composed of great curative properties. The analyst is the Biblical Critic, whose business is to deal with the internal evidence of Christianity. He shows how the Bible is welded together like a beautiful piece of machinery—how, although composed by thirty or forty different authors, who have left sixty-six different works, who wrote, many of them, at different periods of time, and who were of very diverse characters, for there are writings there, both from the pen of the peasant and the king, from high and from low, yet there is a complete design running through the book, showing that there was but one Mind at the back of it, directing the pens of the various writers. In it we find—

“That nothing useless is, or low,
Each thing in its place is best
And what seems but idle show
Strengthens and supports the rest.”

This Analyst, or Biblical Critic, points to prophecy fulfilled, to wonderful miracles wrought, and to a unique morality, as evidence of the wisdom of accepting of this saving medicine.

A second witness is then called to the bedside of the patient. He is a Collector of Herbs. He tells where the ingredients were grown, when they were collected, and by whom. He testifies to the characters of the persons who attended to the doctor's prescription in the manufacture of the elixir of life. This is the Christian Historian, who deals in the outward evidence of Christianity, culled from the works of pagan and Christian writers, who have testified to the truth of Christianity, some of them unconsciously, since its infancy in the first century of era. From the writings of Josephus, Tacitus, Suetonius, Pliny, and others does he bring evidence of the existence of Christianity in their times, and shows that the books of the New Testament, as we have them now, were then regarded as canonical. From the “bridge of history over the gulf of time” does he bring evidence to corroborate that of the Biblical Critic. The last witness gives evidence of a most conclusive character. He is a man who took the medicine and was cured with it, and from

personal experience testifies to its efficacy. This is the experimental evidence. He is the man who says, "I was a drunkard, but the Good Physician took me in hand, and now I am a respectable citizen." He says he can tell of many others who have been similarly cured of the leprosy of sin. On this kind of evidence the majority of intelligent people are made to accept Christianity. However, some are reluctant to receive it. Let us hear their objections, and answer them. One says—"For years I had the bottles of Mormonism on my shelf, and regularly dosed myself with their nostrums, and I found they were only poisoning me." Another said—"I had my stomach impaired by the horrible drugs of Swedenborgianism, and it has seriously impaired my digestion, so I am done with your theological quackeries." My reply is, if there were no genuine medicine there would be no counterfeit. The very existence of the quack is an argument for the doctor. Because poor medicine has been vended that is no argument against the genuine.

Let us now consider some of the popular objections to the internal evidence. They tell us that the morality of the New Testament is defective. The Sermon on the Mount exhorts us to meekness, non-resistance, poverty of spirit, and to take no thought for the morrow. This, they contend, is not moral. Mr. Bradlaugh quotes the words, "He that courts oppression shares the crime," and protests against the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount. It is argued that it is absurd to talk of non-resistance. No Christian country in the world adopts the peace policy. As for taking no thought for the morrow, why it has been thought for the morrow that has set the million wheels of trade in motion. "Before we entrust ourselves to the care of this physician you will require to clear up these difficulties."

"Softly, my friend," says the kindly-faced benevolent friend of the Physician; "I can sympathise with you. I know how men have tortured their spiritual digestive organs with the drugs of Sectarianism, and the poisons of the religious world; but this I offer you is not only medicine for your infirmities, but it's the "Bread of Life," and the very sermon you object to is one of the most nutritious portions of it. First, you object to the Ser-

mon on the Mount, because it inculcates meekness and applauds "the poor in spirit." Now, what is meekness? It is not necessarily self-abasement, but is the opposite term to that of tyranny, and surely you would not favour imperiousness. The meek is defined in the Book, Moses was in his time "meeker than all men," yet he liberated a great people from the bondage of Egypt, and led them by an arduous journey to a better land, and there he established a nation with laws in regard to their social welfare that outrival any we have to-day. The lesson of history prove that "The meek inherit the earth." Socrates, one of the wisest men of antiquity, was essentially a meek man. He stood barefooted in the market place in Athens, conversing with the youth of that famous city, and giving utterance to those wise and beautiful sayings that have rendered his name so dear to the student of philosophy. He compared himself to the midwife that assisted at the birth of a child. He assisted at the birth of an idea; it was not his, but he helped others to give expression to it. In like manner Isaac Newton, of whom England may justly be proud, compared himself to a child standing on the sea-shore picking up pebbles, while the great ocean, undiscovered, lie before him. The great Bard of Avon sings: "In peace there's nothing so becomes a man as modest stillness and humility." The poor in spirit need not court oppression, but the proud in spirit will bring it on themselves. If there were an age when meekness should be inculcated it is now, when the self-sufficiency of man is a barrier to association. Man is a social animal, and to successfully carry out his mission here he must not intrude his individuality to the injury of others. The men who combine and hold together are the meek men. There never was a successful Atheistical association.

When Christ inculcated the peace policy he advocated that which would prevent our commerce from being ruined by the blockading of our ports, our accumulations of the souvenirs of art, science and letters being destroyed by the bombardment of our cities. The policy of non-resistance as taught in the sermon is the policy of the future both among nations and men, "A soft answer

turneth away wrath," but rebellion breeds the poison of hate. Enough, however, has been said on this in the previous chapter.

"Take no thought for the morrow." This is translated in the revised edition "Be not anxious, &c." and where there is the least anxiety, there is the most careful thought. This feverish thought about the affairs of the morrow leads us to neglect the things of to-day, and lose much of the pleasures of life. Herbert Spencer when he went to America pointed out this as a defect in their civilization; everybody seemed in a hurry. Go to our lunatic asylums and inquire what sends so many there, and among the causes, they will tell you "That worry and not work" kills the brain. "Be like the lilies of the field." Henry George in his "Social Problems" but paraphrases this thought when he contrasts man with a herd of buffaloes; and shows how differently society would be if much of this race for individual wealth was checked, and man lived more on Socialistic lines. While thus pleading for more leisure in life, Christianity does not encourage idleness, but distinctly says in the words of Paul, "But if any provide not for his own, especially those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than the infidel."

I have thus far answered your objections to the Sermon on the Mount, and pointed out that what you have called defects, are beauties deeply prophetic of the work "This gospel of peace and goodwill among men" will yet accomplish. I do not say that there are no difficulties in connection with Christianity, but show me a system where you do not find them. The geologist, arithmetician, mathematician, and astronomer, will tell you that each of their schools are possessed of problems that no human mind can solve; but where would be the man who would deprecate the acquisition of these branches of knowledge, or decline to accept the conclusions of science on those grounds? Mr. Talmage illustrates the difficulties of faith in this way. He reads the Bible as he eats fish, when he finds a bone he puts it aside on his plate, and goes on eating the flesh; so when he stumbles on a difficulty in the Bible he places it aside for future solution, and finds sufficient without it to build up his spiritual manhood.

Now, having disposed of your objections to internal evidence, let me hear you on the external. The patient says—"I must say that you have made things appear much more palatable, and if you can clear up all objections in the way you have done this I will put myself under your physician's care. My chief objection to the external evidence is that most, if not all, of your witnesses are Christians, while the Pagans and Jews are silent. Take, for instance, Josephus. The only passage in his works that corroborates Christianity is now very generally recognised to be spurious." "I must object to the statement that the pagan world is silent; they by many of their admissions substantiate Christianity. The testimony of Pliny, Suetonius, Tacitus, Julian, Celsus, and Porphyry is so much unintended evidence in favour of Christianity. That this kind of evidence is inferior to what we get from early Christian writers is true; because if these men testified to the truth of Christianity they would at once cease to be Pagans and become Christians, and then their evidence would not be taken by you because of their Christian characters. You must therefore acknowledge that as soon as one gives complete evidence to the truth of Christianity he becomes a Christian. It is therefore to Christians that we must go for the History of Christianity, just as we expect a Frenchman to write the most correct History of France, or an Englishman that of England. Now then for your objections to the experimental evidence in favour of Christianity. Does it not make better men and women?" "Yes, but how long has it taken to do it. Eighteen hundred years of bloodshed and slavery; eighteen hundred years in which woman has been robbed of her place in society. Tell me how this history experimentally supports Christianity." In regard to slavery the earliest known legislation against it is found reported in the Bible. If a master mutilates a slave, knocks out an eye or a tooth, the man receives his freedom. In Exodus 21, we read, "And he that stealeth a man and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand shall surely be put to death." Kidnapping is made a capital offence. Christianity completely undermined slavery by proclaiming the brotherhood of man. Even Lecky in his "History of Rationalism"

admits this. He says in vol. 2nd, page 259. "But when the fullest allowance has been made for these influences, it will remain an undoubted fact that the reconstruction of society was mainly the work of Christianity; other influences could produce the manumission of many slaves, but Christianity alone could produce the profound change of character that rendered possible the abolition of slavery. There are few subjects more striking, and at the same time more instructive, than the history of that great transition. The Christians did not preach a revolutionary doctrine. They did not proclaim slavery altogether unlawful; at least not until the Bull of Alexander III, in the twelfth century; but they steadily sapped it at its basis by opposing to it the doctrine of universal brotherhood, and infusing a spirit of humanity into all the relations of society. Under Constantine, the old laws for the protection of slaves were enacted with additional provisions, and the separation of the family of the slave was forbidden. At the same time the servile punishment of crucifixion was abolished, but not so much on motives of humanity as on account of the sacred character it had acquired. Very soon a disposition was manifested on all sides to emancipate slaves, and that emancipation was invariably associated with religion. Sunday was especially recommended as the most appropriate day for emancipation, and the ceremony almost invariably took place in a church." In the same way has Christianity brought about the gradual and certain freedom of the slave, so in like manner has it exalted the character of woman. It has said to men, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church," &c. (see Ephesians). It proclaimed that in Christ there was neither Jew nor Greek, bond or free, *male or female*, but they "were all one," or, in other words, had equal rights. As slaves were tolerated in the early times of Christianity, so were women excluded from taking too prominent a part in public matters; but just as slavery was swept by the underlying principles of Christian ethics, so in like manner has the elevation of woman to man's equal been slowly but surely effected. The plea that we have taken eighteen hundred years to accomplish it comes with poor grace from a Sceptic, who

be eyes in Evolution, which teaches that in the lapse of ages man by a slow process evolved from an ape. Need they then complain that in a few generations all sinners have not been made saints of? As Mr. Simpson observes, give us but the time you require to convert one species into another, and we will by that time have all men at the foot of the cross.

CHAPTER VII.

RETRIBUTION.

Christianity has been called a persecuting religion. Robert Ingersoll eloquently pictures the horror of the Inquisition in his lecture on "Heretics and Heresies," and describes how the Spaniards burnt the bodies of heretics here, and "Then prayed to God to finish the holy work in hell." If such were the outcome of Christianity, truly it would be a diabolical system, but Christianity gives no man authority to torture his brother here; nor yet, so far as my reading of the New Testament goes, it appor-tion hell-fire to any one hereafter; both persecution here and hereafter is alien to the genius of Christianity—which is love. It was the persecuted and not the persecutors who exhibited the Spirit of Christ. Lessing once said, "Christianity has been tried for nearly two thousand years, it is now time that the religion of Christ should be tried." If Christianity is a name given to the corruptions of priestcraft, then certainly it is the "Religion of Christ," only that I plead for. But I contend that it is the misuse of the term Christianity, when it is applied to the superstitious hierarchy that so long held the minds and bodies of men in bondage. I use the term Christianity as connoting the religion of Christ, and only in that sense is it used in this little volume. Used in that sense no one can say it is a persecuting



religion for they would have to show where and where Christ authorised persecution. On all reasonable occasions did Christ denounce force. When Peter drew his sword in defence of his master, the first occasion on which a Christian resorted to it, he reprov'd him. He warn'd his disciples that those who resorted to the sword should perish by it. He counsell'd them to forgive their erring brother seventy times seven, to pass undue censure on none; to judge not for fear they might be judged; that accordingly as they meted out it would be measured unto them. Some Sceptics say, did he not declare that he would bring dissensions into families? Did he not declare "I came not to bring peace but the sword?" Yes, but this was not a command but a prediction that his disciples would be persecuted; that their own family and friends would despise; that the sword should be used against them, not by them. This prophecy has been fulfilled to the letter; the extermination of the Abbigenes, and the innumerable cases of the persecution of Christians recorded on the pages of history. Christ taught his disciples that they would be persecuted and warn'd them against retaliation; he said, "Love your enemies, pray for them that persecute you," or again, "Love your enemies; do good to them that hate; bless them that curse you; pray for them that despitefully use you." They were therefore to bear with persecution, never to resent it, and never to practice it against others.

