

If by authority is meant the force of example, then, in order to avoid this, it would be necessary to break up the social life of the world; for assuredly, wherever two men live together, the example of each will tell upon the other. We cannot suppose that the earnest freethinker wishes to escape from what the Bishop of Derry has called the "noble coercion of the highest reason"—in other words, that he cares much for thought that is free, unless it is also true. We do not see, then, any possible meaning of the word that does not imply more than the unbeliever wishes. And the only freedom of thought worth contending for is this—"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

It is, however, of great importance, to ask how far and in what sense the error of the freethinker may be laid at the door of the Church. That there is some relation of cause and effect between iron intolerance on one side, and wild licence on the other, is quite certain. It has often been pointed out that the scandals of freethinking on the Continent may be distinctly traced to the abused authority of the Church of Rome. But Rome is not the only sinner in this respect. Every bigot is a father of freethought. On the other hand, let freethinkers remember that *they* are the greatest supporters of the Church of Rome. The most dangerous enemy of reform is revolution; the most useful friend of bigotry is freethought. If reform must end in revolution—if the abandonment of bigotry means the acceptance of freethinking—then, of the two inevitable alternatives, we prefer the first. For though unreformed and bigoted we still preserve something of the ancient good; whereas, if we are swept by the storm of revolution into the maelstrom of freethought, we preserve nothing at all. The reason that thinks by law, and therefore does not pretend to be free except as this is freedom; the faith that, as belief, depends on the evidence for Christianity, and as trust reposes on the character of Jesus Christ, thus submitting itself to the canons of historic criticism and the conditions of moral progress; the love that, more than anything, symbolises the Infinite, and which, by a blessed contradiction, seeks and finds its freedom only in the service of man,