

to observe nature for themselves, to gather knowledge, and verify their beliefs, by careful observation and reasoning on the facts they learn and see around them. Only in this way can the human race progress.

The history of beliefs—how they were acquired, how they were maintained, and how they were changed—will make us humble, tolerant and progressive.

It is very interesting to trace the history of beliefs from crude primitive notions regarding the universe, to reasoned systematic statements of facts and principles. But workers—those who think and work—are chiefly interested in the beliefs now prevailing, which influence more or less the circumstances of all men, and which mould the customs and laws of nations.

Men's beliefs change with their progress in intelligence, knowledge and civilization: for men's beliefs depend on their knowledge or ignorance of the nature of things, on their knowledge or ignorance of the laws of nature, and on the state of their mental and moral development. Many things which our forefathers believed and acted on are now set aside as altogether unworthy of belief. Our forefathers accepted explanations of things they did not understand, which we now think absurd and superstitious. In many civilized countries great numbers of educated people even believed in ghosts, bogies, ghouls, evil spirits, goblins, and spooks of different kinds, which only weak-minded or ignorant people and savages now believe.

Truth commends itself to the reason and intellect of man. When you present a truth—such as that two and two make four—even to a child, you do not require to add a threat of punishment to make him believe it. But if you wish to subdue, subvert, and bamboozle the mind of the child, by making him say that two and two are three, when he knows that two and two are four,—ah! then you find it necessary to frighten him with some dreadful imagination, or bodily punishment, to compel him to say he believes the absurdity.

"Truth, like the sun, is seen by means of its own light." But the history of the world abundantly shows that truth, and the welfare and progress of the human race, have been greatly hindered by impostors and tyrants compelling the masses to accept and profess to believe silly, degrading and immoral dogmas concerning the nature of the universe and of life,—and not only so, but compelling the people to regulate their thoughts and actions by these dogmas, in order that the governing few may live in luxury on the labor and earnings of the masses.

All living creatures by their instincts and necessities seek to understand the nature of the world they live in, so that they may know how to live in safety and comfort—how to live in the enjoyment of their life, faculties and surroundings.

Ever since man began to reason on the wonderful objects and phenomena that constantly present themselves to his senses, his intellect has persistently sought some explanation of the world in which he finds himself. The earth on which we live, with its myriads of living creatures,—the spheres, poised in space and governed by law,—whence came they? how? and when? These things have engaged the attention and called forth the wonder and admiration