The opponents of Christianity frequently contradict themselves in the one discourse, frequently averring, nearly in the same breath, that Christianity is a humiliating religion, citing such passages as "Blessed are the poor in spirit &c.," which I treated with in the last chapter. If it be a persecuting system, it is not a humble one, and if a humiliatingly humble one, certainly it isn't a persecuting system. Continuing their line of argument, they aver that the belief in future punishment is a further proof of the revengeful character of the Christian system. This argument, when directed against the mediæval belief that the wicked are to be for ever tortured in a penal settlement of fire and brimstone, seems to me to have considerable force. I contend, however, that this is not the teaching of the New Testament, but

is a mythological growth, the fiendish offspring of Satanic ignorance and blind superstition. It seems to me to have been one of the artifices of the evil one to bring disgrace on Christianity, under pretence of upholding it, and has been the means of producing more Infidelity than any other cause. It was my first step to Infidelity. The doctrine seemed to me so hideous and repulsive that I held that any system that taught it could not be a true system, and believing it to be part and parcel of Christianity, I soon surrendered my entire faith in the system. When Infidelity assails this doctrine it simply sticks up a straw man for the amusement of knocking it down again. Christianity undoubtedly teaches future punishment; but it is righteous retribution—punishment adequate to the wrong done, the sins committed. The nature of this punishment I am not in a position to determine, nor is anyone. It is always referred to in a figurative manner, and for anyone to attempt to give a picture of hell would be as absurd as for them to attempt to describe heaven. On these matters we should be Agnostic, remaining silent where the Bible is, and trust in the mercy and justice of God. Jesus, in his pictorial teaching, tells how the unmerciful servant should be cast to the tormentors until he paid *all that was due*. Here the idea of adequate punishment is set forth. Again in Luke 12, verses 47-48, we read, “And that servant, which knew his Lord’s will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with *many stripes*; but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with *few stripes*. And to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom they commit much, of him will they ask the more.” This seems to me to give the key-note of future punishment. It is in accordance with the principles of justice as taught in the New Testament. It shows that there are degrees of punishment, that we are to be judged according to our responsibility, and punished proportionately. To me the doctrine of the larger hope, as taught by such an eminent divine as Cannon Farrar, comes nearest to the genius of the teaching of Christianity. The future punishment in that light becomes a rational belief; even Thomas Paine in his “Age of Reason” grants that it is so. He says

that he conjectures that there is a future state, and that there men will be held responsible for their conduct here. He conjectures that the people will be divided into three classes; the wicked who will be punished, the good who will be rewarded, and a third class, the indifferentists, whom he deems to be too insignificant for either condemning or saving. These, he believes, will be compendiously blotted out. Thus Paine, reasoning purely from nature, and disbelieving in all revelation, was thus compelled, by virtue of the evidence around him, to believe in the reasonableness of future punishment. The violation of any law of our being is attended with serious consequences, and can we expect that other than bad results will follow our violation of the laws of God. If a man neglects his business, he is punished by commercial damnation; if he violates the rules of society, disregards the laws of etiquette, he is socially damned; if he be a politician, and is inattentive to the wishes of his constituents, he is politically damned. As in every sphere of life, too, we see the words of Paul exemplified—"As a man sows shall he reap." Therefore if we trifle with iniquity and neglect the commands of God we must expect to be excluded from happiness. The scriptural saying, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be condemned," is but a parallell utterance to many in common use, such as "Take poison and you will die," "Trifle with fire and you will be burnt," "Get out of your depth and you will be drowned." Nature has ever attached a penalty to wrong doing; all the world over bad actions lead to misery, and good ones to happiness, and it is but reasonable to believe that the same law obtains in the spiritual world that prevails in the natural.

Society has the law of retribution written upon the face of it. The Old Testament has many illustrations of this. Jacob outwitted his brother and deceived his father, and was in turn outwitted by Laban and deceived by his sons; Daniel's accusers were thrown into the lion's den intended for Daniel; Haman hung upon the scaffold he intended for Mordecai. In history we read of Pope Alexander VI being poisoned by the wine he prepared for others. Nearly all those who instituted and upheld the guillotine

in France during the great French Revolution fell victims to it. These are special and striking instances, and they are cited as illustrative of a retributive providence. Nor can we deny that this fact has a salutary influence on conduct, an elevating effect on human life; even the Secularists unconsciously furnish us with evidence of this. Thus, for instance, "In the National Secular Society's Almanac for 1872," on page 12, appended to the date October 12th, is the following note, "1712, great fear in England of a comet which was to burn the world up, 7,000 kept mistresses married in consequence." Clearly the fear of meeting God, of facing the future, had the effect of deterring these women from continuing a life of shame, and induced them and their lovers to substitute for it a life of honorable wedlock. While the penalty of sin is punishment, by faith in Christ we are enabled to overcome it; and although the efficacy of faith has been ridiculed more than any other doctrine, yet I contend it is reasonable to believe in its power, and outside of theology all men more or less are guided by faith. Ingersoll defines it as an unhappy mixture of "Ignorance and Insanity," and Mrs. Besant, commenting on the passage, "That faith as a grain of mustard seed will remove mountains," declared that a mountain of faith would not shift a mustard seed. Nevertheless, in spite of these sneers, a thoughtful consideration of this matter will convince us that faith will remove mountains of difficulties. If Columbus had not an intense faith in the rotundity of the earth, he would never have gone on that memorable voyage of discovery, never certainly have overcome the difficulties he did, and the march of geographical knowledge would have been retarded. Similarly, faith was behind the expedition of Ferdinand Magellan and Vasco da Gama. It was faith that prompted Palissy, the French Protestant potter, to persist in his work, when after enduring intense hardships, having ridicule and abuse heaped on him from all sides, he discovered the lost art of making pottery. Faith has been the motive power behind the world's progress; every invention, discovery, and advance that we are now proud of was due to its influence. It has inspired the poet, the philosopher, explorer and philanthropist. The proudest scions of

humanity—nature's noblemen—have all had it for their favorite star. Faith is the primal cause, works are the effect; they are wedded together as closely as man and wife. "Action," says Joseph Parker, "is but the practical expression of belief." As Tennyson sweetly sings:

"Howe'er it be, it seems to me, 'tis only noble to do good;
Kind hearts are more than coronets, and simple faith that Norman
blood."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE VERITY AND VALUE OF THE MIRACLES.

Most Secularists in dealing with Christians prefer to assail Christianity rather than elaborate and defend their own system. Such being their tactics, it is necessary that we should be equipped with satisfactory answers to their arguments, and in this chapter I will deal with some of their objections to the supernatural. Christianity is rejected on the grounds that the belief in miracles is unreasonable. It is said, if Christ fed five thousand people on a few loaves and fishes 1800 years ago why doesn't he feed the myriads dying from famine? A gentlemen at the close of one of my lectures asked why, when so much sympathy was excited over the distress caused by the strike of the dock labourers in London, didn't God work a miracle and feed those men? These objections arise from a misunderstanding of the object of miracles. John tells it in these words, "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name." Clearly the reason for working miracles, was that they afforded unanswerable evidence of Christ's power over the forces of nature, and thereby demonstrated his divinity. They were the credentials to the people of the apostolic age of

his Messiahship; they were essential at that time. Christianity was but beginning its career, and its advocates could not then, as we can now, point to its marvellous history as evidence of its truthfulness; they wanted something startling to arrest the attention of the world. In starting a new enterprise to-day, the promoters will advertise it in a more attractive manner than they would an old and established firm. So Christianity required credentials at the outset that were superfluous in later times, hence miracles were confined to the apostolic age. To say, that because miracles are not wrought to-day, that therefore they never occurred is obviously absurd. How many features have the various ages of the past possessed that we cannot parallel now? Why, geology shows that in different epochs different faunas and flores prevailed. To-day we have not the vegetation of the carboniferous era, or coal period; nor the Saurians of the Jurassic age. Yet it would be as reasonable to look for these forms of life to-day, as to expect to find the peculiarities of the apostolic age in the nineteenth century. The question to which I have referred, which was put to me at one of my lectures, Why didn't Christ feed the men on strike? has been answered by the foregoing on the object of miracles; were they only wrought for the immediate benefit of those healed and fed, the argument would be allowable, but the primal object was to demonstrate the divinity of Christ. Moreover, it was better for the men that the strike was settled without direct divine intervention, for it taught the workers a lesson in self-reliance that cannot fail to have a good influence for their permanent benefit.

David Hume's argument against miracles is supposed to be unanswerable by Sceptics, yet it was satisfactorily answered in Hume's own lifetime by Dr. George Campbell. Campbell's manuscript was shown to Hume before it was published, but he declined to answer it, averring that he had made a "fixed resolution in the beginning of life," not to enter into controversy. Hume and his followers are firm believers in the "Reign of Law," so firmly that they hold that there can be no exception to it. Their faith in the Materialistic dogma of the "Uniformity of Nature's Laws," is greater than in that of

the paternal character of God. They maintain that under like conditions, like results always follow, such is the observed order of nature. Any exception to this, such as raising the dead, is a miracle, and they won't believe, because they affirm that it is opposed to the uniform experience of the race. The weakness of this argument lies in the fact that, after all, our experience is but limited, and although things have gone on with unvarying regularity in our own lifetime, it does not follow that they always have done so. I feed my dog regularly at 8 o'clock every morning, with almost unerring regularity. The dog, not knowing the why and wherefore of the matter, but observing the regularity with which his meals are prepared, has come to the conclusion that his meals are placed there for him in accordance with an inexorable law of nature; like the Sceptic, he declares that he has experience and observation on his side. It would be a miracle to that dog to find that his breakfast was not there; and he would also discover the absurdity of trying to tot up the universe from a day's experience. Yet the conclusions of that dog were no more irrational than that of the human being who declines to accept the facts of history because they have not in some way been paralleled in his own lifetime.

It is rather amusing to observe the tactics of Atheists. They are great on the question of the order of nature when arguing against miracles; but when taking the negative on the question, "Is there a God?" they swear that there is no order at all, the solar system is out of gear, and the whole universe is in a semi-chaotic condition. This argument of David Hume's is the argument that ignorance brings against speculation, and has been one of the weapons that the Powers of Darkness forged to keep back the Light of Learning. For instance, when the ancient Phœnicians declared that they had travelled around Africa, and that in their journey they noticed as they travelled south that the sun pursued a different course round the heavens, Herodotus, the Greek historian, pursuing a similar line of argument to that of David Hume, said it couldn't be, for it controverted human experience. Yet we now know that the Phœnicians were right, and that Herodotus was wrong.

