

They also attributed to Free Thought many things which we cannot legitimately refer to it. For instance they said that the disappearance of the belief in witchcraft, and other forms of superstition were due to its influence. They also said missionary activity can be traced to Free Thought. These benefits arose from the fact that a purer faith and a deeper spiritual life were found among the people. And this faith and spiritual life arose, not from the rejection of the authority of scripture, but from a clearer appreciation of its truths.

We do not say that Free Thought was an unalloyed evil. But we do contend that its predominant influence upon the church was of a highly injurious nature. We do not deny that it produced indirectly some beneficial results, but the evil far outweighs the good. There are three ways, and only three, in which the church is susceptible of influence, either for good or evil, by any agency at work among men. Firstly—regarding the expression of her doctrine, and the apologetic literature in defence of that doctrine. Secondly—regarding the work of extending the Christian religion at home and abroad. Thirdly—regarding the moral and religious life of her people as manifested in their practical life. In order to estimate the influence of Free Thought let us look at these three spheres.

I. Free Thought has been one of the means which have caused the church to express her doctrine in clearer terms. When the doctrines were attacked the church expressed herself more definitely on those particular subjects; and after doing so, she fortified her position by able apologetic works. You will probably have noticed that this was the strongest argument advanced by the affirmative to-night. They pointed to the works of the apologists which are monuments of human genius. The most of their other arguments related to the benefits derived in other departments of life and activity from the influence of Free Thought. But we must consider the influence of Free Thought upon the church, not upon science, nor archeology, nor literature. At the same time we must not forget that all the apologetic literature and all the clearer expressions of doctrine were not due to Free Thought, but a great deal was due to the adaptation of our religion to the wants of each particular age. But the church does not depend upon apologetic literature nor upon dogma for her growth. Apologies are necessary for defence, but it is the living Spirit of God, dwelling in and working through consecrated men and women, that forms the power in Christian life and in all Christian conquest.

II. I stated that some benefit was derived by the church in the expression of doctrine, and in the line of apologetical literature. Step by step down through the ages the Church advanced, and fought her way at every step. But the injury to the church here arose from the fact that the