Every day of our lives we are called upon to accept statements upon mere testimony, the importance of which has never been tested in our own experience. We believe that they have equal days and equal nights at the Equator, yet only a small proportion of us have lived there; the rest accept it on the testimony of others. We believe unnumbered things about historic personages that are altogether outside the range of our experiences. Were there anything strained in the records of the Miracles of Christ there would be grounds for much doubt, but his miracles are in keeping with his character. We believe him to be a divine personage, and it is but reasonable that he was ushered into this life in a miraculous manner, the forces of nature bending to his will, and that he would take his exit from it in this triumphant way; if it were not so, what would there be, save the surpassing greatness and goodness of his life to attest his divinity? The drama of his life is sustained. His mission commenced with a miracle, and throughout, his teachings were illustrated by it. His miracles were not useless exhibitions of power, but they were examples of love or lessons in morality; even those that have been condemned by Sceptics as showing a malevolent spirit have been consistent with his teachings. For instance, Freethinkers have traded much on the cursing of the fig tree. That fig tree, although exhibiting a fair exterior, although clothed with rich foilage, yet it was barren—and he cursed it; just as he hated and denounced hypocrisy on all occasions. He was saying over again in miracle, "Woe unto ye Scribes and Pharisees; ye hypocrites, &c." Clearly he was denouncing the designing wretches who, under the cover of the foliage of religion, pretended goodness to the world, yet were barren of good works. In cursing that tree did he emphasise his hatred of inward depravity disguised under a fair exterior. He told us to heal the sick, and he set an example by miraculously curing the deaf, dumb, lame and enfeebled. The people whom he brought to life were themselves arguments in favor of love. One was an only brother, another the only daughter, and the third an only sister. He said feed the hungry, and he himself practised what he preached, and fed five thousand on a few loaves and fishes. Whor.

we build our lighthouses, man our life-boats, we know that we are doing our Master's work, for he stilled the tempest. When we build a lunatic asylum we have before us his example of curing the lunatic. His power, when manifested, was combined with beneficence, as if to attest the truth that God is love.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CRIMES OF SECULARISM.

I now commence the unsavory task of exposing the vices and crimes of Secularism. I would not pursue this line of argument, were it not for the assaults that have been made on the lives of Christians by Secularists. The American Freethinkers have issued a book called the "Crimes of the Preachers," in which some man has set for himself the task of culling from the newspapers for a number of years all the recorded incidents of the clergy going wrong, which came under his notice. Mr. Geo. W. Foote, (now the president of the National Secular Society) has issued a book called the "Crimes of Christianity;" he has searched the pages of history for records of ecclesiastical abuses, and labelling them Christian; he seeks by that means to bring an indictment against Christianity. Similarly, Mrs. Besant in the "Freethinkers' Text Book," an ill-digested assortment of quotations, asks the question, "If the bishops and clergy and missionaries were ignorant, sensual, tyrannical and superstitious, they are none the less representative of Christianity; and if these are not true Christians, where are the true Christians?" From A.D. 324 to A.D. 1500 she extracts from the ecclesiastical history of that period all the most unpleasant episodes she can collate.

Mr. Symes heads an article in the *Liberator* with an offensive title, "Religious Brutes," and from the time

that paper was started, he has published in it, any account that might appear in the "Dailies" concerning the shortcomings of the advocates of Christianity. When Atheists thus descend to gutter warfare, and hurl at us their obnoxious stink-pots; when they abandon all the recognised methods of intellectual warfare, and seek to gain an advantage by vilifying those opposed them; when their weapon is "The dagger of assassin rather than the axe of the Roman Lictor," they must be prepared to bear the consequences. They have provoked retaliation and therefore cannot complain of the unmasking of the infamous lives of some of their champions. The mildest and perhaps most prevalent vice among Secularists is slander. Spurgeon, in his little book, "John Ploughman's Pictures," has a sketch of a hunchback walking behind a round-shouldered gentleman, and scornfully pointing to his crooked back, forgetting that he has a larger hump on his own. Mr. Spurgeon remarks, "He points to the man in front of him, but he is a good deal more of a guy himself." That is a fair illustration of the average Secularist. He is everlastingly finding fault with Christianity, and at the same time forgetting to amend his own conduct. Jesus probably had such a man in his mind's eye when he counselled us to first cast the beam out of our own eyes before we attempt to take the mote out of others. Let us take as an example of this class the redoubtable Mr. Joseph Symes. He is so anxious to find fault that in some articles in his inelgant paper, he criticises the Solar System. I presume that he was a little weary of firing away at the Bible, and therefore by way of recreation had a shot at the Solar System. He declares that the whole thing is out of gear, and leads one to infer that if the Almighty had only been possessed of his knowledge of astronomy, he would have made a much better job of it. It is a pity that Mr. Symes wasn't present at the making of it, he might have given his Creator the benefit of his knowledge and inventive genius. A writer said, "An undevout astronomer is mad." If so, we can excuse Mr. Symes' presumption on the grounds of lunacy. Watching the moon not infrequently affects the mind, and possibly our astronomer has fallen a martyr to his studies. If egotism is a symptom of

insanity, certainly he is a little gone. He calls to my mind a little narrative I once read concerning President Grant. Someone mentioned to him that a certain Senator noted for his conceit, hadn't much faith in the Bible. Grant made the laconic reply, "Why should he, he didn't write it?" The same might be truthfully said of Mr. Symes. He believes in no one but himself, as witness his slander; in the disputes with his former colleagues. And he is not likely to applaud a Solar System that he hadn't manufactured or suggested.

Another damaging feature in connection with Secularism, is that it fosters a love of loose literature, which it scatters broadcast over the world. Take, for instance, such works as "The Elements of Social Science," "The Fruits of Philosophy," and "Phallic Worship," another pernicious production from the pen of Mr Symes. These books, circulated indiscriminately among young people, cannot fail to do great injury. I remember that Sir John Lubbock, in his work on the "Origin of Civilisation," after dealing with various phases of religious belief, makes a passing allusion to "Phallic Worship," but declines either to discuss or elaborate it in a work that will probably fall into the hands of all classes. This man of science, by no means a friend of the theological school, declines to discuss this matter in a work which, by the very price of it, would not fall into the hands of the generality of young people. Mr. Symes, however, has not the delicate feelings that characterise a man like John Lubbock. He publishes his pamphlet in a cheap form, and states that he intends young people to read it. After describing the male and female organs of generation in a very crude manner, he writes—"Now, my young readers of either sex, which of you is the worse for reading that?" Let children read this abominable book, and as they enter a chapel and look at the architecture of the building, they will find in some of its most attractive features food for impure thoughts. The stories of the Bible are twisted to bring to the mind evil suggestions, as this book on "Phallic Worship," and those books on the law of population can. Some of those books were evidently written with a benevolent purpose. Their authors pleaded that it was their desire to ameliorate the condition of the

poor, and although I believe they have failed in their object, yet they had no such unworthy motive as exciting a morbid curiosity for the purpose of gain. "Phallic Worship" is a vile, unclean publication, that possibly may give a few pence to its publishers, but will only impair the morality of its young and weak readers. Indeed, when, to make a few pence, the leaders of Secularism have to degrade themselves by producing such publications as these, Christianity need not fear anything from the attacks of this form of Infidelity. Joseph Barker, formerly co-editor with Mr Bradlaugh on the *National Reformer*, says that the reason why he severed his connection with that paper was because it approved of such books as I have named. On page 123 of his book he writes, "In August my wife and children arrived in England. They were sorry to find me in connection with a paper, and a paper of so objectionable a character, and they set themselves quietly to work to bring about a change, and it was not long before they succeeded. A book written by a leading Secularist was sent to me for review. When I read it I found that its object was to undermine marriage and bring it into contempt, and to induce men to substitute for honorable wedlock unbounded sensual licence. It was the most horrible and revolting production I ever read. This book had been advertised in the paper of which I was one of the editors, and in the part of the paper over which I had no control had been strongly recommended. I found, too, that it had been very extensively circulated among the readers of the paper, and that the Secularist leaders were adopting measures to promote its still more extensive circulation. I at once exposed the filthy production in my portion of the paper, as far as a respect for decency would permit. I laid its loathsome, horrible abominations before my readers. This led to a total separation between me and the friends of the loathsome book." Joseph Barker here tells that his experience taught him that Freethought tended to loosen the marriage tie. Abundant evidence can be brought to prove this from their own literature. Mrs. Besant writes, in her pamphlet on "Marriage! What it is, and What it Should be," "Mary Wolstonecraft acted on the same theory in her own life, and her daughter was united to

the poet Shelley while Shelley's first wife was living, no legal divorce having severed the original marriage. Richard Carlisle's second marriage was equally illegal. In our own days the union of George Henry Lewis and George Elliot has struck the key note of the really *moral* marriages." George Henry Lewis lived with George Elliot (Marian Evans) while his own wife was living, and he had obtained no legal divorce from her. This, according to Mrs. Besant, is the key-note of the really *moral* marriage.

The views of Joseph Symes on marriage are just as obnoxious. He says in the *Liberator* of April 11th, 1886, page 311, "Society has its choice either to have prostitution as a permanent thing, increasing in proportion with all its concomitant evils, or to introduce variety of marriage—*marriages for short periods*, for long ones, for life, as each couple may prefer, or monogamy or polygamy, as the parties concerned may desire for themselves. Again, in a previous issue of the paper, July 28th, 1886, page 212, he wrote, "In Egypt under the Ptolemies, it was quite common, in fact the rule for the king to marry his *own sister*, and it is open to doubt whether those restrictions still existing respecting marriages, might not better be left to education and custom—much stronger forces than laws—than to be dealt with by acts of Parliament. The state which forbids *brothers and sisters* to marry, might command them to do so if its whims prompted."

This is just the way the Anarchist argues. Mr. Symes repudiates Anarchy, yet says that custom and education are stronger forces than laws, and incest should be dealt with not by acts of Parliament, but with these other forces; if this be so, why not treat all crimes in the same manner? If custom and education are stronger forces than law and sufficient for the suppression of incest, why not for theft, for murder, or any crime? If custom and education are stronger than law, why have law at all? Why not be an Anarchist?

Mr. Symes repudiated the statement that he was a Freelover, and declares he never advocated Free love; yet he advocates "short-time marriages," as "the parties concerned may decide." What is that but Free love?

Much more might be written on the licence, dissension and evil influence of Infidelity. Sufficient, however, has been cited to show what an undesirable thing it is, although Freethinkers indulge largely on an attack on private characters, as is shown in "Crimes of Preachers." In this chapter I have dealt almost exclusively on the views advocated by prominent Secularists; in my next chapter, on great Infidels, I will show how they illustrated their teaching in their lives.

In closing this chapter I would ask you to contrast two great revolutions, both of which were begotten of similar causes—dark oppression. But the one, the English Revolution, was tempered by religious sentiment; its leaders were men famed for their piety, and it is one of the noblest epochs in our history; its story is a tale of great wrongs redressed with moderation and firmness. The other, the French Revolution, had for its leading spirits, Freethinkers; it came a century later than the English one, and its story is a tale of terror and horrible cruelty. When the power of the monarchy was broken and the serfs of kingcraft were liberated, they forgot the lesson of liberty, and unrestrained by the kindly influence of religion, they rushed into the wildest excesses, and by their extravagance destroyed the very fabric that the wisest, most moderate, and most religious amongst them had built up.

CHAPTER X.

GREAT INFIDELS.

"Talk about questions of the day; there is but one question, and that is the Gospel. It can, and will correct everything needing correction. All men at the head of great movements are Christians. During the many years I was in the Cabinet, I was brought into association

with sixty master-minds, and all but five of them were Christians. My only hope for the world is bringing the human mind into contact with divine revelation." So, recently, spake Mr Gladstone. It would seem from this that those who are doing the most for the promotion of human welfare are Christians. I know of no great movement to benefit mankind that Secularists have been identified with, that has not been initiated and carried to a successful issue by Christians. Take, for instance, the work of Mr Bradlaugh. It is his boast that he has been the means of partially sweeping away the prevalent system of oath-taking. Here, however, he has been working on Christian lines, and has had Christian sympathy in his enterprise. Christ said, "Swear not at all, neither by the heaven, for it is the throne of God; nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King; neither shalt thou swear by thy head, for thou can'st not make one hair white or black. But let your speech be yea! yea; nay! nay! for whatsoever is more than these is of the evil one." The Quakers, long before Mr. Bradlaugh commenced his crusade against oath-taking, persistently refused to swear, maintaining that if their word was not their bond, nothing else would bind them.

Thomas Paine said, "The world is my country, mankind my brethren, and to do good my religion." What is this but a paraphrase of Paul's teachings? He proclaimed the brotherhood of man in Christ. There was neither bond nor free, neither male nor female, neither Jew nor Greek, but they were all one in Christ. Thomas Paine, although he assailed Christianity, received better treatment from the Christians of his own time than he did from his fellow-thinkers. He was imprisoned in a French dungeon for his moderate views, by order of a French Government, chiefly composed of Freethinkers, and only by an accident escaped being guillotined by them. After the fall of Robespierre, when Christians again came into positions of authority, through their leniency, Paine was liberated. All that is beautiful and true in Paine's writings can be paralleled in the New Testament. He says, "Any system of religion that contained that which shocks the mind of a child cannot be a true system;" and Christ tau,ht

this seventeen hundred year before Paine's time, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." The child, in its innocence and purity, was held up as typical of what a Christian should be. Paine advocated a peace policy, and yet some of his admirers to-day declare that the peace policy of Christianity is one of the assailable planks in our platform. Paine declared, however, that it was just as unreasonable for a commercial nation to go to war as for a shopkeeper to put a dog at his door to frighten away his customers. All that we can admire in connection with the writings of Paine is that which re-echoes the sentiments of Christ; and that portion of his life and writings which it would be well to bury in oblivion was antagonistic to the teachings of the great Master. Byron and Shelley may be taken as representative of the Free-thought poetical school, both men of great genius, and both of them put the loose views held on the marriage relationship by many prominent Freethinkers into practice. Byron separated from his wife, or she left him, shortly after marriage. He left England to reside on the shores of the Adriatic, where he led a most profligate life. Some have argued that the story of Don Juan is but a poetical sketch of his own life. Percy Shelley united himself to Mary Godwin while his first wife was living; with her he travelled on the continent, deserting Harriet Westbrook, his legal wife, who, broken-hearted, committed suicide. George Henry Lewis, the sage of modern Agnosticism, lived with George Elliot, the novelist, while his own wife was living. As I have mentioned in my previous chapter, this couple, Mrs. Besant tells us, has given the key-note of the truly moral marriage; if so, then George Elliot grew immoral in her latter days, for on the death of Mr. Lewis, she was married, according to the forms prescribed by law, to Mr. Cross. George Elliot, although an Agnostic, evidently did not believe it was a good thing for the world, for her grandest characters were Christians. Her books, such as "Scenes from Clerical Life," trade on the religious feelings. Whatever may have been her views on religion, she seemed to realise that they were not sufficient to gratify the heart hunger of mankind.

Richard Carlisle, whose name is included in the list of the "Martyrs and Heroes of Freethought," seemed to entertain similarly loose ideas on the marriage tie. George J. Holyoake, in his biographical sketch of him, page 28, makes this reference to Carlisle's domestic life. "Carlisle left six children—Richard, Alfred and Thomas Paine *by his wife*, Mrs. Jane Carlisle; and Julian, Theophila and Hypatia by "Isis," the lady to whom he united himself after his separation from his wife."

Voltaire, whose writings proclaim him the foremost thinker of his age, led a most disgraceful life. I quote the following from Dr. Newman's account of him, which I have verified from other sources. Parton, in his life of this philosopher, although trying to palliate his shortcomings, records the facts stated by Newman. "Voltaire's private life was a scandal even to his own corrupt age. When Secretary to the Marquis Chateauneuf, at Hague, in the United Provinces, he ruined the young daughter of Madame Dunoyer, and was compelled to fly the Hague to escape the fury of an enraged mother. When he fled from Paris to escape the officers of the law, he found a retreat in Cirey, on the borders of Lorraine, where he was kindly received by M. Chatelet, whose hospitality he violated by a liason with the wife of his host, the famous Madame Chatelet, and which continued while she lived, and that too while her husband was yet alive, and he boasted that he was the favorite of Madame Pompadour before she became the favorite mistress of Louis XV!"

Many men it may be said have adopted Atheism, and still continue to perform their social and family duties with unerring exactness. Tyndal has paid a splendid tribute to the conduct of these men, (which has been published in support of Atheism by nearly all the Freethought periodicals in the world), but these isolated cases in no way give sanction to their system. We will sometimes find flowers near the tops of the highest mountains that have survived through the withering blasts of winter; but that will not give us the right to say that those conditions are suitable for the growth of vegetation nor will the few noble examples of Infidelity prove that it is suited to the mental and moral require-

ments of mankind, when so many have their manhood dwarfed by it. Moreover, these, the good men, have left behind them in their writings admissions which are sufficient to prove that Christianity is the religion of mankind.

Charles Darwin, who has been justly called the Newton of biology, has left behind him a splendid testimony to the good done by the Missionaries in Polynesia. In his "Journal of a Voyage round the World," he writes, on page 301, of the effects of Christianity on the Tahitians, and says, "On the whole it appears to me that the morality and religion of the inhabitants is highly creditable. There are many who attack even more acrimoniously than Kotzebue, both the missionaries, their system, and the effects produced by it. Such persons never compare the present state with that of the Island only twenty years ago; nor even with that of Europe at this day; but they compared it with the high standard of gospel perfection. They expect the missionaries to effect that which the apostles themselves failed to do. Inasmuch as the condition of the people falls short of this high standard, blame is attached to the missionary instead of credit for that which he has effected. They forget, or will not remember, that human sacrifices, and the power of an idolatrous priesthood, a system of profligacy unparalleled in other parts of the world; infanticide the consequence of that system; bloody wars, where the conquerors spared neither women nor children; that all these have been abolished, and that dishonesty, intemperance and licentiousness have been greatly reduced by the introduction of Christianity. In a voyager to forget these things is base ingratitude; for should he chance to be at the point of shipwreck on some unknown coast, he will most devoutly pray that the lesson of the missionary may have extended thus far." It may be said that this journal was among his earlier writings, but the latest edition of it does not appear with any emendation, and as Darwin only stated what he observed, the passage must stand as a statement of his conviction on the utility of Christianity.

J. S. Mill also acknowledges the blessings flowing from Christianity. In his essay on Theism, page 253 of his

"Theological Essays," he says, "It is the God incarnate, more than the God of the Jew or nature, who being idealised, has taken so great and salutary a hold on the human mind, and whatever else may be taken from us by rational criticism, Christ is still left, a unique figure, not more unlike all his precursors than all his followers." In his "Dissertations and Discussions," when criticising a production of Guizot's, he acknowledges the beneficent influence of Christianity, and even goes so far as to give Roman Catholicism credit for more good than evil; he says, "Enormous as have been the sins of the Catholic church in the way of religious intolerance, her assertion of the principle (separation between temporal and spiritual authority), has done more for human freedom than all the fires she ever kindled have done to destroy it." Thus Mill acknowledges that ecclesiasticism with all its faults, has curbed the power of the tyrant, and saved Europe from much political oppression.

Similarly, Ernest Renan commences the first chapter of his "Life of Jesus" with the words, "The great event in the history of the world is the revolution by which the noblest portion of humanity have passed from the ancient religion, comprised under the vague name of Paganism, to a religion founded on the Divine Unity—the Trinity—and the incarnation of the "Son of God." It has taken nearly a thousand years to accomplish this conversion. The new religion had itself taken nearly three hundred years in formation, but the origin of the revolution in question is a fact which took place in the reign of Tiberius and Augustus. At that time there lived a superior personage, who, by his bold originality, and by the love which he was able to inspire, became the object, and fixed the starting point of the future faith of humanity." After dealing with this prediction of his coming, he closes the chapter with the words, "This confused mixture of clear views and dreams, this alternation of deception and hopes, these ceaseless aspirations, driven back by an odious reality, found at last their interpretation in the incomparable man, to whom the universal conscience has decreed the title of the 'Son of God,' and that with justice, since he has advanced religion as no other has done or probably ever will be able to do."

Lecky, in his "History of European Morals," also passes a eulogy on Christianity, showing that it has been the chief factor in developing European morality. In volume II, on page 9, he says, "The Platonist exhorted men to imitate God, the Stoic to follow Reason, the Christian to the love of Christ. The later Stoics had often united their notions of excellence in an ideal sage, and Epictetus had even urged his disciples to set before them some man of surpassing excellence, to imagine him continually near them; but the utmost the Stoic ideal could become was a model for imitation, and the admiration it inspired could never deepen into affection. It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character, which, through all the changes of eighteen centuries, has inspired the hearts of men with impassioned love, has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments and conditions; has been not only the highest pattern of virtue, but the strongest incentive to its practice, and has exercised so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of actual life has done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers, and all the exhortations of moralists. This has been the wellspring of whatever is best and purest in Christian life. Amid all the sins and failings, amid all the priestcraft, persecution and fanaticism that has defaced the church, it has preserved, in the character and example of its founder, an enduring principle of regeneration. Perfect love knows no right; it creates a boundless, uncalculating self-abnegation that transforms the character, and is the parent of every virtue."

Edward Gibbon, in his history of the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," second volume, describes the progress Christianity made in the fourth century, and tells how it refined the manners and ennobled the lives of those who accepted it, thus corroborating the statements of the other illustrious Freethinkers to whom I have referred. Those men, although denying the Divine origin of the system, have had to acknowledge its utility.

Dr. Straus, some years ago in Germany, wrote a critical "Life of Jesus," and, although acknowledging the goodness of Christ, cast reflections on the historical character

of the New Testament. Straus was vanquished in debate by an old college comrade, Dr Hoffman, who effectually refuted his arguments, and established the historical verity of the Gospel. Straus married an actress, and retiring from the arena of controversy, settled down to his legitimate occupation as a novel writer.

How frequently do we find Sceptics tacitly admitting the superiority of Christianity by continuing to hug its shores with their frail barques of humanity, even after they have given up their faith in it. Bishop Colenso, after he had assailed the authenticity of the Pentateuch, continued preaching in the pulpit, and drawing his salary as a bishop of the Anglican Church. Under cover of that body he forged weapons that now constitute a large part of the stock-in-trade of the Freethought lecturers of to-day. By their actions do men like Colenso prove that in Christianity is the salvation of the world. The scientific thought of the world is in sympathy with Christianity. Last year the presidents of "The Royal Society," "The British Association," "The Linnæan Society," "The Chemical Society," and the "Microscopical Society" were all Christian men, some of them preachers of the Gospel. Men like Dana, Dawson, Agassiz, and Asa Gray have shown that there is no want of harmony between science and revelation.

Christianity has little to fear from the attacks of Australian Sceptics. Their movement, as I have shown in another portion of this book, is gradually waning, and will in all probability at no distant date as an organised movement become extinct, at least it can never have sufficient vitality to grapple with the splendid organisations of Christianity. The defect in it, however, is that the men who are leading it are neither men of discretion or thought. They are vain theological warriors, who boast very loudly in their newspapers, but sing very small when they find a man ready to accept their challenge. Men of such a stamp as W. W. Collins and Joseph Symes. These men clearly belong to the Laurentian period of Sceptical thought. In mental biology they would be classed among the Protozoans. Freethought in Australasia was not always led by characters like these; once it had upon its side such able men

as Sir Robert Stout and John Ballance in New Zealand, and equally thoughtful and influential men in other colonies, showed signs of giving it the right hand of fellowship, but they seem to have taken fright when they discovered the nature of the monstrosity they were nursing. It is a notorious fact that the great minds who have penned Sceptical works: men like Mill, Lecky, Darwin, and Gibbon have kept themselves clear of the Freethought propaganda; have not associated themselves with movements for the destruction of Christianity, and although declining to believe in the divine origin of that system, yet they have granted that it has been one of the chief factors in producing all that is beautiful and useful in the present civilization.

CHAPTER XI.

A LEAF FROM MY LIFE.

I think I need hardly ask pardon of the reader for introducing a chapter of a personal nature. I have been invited by friends and challenged by foes to give my experience, but I have, up to the present, studiously avoided doing so. I feel that it is no argument against Secularism to merely cite the fact that an advocate has seceded from it, unless the seceder gave substantial reasons for doing so. All the men whose names I have cited in my first chapter in this book were men of ability, and capable of giving a reason for the hope that was in them. They were men equal in ability to those connected with Secularism at the present moment, and were willing when they left it to defend in fair discussion the respective positions they took up. If I turned Mahometan to-morrow, it would be no argument against

Christianity, unless I could show that I had satisfactory reasons for believing that Mahometanism was better than Christianity. I think I have written sufficient to show that I had good reasons for taking the steps I have done. Therefore to refute the inuendos of Secularists, and to gratify the wishes of my friends, I proceed to enter into a few personal details.

From the year 1878 to 1888, I took an active part and a deep interest in the Freethought work. Prior to 1878, I was gradually drifting towards Secularism, but during those ten years I was a full-fledged Materialist. I was always found ready to take up the cudgels on behalf of my hobby. I gave to the Freethought movement my first love, and pleaded for it with all the earnestness of youth and early manhood, making many personal sacrifices for its extension. For nearly two years I acted as honorary secretary to the Dunedin Freethought Association, and when I left home I carried with me a letter of commendation signed by the members of the executive of that body. I was in Melbourne when the Australasian Secular Association was inaugurated, and during the first twelve months of its career, I took a prominent part in its work. I evidently won the esteem of its members, for on leaving Victoria for New South Wales, I was publicly presented, in the Athenæum Hall, with a handsome album, containing the photos of the members of the first executive of the A.S.A. I also received from the ladies a token of their esteem. I can fearlessly state, that throughout my career as a lecturer, I never trifled with the reputation of the movement by lapses from right-living. No Freethinker can ever say I dealt dishonorably with him, and no woman can blush for my acquaintance. I have sketched out in a previous chapter my introduction to the Freethought platform, how, through the indisposition of a lecturer, I was led to take to it in an emergency, and how, at the solicitations of friends, I afterwards pursued it as an avocation. I held my first formal debate with a representative man in Newcastle, in the March of 1884; it lasted for four nights, and we discussed a different proposition each evening. My opponent was the Rev. John Evans, then a Baptist minister, but now a minister of the Church of England.

My next encounter was in the August of the same year, with Mr. John Buchanan, the representative of the Auckland (N.Z.) Christian Evidence Society. This discussion lasted for two evenings, and was on the question, "Is the Mosaic account of Creation at variance with Science?" From Auckland I went to Nelson, and there, on Thursday evening the 6th of November, I debated with the Rev. H. J. Lewis, Congregational minister: the proposition was, "Is there a God, the Maker and Moral Governor of the Universe?" My next discussion was in Wellington, in the December of the following year, with Dr. Gilbert; we debated for one night, but met again about two months after, in Wanganui, for a further discussion of two nights. The heaviest discussion I entered into was a few months after this in Adelaide, South Australia; this was a discussion with Mr. M. W. Green, a minister of the Disciples of Christ, and a practised debater. He defended Christianity, not as it is popularly taught today by many of its defenders, but as he believed it was taught in the times of the Apostles. The discussion lasted for eight nights, and we debated three different propositions; it was a determined fight on both sides. The debate was reported, and the report, almost verbatim, was published in book form. During that discussion I came to realise the necessity of distinguishing between the priestcraft, that had been commonly designated Christianity, and the religion of Christ, as taught in the first century. But still I left South Australia a zealous Secularist. The debates I had after this were easy work for me, and I say this without casting any reflections on my disputants. I met none so practised in the arts of intellectual warfare as Mr. Green. In Charters Towers, North Queensland, I met the Rev. Mr. Haggar, Congregational Minister, for two evenings; and in Brisbane, Queensland, in July 1888, I held my last debate, as a Freethought lecturer, with the Rev. Mr. Hoskins. Neither of these discussions impressed me with anything that was remarkably new on the questions between us; but in my own mind I felt the craving for religion. I began to feel that I was in many cases misrepresenting Christianity, and above all my personal acquaintance with the effect of irreligion on character was such as to induce me to take a

more lenient view of religion. These were not the only discussions I held, but they were the principal ones, and I cite them, not to boast of my work, but as proof of the position I held as a lecturer, as I will need to refer to them as a refutation of certain slanders that have been coined about me. In the beginning of 1889, I formally seceded from Secularism, although prior to that time I had given up lecturing on anti-theological topics; yet it was from distaste rather than any distinct conviction that I was doing wrong. My last lecture, under the auspices of the Freethought party, was on a political topic, "Under the Southern Cross, or the coming Republic." It was delivered in the Hall of Science, Newcastle, Sunday evening, Jan. 6th, 1889. It was my last lecture, and even then I doubted the wisdom of the course I was pursuing, and when invited to lecture on the following Sunday I declined to do so, not out of any direct feeling of disloyalty to Secularism, but from a growing inclination not to assail Christianity. In fact, I had determined to quietly drop out of the movement and devote my life henceforth to other pursuits. I thought I could see in the Temperance work, Land Law Reform, and other directions room for an energetic worker. Mr. Daniel Wallwork wrote to me from Newcastle, suggesting that my wife and I should settle for a time in the coalopolis. He believed that the Northumberland district would supply us with tolerable audiences. I would probably have accepted this offer had not my wife strongly objected to my continuing to be associated with the Freethought party. I therefore wrote a friendly note to Mr. Wallwork, declining to enter on the work in Newcastle. Still I clung to the flesh-pots of Egypt, and could not alienate myself from the bondage of my former life. My wife, with the keen intuition of a woman, had long before detected the utter hollowness of Freethought so-called. She had never been an Atheist, but was an earnest Theist, with strong leanings towards modern Spiritualism. Now, in the course of an anti-papal lecture, which she was delivering in Maitland, she boldly proclaimed herself a Christian. On her return home, she exhorted me to take the step she had taken, pointing to the many defects in the system I had been associated with so long, and plead-

ing that it was unsuited to the Spiritual and Moral welfare of our children. In accordance with her wish I again went over the evidences in favour of primitive Christianity. Soon I conceded that Theism was reasonable and then that Christian Theism was the highest expression of religious thought. But I felt that I could not associate myself with any denomination. In that state of mind I wrote to Mr. Collins, who was then lecturing in Sydney, stating my change of mind and inviting him to a debate on the question of the existence of God. He agreed to meet me on condition that I would publicly proclaim my change of views, and then formally challenge him. This I did through the columns of the *Protestant Standard*. A committee was appointed, consisting of Messrs. Collins, Skinner, Black and Tye, representing Mr. Collins; and Messrs. Watt, Picton, Pottie and myself, representing my side. We met and drew up the conditions; the following is a verbatim copy of them. Mr. Collins was absent from the meetings of the committee, but signed the following conditions in the presence of the chairman, on the first evening of the debate. Conditions of debate:—

Proposition, "Is there a God, the Maker and Moral Governor of the Universe?"

The debate to extend over two evenings, of two hours each; and a third evening if either disputant desires it.

On the first evening, Mr. Selby to commence with a speech of half an hour, Mr. Collins to be allowed an equal period, then alternate speeches of a quarter of an hour each for the concluding hour, the same conditions to be observed for succeeding evenings, with the exception that Mr. Collins opens on the second evening, all interruptions to be allowed for.

The speakers to be notified two minutes before the expiration of their time.

Each speaker to have a chairman, who shall if necessary, have the right to appeal to the chairman of the meeting on points of order.

Signed { ISAAC SELBY.
W. W. COLLINS.

I still have this document in my possession, with our names attached. The document, you will notice, provides that either disputant has a right to ask for a third evening. I solicited the third night, but although Mr. Collins had signed these conditions he declined to go on with the discussion. He offered to avoid the difficulty by desiring that it should be put to the meeting, which was composed almost solely of Secularists, for at that time I could not say that I was entitled to the friendship of any Christian, not having associated myself with any religious organisation, or having done any work in their cause. The large majority of the audience was, therefore, entirely hostile to me, and I contended, justly, that Mr Collins should be bound by the agreement he had put his signature to, but this he declined to do, evidently believing that "discretion was the better part of valor." This debate took place in the Temperance Hall, Pitt-street, Sydney, on the 4th and 5th of March, 1889, before large audiences; and if anything was required to cement my faith in Christianity it was that discussion. The venomous conduct of some of the audience, along with the sneers and inuendoes of my opponent, proved to me that those men who talk so loudly of Freedom are without any right ideas of the import of the term. A garbled report of this debate appeared in *Freedom*, Mr Collins' paper, written by the lecturer's "great father-in-law;" and although I believe the reporter tried to be fair, as I know him to be a just man, he certainly failed to give "a plain unvarnished tale." This might be owing to his lack of practice as a reporter, or to his prejudice as a partisan, or possibly to both. After this discussion I sought a Secular avocation, but no sooner had I promise of employment on the press than I fell a victim to the typhoid fever. My finances were now exhausted through my being out of remunerative employment so long, so disease and debt invaded the house at the same time. I had, however, the good fortune to fall into the hands of some good Samaritans. During that trying time Dr Joseph Kingsbury, the gentleman to whom this little book is gratefully inscribed, attended me, furnishing me with not only his kindly advice, but also gave me other "things needful to the body." I was near to death's

door, the doctors having given me up before Dr Kingsbury came to treat me. My wife nursed me tenderly, and she and the doctor brought me back from the mouth of the "Valley of the Shadow of Death." My sick hours were periodically enlivened by the calls of Mr. Charles Watt, Mr. H. G. Picton, Mr. Thomas Lutton, and other Christian friends who became interested in me during the debate with Mr Collins, but no Freethinker ever crossed the threshold during all the hours of trouble. If anything were required to make me bury the old man and strive "to rise to newness of life" it was the hours when sickness and adversity invaded the home, to find it hallowed by a Christian friendship I did not deserve, and deserted by the friends of a movement to which I had given my first love, and faithfully wooed for over ten long years. As soon as I recovered from the fever and was strong enough to attend church, I attached myself to the "Church of Christ." I was immersed by Mr. Charles Watt, May 12th, 1889. Why I chose this body in preference to other religious bodies I will state in my next chapter. A few months after this, at the invitation of Mr. Geo. T. Walden, I visited Melbourne, and lectured on "Martin Luther" in the Lygon-street Christian chapel. In the lecture I made no display of hostility towards my former friends, but invited questions on that subject. Questions were submitted, most of them wide of the subject, and in reply to one casting reflections on myself, I promised to lecture on "Why I left the Secularists?" Mr Symes, noticing that I was lecturing in Melbourne, put a note in the *Liberator* suggesting that the local Freethought body should offer me their hall, free of charge, to give a lecture on my reasons for becoming a Christian, on condition that I should submit to an hour's questioning from them. No sooner did I notice this paragraph than I wrote to Mr Symes, intimating that I was going to give a lecture on that subject, but as I did not desire to put myself under any obligation to the Freethought party, it would be delivered in the Old Hall of Science (then, and now the property of the Young Men's Christian Association), and that he and any of his friends could attend and put what questions they deemed desirable at the close of the lecture. Mr Symes neither acknowledged

the letter or attended. I delivered the lecture, my esteemed friend Mr. Walden being in the chair. There was a crowded audience, and every opportunity was allowed for questions; many were put and answered. This was the first of a series of controversial lectures which I have given in the City of Melbourne, at which I have always permitted discussions and questions. The most of my lectures have been given in the Swanston-street Christian Chapel, where I am serving my apprenticeship to the Christian Ministry, and where I have made friendships that I trust will last as long as life. Swanston-street Christian Church is one of the oldest, if not the oldest church in the brotherhood, and among its members are the veteran defenders of Primitive Christianity. They are noted for their rigid adherence to what they believe to be the apostolic customs. Hence it has been an advantage for me in many respects to commence my labors here.

Mr. Symes has systematically vilified me through the columns of his paper, insinuating that "I left the Secularist" because there is better pasture on "my side of the fence." Really, Mr. Symes crows very loudly in his own paper, but he, like Mr. Collins, showed the "white feather" when I challenged him to debate—but more of that anon. Let us for the present consider if the pasture on my side is better than that on his. In the church to which I belong the best paid evangelists are receiving two hundred and fifty a year, and there are not a great many of them getting that. Mr. Symes was, and I believe still is, receiving a salary of four hundred pounds a year for one lecture a week. We have two meetings a week. He has made this salary and more by his lectures for over six years; there is no evangelist in Australia who has done this, so Mr. Symes gets a great deal more as a Freethought lecturer than we would ever give him as an evangelist. My own receipts as a lecturer averaged more than I am receiving now. When my wife and I were travelling through New Zealand we obtained at times very large sums for our lectures. For the first two lectures she gave in Christchurch she received forty-five pounds, and similarly high results were obtained in all the large towns of New Zealand. When we were in

Brisbane for our first engagement the local association paid us one hundred and six pounds for twelve lectures. We have not received a half of that sum for the same amount of work among the Christians, and would not expect it. In Sydney, one of Mrs. Selby's houses amounted to seventy two pounds. I don't say such results could be obtained by anyone now; but at least these facts show that there is good pasture from a worldly standpoint in the country from which we have emigrated. I grant that we had periods of misfortune, but they were few and far between, and striking an average, our receipts were higher than those of the best paid evangelist in the Christian Church to-day. Mr. Symes never expressed doubts of my success until I changed, when of course he changed also. He wrote in the *Liberator* for September 7th, 1884, "Mr. Isaac Selby late of Melbourne, is continuing his successful career in New Zealand. He has held a debate with a local clergyman, and the press has declared that the young Secularist seemed to have the better of it. He has challenged a bishop to debate, but of course, unsuccessfully. Bishops are too conservative to allow of such opportunities for their being held up to ridicule, &c." This and other comments have been made on my work by Mr. Symes. While on his side I never remembered his making an adverse one; but, to use a familiar illustration of his own, like a "transformation scene," he has wheeled round, and now nothing is too vile to say about me. A few months ago he delivered a very silly lecture on "Christianity, The Worst Enemy of the Working Classes." I attended it, and on being called to the platform expressed my willingness to meet Mr. Symes in public debate on the question, if the money accruing from the discussion was given to our charities, but to this Mr Symes objected. I afterwards, rather than see the discussion fall through, offered to waive that point. Then Mr Symes positively refused to meet me or again refer to me, declaring "that he didn't intend to advertise me." Surely it would be no advertisement to me if he defeated me. Clearly he believed he had no case, and therefore, like the Bishop to whom he refers in his eulogy of me, declined to be held up to ridicule. Whenever Free-thinkers have met the representatives of the Disciples of

Christ" in debate they have had anything but a pleasant time of it. For instance, take the case of Robert Owen in his debate with Alexander Campbell, and also that of Charles Bradlaugh with David King. Mr. Symes knew full well that when I was associated with the Freethought party, I fearlessly played my part, holding as many debates as any lecturer they had in Australia, and in those days the lecturers did not sneak out of discussions. That form of heroism has been left to warriors of the Collins and Symes type, who vilify the clergy in their papers, but sing small in the presence of them. Enough, however, has been written to vindicate the course I am pursuing. Now for a few remarks on my present position.

CHAPTER XII.

PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY—THE ROCK ON WHICH I STAND:

As soon as I woke to the reality that Christ was Monarch of the Spiritual World, I felt it incumbent upon me to become a naturalised citizen of his kingdom. To do this I must join some religious organisation, the question was which one; in the first century this would have been an easy thing to determine; then the religious world was not divided on points of discipline or matters of faith. But now in some respects it is a state of Anarchy, although I grant that "there is a streak of kinship" running through the various churches of christendom. In stating why I joined the "Church of Christ," using that term in a denominational sense, I would avoid casting reflections on other religious bodies. The distinctive peculiarities of the "Disciples of Christ" commended themselves to my judgement, as a haven of rest, because that body pleaded for the religion of Christ.

as it was practised and taught in the first century. Without affirming that the "Churches of Christ" now are identical in practice and precept with the Primitive Church, I do claim that in putting forward the plea of "Restoration" they have commenced to tread the road that must lead inevitably to that much desired goal. I must confess that when I first became enamoured with this plea, I had but a hazy idea of where it would lead me; I formed no complete conception of the landscape of life I now contemplate. And I very much doubt, ay, do not believe, that the pioneers of this movement, the Campbells, Scotts and Erretts arrived at that Nebo-like eminence from which they could see the whole of the promised land. Nor could we expect it, considering the errors that the human mind has had to overcome. We have only arrived at our present condition by successive religious awakenings. When Christianity grew into large proportions in Rome, it began to assimilate many of the pagan practices prevalent at those times, and the more popular and influential it became the more pagan it grew. Thus the church was corrupted to render it palatable to the depraved tastes of an idolatrous people. It has been the aim of the reformers to get rid of these pagan elements it absorbed, and restore it to its primitive purity. Martin Luther, when he stumbled on the Bible, read and studied it, and then translated it into the language of the German people, did much towards clearing the Augean Stable of Ecclesiasticism. Zwingle and Calvin did a similarly good work for Switzerland and France, John Knox upheld the Standard of Reform in Scotland, and John Wesley did the same for England. These men and many others prepared the world for the religious life of our own time. Unfortunately the work has not been one of unmixed good, while it has broken the power of paganism, it has at the same time given rise to a hateful Sectarianism. In trying to avoid the rock Scylla, we have fallen into the whirlpool of Charybdis. This should not be so, the church was not divided in the beginning, and in aiming at a restoration of the church, "Unity with Liberty" must be our watchword. To promote unity we must give up our party names, cease to call ourselves after men, after a form of

church government, or after a mere ordinance. We must adopt the terms used in the beginning and call ourselves only after him from whom our doctrine comes. Paul, in the first century foresaw the danger of establishing parties in the Church which would call themselves after their founder. Paul said, "Now I say unto you that every one of you saith I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you?" This seems to imply that party names were not tolerated in Apostolic times, then why should they be now? Martin Luther, catching the spirit of Paul, warned his admirers against falling into the error of using his name, a piece of advice they forgot to keep in mind; he said, "I pray you leave my name alone; do not call yourselves Lutherans but Christians; who is Luther, my doctrine is not mine; I have not been crucified for anyone. St. Paul would not that anyone should call himself of Paul, nor of Peter, but of Christ. How then does it fit me, a miserable bag of dust and ashes, to give my name to the children of Christ. Cease, my friends, to cling to these party names and distinctions; away with them all, and let us call ourselves only Christians, after him from whom our doctrine comes." But while pleading for union among Christians we do not plead for uniformity of opinion; that would mean intellectual death. The creeds have attempted this, and the result is the evils of Sectarianism. The divisions in the church as Mr. Tyler says, have been christened with "wormwood and gall." What we want is Unity with Liberty. We find no two flowers in the garden alike; no two trees alike, so we cannot expect in the realm of mind to have any two intellects alike. There will always be diversity of opinion on matters of speculation, such as the destiny of the wicked; forms of church government, and numberless other unessential matters. Therefore do we adopt the maxim, "In essential matters, unity; in doubtful ones, liberty; and in all things, charity."

To make clear my position, I will use an illustration, the idea of which was suggested to me when reading one of Dr. Cumming's Anti-Papal Lectures. Here is a noble river flowing through a continent; it is the river of life, flowing through the continent of human depravity. On

its bank are the dense jungles of superstition, wherein roam the wild beasts of ambition, lust, and avarice. As the noble river flows along it passes all kinds of land; sometimes its course is through the rugged rocks of human self-will, at other times through the mud of human ignorance, and so its salutary waters are darkened by the detritus from the country through which it flows. A man of love, thought, and action, a Martin Luther, who got a draught of it from its source, says this stream of life ought not to be poisoned by contact with human depravity. So to purify it, he casts a rock into it and divides it. The division over which he obtains authority is filtered and somewhat clarified, so that those who drink of it in future will relish its sweetness, and be strengthened by its health-giving properties. Another, seeing what a Luther did, says I will do more to purify the stream—it may be John Wesley—and he throws another rock into its great tributary of Protestantism, and further purifies and further divides it. Now, says some bold men, enough of this filtering policy. Let us have the water in its purity; let us go drink of it at its source as it comes fresh from the snows of the mountains; let us drink of its pellucid waters before they have flown through the continent of human depravity, and have been contaminated by the ignorance, pride, lust, and ambition of man. And so we say, metaphorical “to the mountains,” let us go back to Christianity as it was in the days of the apostles; let us reject all text-books, verdicts of ecumenical councils and such like, and, swearing allegiance to Christ, be guided only by the instructions given in the New Testament. “The Bible, and the Bible alone,” must be our rule of faith. Any creed that contains more than it, contains *too* much; any that contains less than it, *to little*; and any that contains the same, superfluous. Paul said to Timothy, “Every scripture inspired by God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely with every good work.” If the scriptures are sufficient to equip us for every good work, we need no additions in the form of creeds, which have only been the means of dividing the brotherhood of Christ, which it was intended should be united. There was no

confession of faith required in the first century other than that made by Peter under inspiration, a confession on which the church was built—"Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God." The heartfelt acknowledgement of this fact was sufficient to constitute one a fitting candidate for admission to the primitive church; why shouldn't it be so to-day? The gospels are but four succinct arguments for the Messiahship of Christ, and around this central fact revolves the whole of the New Testament teachings. Let this, therefore, be the "rock on which the church is built," and let the Christian world be again united as it was in the beginning. Once men are willing to look to Christ as their only King they will cease to bow their knee to human tyrants; once they acknowledge him as their Prophet, they will listen to his teachings, be guided by his precepts, and execute his commands; once they fully realise that he is their Priest, they will seek absolution from him alone, and away goes all the hierarchies of the world.

I look to Christianity to regulate our social problems. I feel that when we realise that we are citizens of a kingdom in which we are endowed with equal rights, a kingdom where there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond or free, male or female, we will not be able to tolerate within its limits the glaring inequalities that prevail in the world to-day. When we commence to contemplate the two great commandments, the first to love God with all our strength, and the second to love our neighbors as ourselves, which constitute the essence of Christian ethics, we will realise that if brotherly kindness is to continue, we can never become the upholders of a system that is producing pampered millionaires and famished mendicants. The Dives and Lazarus cannot sit at the same table of God, the one only getting the crumbs and the other eating of the dainty viands. Surely this plea for the restoration of the church involves something more than merely teaching "Faith, Repentance and Baptism." The Christian cannot recline on a couch in his richly furnished parlor and listen to the hailstorm beating against the window panes, callous to the fact that out in the storm are homeless women and children crouching in uncanny places and seeking shelter from the

excesses of the night ; no Christian can do this ; he must be in the vanguard of progress, pleading, though it be unpopular, for social advancement, and a more equitable distribution of wealth ; just as Christianity swept away negro slavery by proclaiming the brotherhood of man, so in like manner will it undermine industrial slavery, and give to each man the inalienable right of " Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." It builds upon a broad and ample basis ; it protests against injustice, and seeks to build a brotherhood among men in which love and not force will be the connecting cord that binds them in unison. Its influence upon its disciples has the same influence on character that the discipline of the army has on outward bearing of the soldier. When a man enters the army he is taught methodical habits, drilled to stand upright and to walk with regular step, so that after he has been for some years a soldier, he is known to be such from his military carriage. In like manner a consistent Christian develops his moral powers, and becomes known to the world by his unimpeachable conduct.

I have in this chapter pleaded for a purer and more united form of Christianity than that prevalent in religious circles to-day, because I am confident that much of the infidelity of this age, is but the natural rebound from a narrow and irrational Christianity, and a corrupt priestcraft. A perverted representation of Christ's teaching has driven many an active and thoughtful man into the arms of Scepticism. Just as imperfect sanitary conditions foster plague and pestilence, so does superstition and priestcraft produce infidelity. What these scourges are to the natural world, infidelity is to the spiritual world. If you want to get rid of disease you improve the condition of your neighbourhood, so if you want to banish Scepticism, you will have to free the Church from the blemishes that have been introduced into it by the teaching of men. Mr. Adolphe Headingsly, in his biography of Mr. Charles Bradlaugh, mentions that the great English Secularist was really driven into Scepticism by the inconsiderate conduct of the Rev. Mr. Packer. Bradlaugh had been preparing for confirmation, and in doing so he discovered some discrepancies between the teach-

ing of the Church of England and the statements in the gospels; he pointed them out, being rudely repulsed in his enquiries, and was reported to his father. This roused a spirit of defiance in him and he soon drifted into open hostility to the church. I once asked a Sunday school-teacher to explain to me the passage, "No man can come unto the Father but by the Son." I said, "If this were so, what hope was there for those heathens who had never heard of the Father?" Instead of giving an intelligent answer to the question he treated it with contempt. This, coupled with my distaste for the doctrine of a physical hell, roused in me the spirit of opposition. Voltaire was educated in the college of the Jesuits, and confounding popery with Christianity, he dropped into Scepticism, and assailed some of the fundamental doctrines of our system. Edward Gibbon, the Sceptical Historian, was educated in Ritualism, from which he was led into Romanism, and from that rebounded into Rationalism, like the illregulated pendulum of the clock, which, having swung too far in the one direction, swings back to the opposite extreme. So in the revolt of the creed-bound mind of man against unnatural fetters, it rushes forth into cold negations. Tennyson may well sing, "There lives more faith in honest doubt, believe me, than in half the creeds." That New Testament Christianity is a good cure for infidelity is illustrated in the conversion of two illustrious Freethinkers, Lord Lyttleton and Mr Gilbert West. Both these men took up New Testament themes for the purpose of hostile criticism. Gilbert West chose the Resurrection of Christ; Lyttleton the Conversion of Paul. The result of their able enquiries have been to furnish the religious world with two powerful arguments for revelation. The one by Lyttleton is entitled "Observations on the Conversion of St. Paul;" that by West is, "Observations on the Resurrection of Christ." Things like this should teach us that "the simple gospel is the power of God unto salvation," and that it needs no doctoring by human hands to make it win its way.

Whatever may be the opinion of the religious reader in regard to this chapter, he will cheerfully agree with me that the destruction of Infidelity is necessary to the

cause of our Master. If the extension of the kingdom of Christ is our highest ambition, then we must unite to banish the common enemy. We read in classic history that when Hercules went to capture the golden apples in the garden of Hesperides, he had to overcome a dragon that stood in his way. So, when we go forth on our mission of saving souls, and find that there is the dragon of Infidelity debarring us from the accomplishment of our purpose, we must do with him what Hercules did to the monster that guarded the golden apples. Ours is the noble task to build up the commonwealth of Christ. Poets have sung of a golden age away back in the infancy of mankind; but ours is the hope that, by the spread of the gospel, we will make that golden age a fact of the future, for the verdict of the conscience of mankind is that Christianity "works well in this world and wears well in the next one."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CONCLUSION.

My task in this chapter is to briefly recapitulate what has gone before, showing the connecting links, and bringing into prominence the line of argument pursued. In the first chapter I dealt with some Sceptics who Recanted, after they had given a searching examination to the evidences of Christianity, thus proving that Scepticism is not an incurable complaint, and citing precedents for the course I have taken. My next step was to examine the principle dogma of the Secularist, "one world at a time," and to show how this creed cramped our efforts for the good of others, how it failed to satisfy the spiritual aspirations of mankind, and how its consolations in the hour of bereavement were of the

Job comforter kind. In support of this, I cited among other things a letter from Mrs. Hume, the mother of the celebrated philosopher and historian. Burton, however, in his life of Hume, challenges the authenticity of this note; but as it is acknowledged as genuine by equally reliable authorities, and as it does not read like a falsehood, I embody it in this work; but even if doubt can be successfully thrown on the genuineness of it, sufficient is still left to prove my case, and to show that after the principle dogma in the Creed of the Secularist has been weighed in the balance of criticism it is found wanting.

The third chapter depicts the Failures of Secularism, showing that it has not sufficient vitality to accomplish its mission; to use the words of Dr. Newman, "Infidelity has only the torch to burn but not the trowel to build." While Christianity has been hallowed by the lives of its martyrs, and has overcome all the difficulties that stood in its way, secularism has cowered before nearly every wave of adversity. It cannot give the name of one man who suffered martyrdom for Atheism; when pressed for their martyrology, they trot out the names of Hypatia, the Platonist; Bruno, the Pantheist; Socrates, the Theist, or Servetus, the Unitarian. It breeds Anarchy and dissension, embittering and not ennobling the lives of its votaries. Christianity, on the other hand, is a divine philanthropy, and binds men together by virtue of its power to organise. Therefore, as in the previous chapter I showed good reasons on the grounds of principle for seceding from Secularism, in this chapter I show that the step was equally desirable as a matter of policy.

In the fourth chapter I show the superiority of Christian morality over that of other systems, demonstrating that the doctrine of utility as taught by Secularism, has been borrowed from Christianity and mutilated so as to make it an unsafe guide. From the perfect character of Christian ethics, indubitable evidence is advanced to prove that they are of divine origin, thus in this chapter I have tried to demonstrate that Christ alone gives us an infallible rule of conduct.

Continuing to examine the Platform of the Secularists, I show that Christianity is the friend of progress; that it pleads for education for the people, for social reform, and

for intellectual advancement, that it is the enemy of priestcraft, and that it deprecates the pernicious alliance of church and state in a political sense. In this chapter I contend for the intellectual as well as the moral supremacy of Christ, showing that the Soldiers of the Cross have fought shoulder to shoulder with their allies, the men of science. The Missionary with his Bible preceded the journalist with his paper in the heart of heathendom. The Reformation was heralded by the printing press and the compass, and the restoration movement to-day is ushered in with the steamship and telegraph. In thus showing that Christianity teaches the true Secular gospel, I show that in seceding from Secularism I have widened my influence for good. Inscribed on every church might be those words now on the Eddystone Lighthouse, "To give Light and save Life."

I next proceed to clear away the Objections to Belief, illustrating the three important lines of Christian evidence, protesting against the statement that because we cannot understand a thing, that, therefore, we cannot believe in it. I believe in a good coat, but for the life of me I couldn't tell how it is made.

In my chapter on Retribution I have shown that it is reasonable to believe that we will be punished for wrongdoing and rewarded for righteousness; I have repudiated the idea that punishment is inflicted for the mere purpose of causing pain to the sinner, it is to uphold the majesty of law, and to prevent a repetition of wrongdoing. Love is the spirit of Christianity—"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved"—John 3: 16-17. I preach God the Father, not God the Avenger. In this chapter I defended Christianity against the charge that it is a persecuting system, and have shown that the Inquisition was the offspring of an iniquitous priestcraft. Voltaire maintains that were Atheists in power they would be more intolerant than any other class, and if recent events in the Melbourne Freethought party are to be taken as a criterion, certainly he is right. He says, in his treatise on toleration, "An

Atheist of any capacity, and invested with power, would be as dreadful a scourge to the rest of mankind as the most bloody enthusiast."

The Verity and the Value of the Miracles are next discussed, and the belief in the supernatural shown to be logical. In previous chapters I had dealt with the moral and intellectual supremacy of Christ. Now I turn to contemplate him in his character as monarch of the natural world. By his exhibitions of power over the forces of Nature does he prove himself to be what he claimed to be, "The Son of God." Thus do I furnish to my readers an additional reason for the hope that is in me.

The chapter on the Crimes of Secularism is introduced as a set-off against such publications as "The Crimes of the Preachers." Infidelity is proven to encourage licentiousness, and other "ills that flesh is heir to." Had not the other side descended to attack the private character of some Christians, neither would this chapter, nor a portion of the succeeding one, have been written; but as Freethinkers have shamefully vilified the reputation of preachers of the gospel, it is necessary, in self-defence, to point to the brittle house in which they live. The clergy, as a class, are more virtuous, I make bold to assert, than the representatives of any other calling. There are Judases among them, as among all sections of mankind, but it is not fair to take these isolated cases and hold them up as examples of the order. Who would think of condemning education because of the viciousness of a few school masters; or disparaging law because some members of the "learned" profession forgot themselves, and allowed their feelings to overcome their judgement; or of questioning the advisability of banks, because a manager or cashier occasionally, by an act of peculation, endangers its safety. Yet this is the kind of logic some Sceptics employ against Christianity.

The lives and teachings of some illustrious Freethinkers are next dealt with. Their admissions of the advantages of Christianity are quoted, and from their lips do we learn that this system swept away slavery from Europe, has elevated women, has driven cannibalism, human sacrifice, and infanticide from Oceania. To use the words of

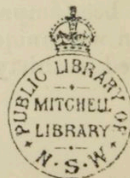
Lecky, "It did more to soften and regenerate mankind" than any other influence. The verdict of the most intelligent of Freethinkers supporting the utility of Christianity, and the other evidence being before me in favor of the beneficence of this system, it became a matter of duty for me to pay my allegiance to it.

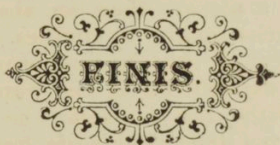
The eleventh chapter is of a Biographical character, written out of no desire to prominently intrude my personality into this book, but from a desire to refute charges that have been brought against me. Many of the difficulties attendant upon this secession from Secularism were softened by the thought that all my relatives, and many of my best friends, were on the other side. My mother was a woman of exceptional piety, and my father had a profound belief in the efficacy of Christianity, although he held latitudinarian views that seem to me to resemble those of Franklin, which I have sketched in the first chapter.

In the penultimate chapter I state why I joined the "Disciples of Christ," and here I plead for Unity—'Unity as it was in the beginning,' believing that in adopting the precepts and practices of the primitive church as completely as the exigencies of our time will allow, we will have a sure and certain panacea to Infidelity, and all the other evils with which modern society is beset. To show this, let us imagine what the condition of society would be if by way of experiment for five years we determined to live on purely Christian lines, we would "owe no man anything," consequently there would be no bankruptcies. "He that stole would steal no more," but would labor with his hands, consequently no cases of larceny would be before our courts. Remembering the apostolic injunction, "Be courteous, be pitiful," there would be no unpleasant disputes; litigation would cease in our endeavors to "agree quickly" with our adversaries; masters rendering unto their servants that which was "just and equal," and servants also carrying out the instructions of Paul, would promote harmony between employer and employed, banish strikes, and settle all industrial difficulties; in a word, society would be unspeakably happy. Such then being the happy results of loyalty to this system, I think my journey from Atheism

to Christianity has been a profitable one, and I trust that the reader who has gone with me has been as much benefited by reading as I have been by writing this little volume. I have striven to draw, as far as my feeble capabilities will allow, a rude chart that may help the residents on the shoals and reefs of a false system to sail safely to a haven of rest and refuge. While myriads have tried other systems with varying success, Christianity alone has shown itself able to stand the test of progress. One after the other the religious systems of the world have taken their place in the cemetery of the past, they having failed to keep pace with the march of intellect or to find an abiding place in the affections of mankind. The religion of Buddha and the ethical system of Confucius are at a standstill. China, the land of these beliefs, has made but little advance in two thousand years; its civilization is as crippled as its ladies feet, or as dwarfed as the plant the Chinese love to cultivate. Mahomedanism has turned woman into either a concubine or a slave, a toy of a monarch's pleasure, or if she be of the lower order, a "hewer of wood and a carrier of water." Christ alone stands forth as "The Light of the World." He outshone all other teachers as the sun outshines the stars. No conqueror, statesman or author has bequeathed to the world such a lasting influence as this. He has indelibly stamped the impress of his mind and life on the thought of our world, and his teachings have become interwoven with every fibre of our social life. The Monarchy, Republic, or Commune has not outgrown him. A Victoria, a Garfield, or a Kingsley, will sit at his feet and learn lessons suitable to their respective realms of thought. The social growth of the world has only brought us nearer to the life of the Great Teacher; instead of transcending him, we have only touched the hem of his garments, and in doing so we have already felt his healing power. Homer, Milton and Skakespeare were men of an age. Christ is the contemporary of all ages. In a previous chapter I have shown how his morality has never been improved on; similarly his method of instruction was unique. His Sermon on the Mount could be delivered in thirty minutes, and that thirty minutes

address has revolutionised the world; from exordium to peroration it is matchless; its wisdom is surprising; the great complaint against it is that we cannot live up to it; some carp about it and say it is impracticable, but the fact that it is in advance of us is a proof of its divine authority. Each day, as we strive we get nearer to it, we find it is still before us; it is something to strive after, and inasmuch as we come short of it, is it a proof of our fallibility. As in the Sermon on the Mount we learn how to preach well, so in that sermon we also learn how to pray; the Lord's prayer is a model prayer, short but complete. Christ was master of the Socratic method of teaching and his answers to questions astonished his listeners. When he spoke in parables, he adopted a method for giving permanency to his instructions, that any student must acknowledge the advantages of; we all know how much easier it is to learn poetry than prose; how much easier it is to fix a picture than an abstraction on the mind, so when Christ taught by similies he adopted the most approved form of rhetoric, and proved his thorough knowledge of the capabilities of the human mind. His character was without a blemish; he challenged his enemies to point to a defect in his life, but they could not; he practised what he preached. He taught humanity, and himself set the example, by washing the feet of his disciples; baptism, and was himself baptised; self-sacrifice, and gave up his own life. No teacher so lived his teachings as did Jesus. Mahomet made a law that his followers should only have four wives, but he had eleven himself. His life was irreproachable. Tiberius was so enamoured with him that he offered to place his statue in the Pantheon, side by side with the statue of the gods in the pagan mythology—acknowledging the necessity for religion. No other faith can claim the acceptance of the thoughtful, therefore I bend the knee to him as my Prophet, Priest and King, and acknowledge that my journey from Atheism to Christianity has been a translation from darkness into light.



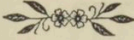


THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

CHRISTOPHER BROWNE



PIONEER PUBLISHING CO'S



CATALOGUE



THE
CHRISTIAN PIONEER,
A WEEKLY PAPER

In the interests of Primitive Christianity, published
in Melbourne

EVERY THURSDAY.

—(:o)—

EDITORS :

D. A. EWERS, Henrietta Street, Hawthorn.

GEO. T. WALDEN, Christian Chapel, Lygon St., Carlton.

EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTORS :

J. F. FLOYD, Dunedin, New Zealand.

T. J. GORE, M. A., Adelaide, South Australia.

Correspondents in every colony.

—(:o)—

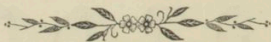
Subscriptions from Agents, or when two or more copies are sent to one address, 4s per year or 1s per quarter ; for single copy per post, postage 2s per year, or 6d per quarter is added.

Send Orders and Payments to D. A. EWERS, Henrietta Street, Hawthorn, Victoria.

SEVENTEEN REASONS

Why the Disciples of Christ should subscribe for the

Christian Pioneer



1. It is the *only weekly paper* published by the Disciples in Australasia.
2. It is a *newspaper* containing reports of the work from all the Colonies.
3. The Editors who are both Australians are well known preachers and *uncompromising advocates* of New Testament principles.
4. Among its contributors are well-known brethren from all directions, such as Floyd, Black, Moysey, Bates, Gore, Bryant, Henshelwood, Pittman, Gilmour, Thurgood, Donaldson, Fischer, &c., &c. It is therefore a *thoroughly representative* paper.
5. It is an outspoken advocate of *Temperance*.
6. It is the *Young Men's* paper, containing a well edited column conducted by the Secretary of the Literary Societies Union.
7. It is the *Young Women's* paper, containing their excellently prepared Endeavour Column edited by Miss Hill.
8. It is a *family paper* with a carefully selected Family Circle.
9. It is not filled with long book-like articles, but its contributions are *short, live and practical*.
10. It is taken in *almost, if not every church*, and its circulation is steadily increasing.
11. It is a warm supporter of *Home and Foreign Missions*.
12. It presents the distinctive plea of the Disciples of Christ in as *terse and attractive* a manner as possible.
13. It is a *cheap* paper only 4s per year (a penny a week) if obtained from our agents, or when two or more copies are sent together, and only 6s per single copy posted to any address.
14. It is not a *financial speculation* and the Editors, who are sole proprietors, only desire it to cover cost of printing and postage. The editing and publishing are done *free*.
15. It is a weekly means of communication between the brethren of Australasia, by which unity is fostered and distant churches *drawn closer together*.
16. Its *circulation* exceeds that of any other paper ever published by the Disciples in Australasia.
17. It is *your own* paper, giving an account of *your* work.

Send for SAMPLE COPIES to

D. A. EWERS, HENRIETTA ST., GLENFERRIE, VICTORIA.

PIONEER PUBLISHING Co.

GEO. T. WALDEN,

CHRISTIAN CHAPEL, LYGON STREET, CARLTON, VICTORIA.



PUBLISHERS OF "STANDARD SUNDAY SCHOOL SERIES"
comprising :—

- { "Eclectic Commentary" 4s. each.
- { "Bible Lesson Quarterlies" 3s. per doz.
- { "Pure Words" 6d. per doz.
- { "Buds of Hope" 6d. per doz.
- { Primary Lesson Paper 2d. per doz.

Samples sent on application.

"DISTINCTIVE PECULIARITIES OF THE DISCIPLES," J. Z. Tyler.

"WHY I AM A CHRISTIAN," Isaac Errett

"FROM ATHEISM TO CHRISTIANITY," Isaac Selby.

Agents for the "Standard Publishing Co." Ohio, U.S.A.
" " " Canright's "Seventh Day Adventism Re-
nounced."

Agents for the following religious newspapers :—

"CHRISTIAN STANDARD," U.S.A. Weekly, 16 p.p. 10s.
yearly; post free.

"CHRISTIAN EVANGELIST," U.S.A. Weekly, 16 p.p.
10s. yearly; post free.

"APOSTOLIC GUIDE," U.S.A. 10s. yearly; post free.

"GOSPEL ADVOCATE," U.S.A. 10s. yearly; post free.

"CHRISTIAN COMMONWEALTH," London. 8s. yearly; post
free.

Agents for The "Paul E. Wirt Fountain Pen," price
10s. Will hold one week's supply of ink—always ready
for use; over 300,000 now sold. Will enable one to
write 100 ordinary business letters without replenishing
ink. "An absolutely perfect fountain pen, compared
with which all others are rank failures."—*Mark Twain.*

Agents for "The Noyes" Dictionary Holder, strongly
made, highly finished, will hold an unabridged dictionary
and six other books—price 20s.

Living Pulpit. 12s; post free, 13s.
 Missouri Lectures. 4s; post free, 4s 6d.
 Sermons and Songs. Updyke and Hawes. 4s; post free, 4s 4d.
 Conversion to God. Cloth Covers, soiled, 1s 3d; post free, 1s 7d.
 Popular Lectures and Addresses. (Campbell.) 12s; post free 13s.
 Evenings with the Bible, 3 vols. 6s. per vol.; 6s. 9d. post free.
 History of Reformatory Movements. (Rowe). 8s.; post free 8s. 9d.
 Voice of the Seven Thunders. (Martin). 6s.; post free 6s. 6d.

BOOKS SUITABLE FOR FAMILY AND S. S. LIBRARY.

The White Church. 4s; post free, 4s 6d.
 Shifting Shadows. Simmonds. 4s; post free, 4s 6d.
 Heavenward Way. 2s; post free, 2s 4d.
 Letters to a Young Christian. Errett. 4s; post free, 4s 6d.
 Talks to Bereans Errett 4s.; post free 4s. 6d.
 Walks about Jerusalem. Errett. 4s; post free, 4s 6d.



RODERICK WAYNE, NORMAN MACDONALD, A WOMAN'S DOING, By JESSIE H. BROWN.

These are charming stories by a gifted writer which readily take first place as works of fiction. There is a steadily increasing demand for the wholesome and practical lessons which these volumes so ably and charmingly teach. No home or Sunday-school library should be without them. **Neatly bound in cloth.**

Tale of a Pioneer Church (Vogel). 6s; post free, 6s 6d.

TRAVELS.

Coop's and Exley, or Around the World. 4s; post free 4s 4d.
 Under Ten Flags. Sweeny. Handsomely illustrated, 10s.
 Chang Foo. 4s; post free, 4s 6d.
 Poetry and Prose of Marie Butler. 10s.
 Lands of the Bible. (McGarvey). Cloth 12s; post free 13s; sheep 14s.; post free 15s.

Address all Orders to GEO. T. WALDEN, Christian Chapel
Lygon Street, Carlton, Victoria.

MISCELLANEOUS.

- Bible Temperance, or Wines of Old and New Testaments. Collins
Paper, 1s 9d; post free, 2s.
Christian Baptist. 7 vols in one. 12s; post free, 13s.
Scheme of Redemption.—8s; post free, 9s.
Reason and Revelation. 8s; post free, 9s.
Conversations at the Unity Club. 3s; post free, 3s 4d.
Living Oracles. Campbell. 2s; post free, 2s 4d.
"Office of Holy Spirit." 6s; post free, 6s 6d.
Vision of the Ages. 5s; post free, 5s 6d.
New Testament, with Apostolic References. Jackson. Cloth 6s;
post free, 6s 9d.
Care of the Churches. (Munnell). 5s; post free, 5s 6d.
Trials and Crucifixion of Christ. Stout. 4s; post free, 4s 6d.
Hermeneutics. Dungan. 6s; post free, 6s 6d.
Orthodoxy in Civil Courts. 1s 3d; post free, 1s 6d.
Christian System. (Campbell). 6s; post free, 6s 6d.
Gospel Plan of Salvation. (Brent). 10s; post free, 11s.
Preacher's Record. 4s; post free, 4s 4d.
Communing in the Sanctuary. (Richardson). 2s; post free 2s 6d
The Messiahship. (W. Scott). 6s; post free, 6s 6d.
Genuineness and Authenticity of the Gospels. (Hinsdale). 5s; post.
free, 5s 6d.
"Contradictions of Orthodoxy." 4s; post free, 4s 6d.
Symposium on Holy Spirit, by best living writers. 3s; post free,
3s 6d.
Gems of Thought. (Smart). 2s; post free, 2s 3d.
Ecclesiastical Tradition. 3s; post free, 3s 4d.
Year book of Disciples of Christ. 1s.; post free 1s. 2d.

—[o]—

❖ NEW BOOKS ❖

BEING RECEIVED EVERY MAIL. ANY BOOK
PUBLISHED FURNISHED ON
APPLICATION.

—(o)—

Address all Orders to
GEO. T. WALDEN, Christian Chapel, Lygon Street,
Carlton, Victoria.

Limelight Entertainments

—BY—

BRO. A. B. MASTON

AND

BRO. GEO. T. WALDEN.



WE ARE PREPARED TO GIVE A FIRST-CLASS

Limelight Lecture Entertainment

at any place within a radius of

THREE MILES OF MELBOURNE P.O.,

FOR **£2.**

This includes at least Forty Pictures, Lecturer, Limelight Operator, in fact everything necessary for a first-class entertainment.

Places at a greater distance than three miles are charged simply the extra cost of getting to and from the place.

239.7

S

a.n. 4239202

DSM

239.7

S

DSM/ 239.7/ S
From atheism to
Christianity, and what I
learned on the way : a
popular defence of
Christianity and a
refutation of the fall

**STATE LIBRARY
OF N.S.W.**



N2145028

