AGNOSTIC V. CHRISTIAN.

REV. DR. BURNS AND MR. WATTS DISCUSSING THE BIBLE'S VALUE.

A Liberal Interpretation of the Scriptures by a Methodist Clergyman—Christianity Progressive—An Interesting Discussion at Hamilton.

From the Hamilton Tribune.

A large and intelligent audience assembled Monday night to Hear Mr. Watts lecture on "The Bible and Modern Thought." Mr. Littlehales, presided. The subject was chosen with a view to stimulate discussion, and the general statements advanced are so familiar that it is not necessary to follow them seriatim. In explanation of the position he assumed, and in deference to those who differed from him, the lecturer premised that no subject ought to be too sacred for criticism. He claimed that freethinkers are generally misapprehended, and held that in disputing the divine inspiration of the bible they wished not to destroy, but to analyze it, judging of its claim to accuracy from internal evidence. Whilst they were not satisfied who wrote the scriptures, they did not value that point so much as the more pertinent one, what is written. After maintaining that it was not feasible that a supreme being would make a divine revelation which was of infinite consequence to only a moiety of those interested in it. Mr. Watts asserted that the bible failed as a standard of ethics in that it did not tell us, first, what man is: second what his duties are; third, how to perform them? The reason they had hitherto held so powerful a position, was that in former days people deputed their thinking to others, and priestcraft seized upon this lazy indifference as a pretext to propound doctrines which put the laity in its power. But modern thought was changing all this, and secularists, in thinking out various "doxys" for themselves, set an example which Christians ought to, and eventually must, follow so as to have logical reasons for the faith that is in them. Modern thought was exacting, refused to prostrate itself by blind acquiescence in teachings which insulted their understandings, and claimed the right to weed out the good and true from the false and misleading. He protested against the injustice of those who denied the "respectability" and honesty of free-thinkers, and in a perfervid peroration declared that he would undertake to maintain, on any platform and against any disputant, that the bible was not in accordance with modern thought, and that the teachings of free thinkers were productive of greater good to humanity than those of Christ. Frequent applause was accorded to the lecturer, and a large majority of the audience was evidently en rapport with him.

The chairman then invited discussion, an open platform being, he said, an important article in the secularist creed.

A workingman objected to Mr. Watt's statement about the deluge, instancing the recent Java calamity and the London, Ont., floods, as a proof that God even now occasionly visited man with terrible afflictions, before which he should bow with a humble spirit.

Another gentleman, a mechanic, here advanced upon the platform, and said, whilst he agreed with much that the lecturer advanced, he wanted to ask one question—How much better would the world be if free thought doctrines were substituted for christianity? Ancient Greece and Rome had high degree of excellence in arts and philosophy, but had no christianity, and consequently immorality abounded. By some unexplained means the speaker then got off the track and, amidst convulsions of laughter, declared that he wanted property more equally divided.

The chairman called him to order, after which the audience loudly demanded

The Rev. Dr. Burns, who came forward in response. The doctor, promising, said that he had no earthly objection to the freedom of thought which Mr. Watts claimed. He was as radical as the lecturer could be. His faith belonged to no priest or potentate. Apart from the inspiration of the bible, the aim of the christian religion was to make good men and women. He spoke at a disadvantage, not having made any notes. However, he could say that he perfectly agreed with the position of Mr. Watts as to the impossibility of accepting the literal word of the scriptures as inspired. No educated minister of the day disputed that. Neither does the modern church preach the doctrine of belief or damnation. Such a statement was a caricature of the christian religion of to-day. Faith was the key-stone to modern christian thought and to accuse the church of propounding hell and damnation as the unbeliever's alternative was an insult. He was as great a champion of free thought and free speech as the lecturer, and if any man were to come forward that night and attempt to gag Mr. Watts, his (Dr. Burns') hand would be the first to put a stop to such a procedure. One of the worst thoughts put forward by the lecturer was that christians contended every verse of scripture was sacred. It was not so. The church long ago got away from that anachronism. As to the charge that the bible contained more vulgar obscenities, he said that when it was translated such expressions were commonly accepted. But times were changed, and as in the case of Shakespeare's works, it was advisable now to have an expurged edition, so allowances must be made for certain passages in the bible. There was a human as well as a divine element in the scriptures, and the human element was subject to error and correction. It was a good thing that, as the lecturer said, there were various readings of some biblical books. Students in this way got a better light upon them. There were more original manuscripts for the bible than for any other known book, and from this cause arose the discrepancies made so much of by Mr. Watts. He further claimed that such apparent contradictions were the discoveries of good christians in their search for truth, and, for the reason that biblical scholars were so earnest in this pursuit, we must expect that the revision of the new testament would result in very many alterations. His reply to the lecturer's statement that for nearly a century after Christ no single word of the scriptures was written, was that such objection had been frequently answered before christian ministers had not time to reply to unbelievers' objections. If it had not been for a relative, he (the speaker) would not have been present that night, and he had no notion of controversy. There was better work to do. It was not scholars that were doing the bulk of the work. Illiterate preachers—who did not know a Greek root when they saw it, but who somehow got hold of the root of evil and eradicated it—were doing more good than he. They had a sort of "catch weight" mode of wrestling with wickedness which was far more productive of good in saving souls and turning from drunkenness than more polished style. He believed that this must be accepted as proof that there was a tremendous power in religion. He cared not that such a conviction might be unphilosophical or what; he knew that it was good. It could not be that the means employed were accountable for work done, for most illiterate and ignorant men—men who could not even speak grammatically—were doing vast service, and were saving some of the finest natures in the country. They all knew him (the doctor). He was a gnarled, excitable, hot tempered Irishman, with a strong admixture of Scotch blood. He loved to argue, and he would rather discuss the genuineness of that book (putting his hand on the bible) with Mr. Watts than he would eat an oyster supper. But the more he read the opinions of sceptics the more he was convinced of their weakness. He never yet met a man who spoke against christianity that understood what Christ's religion meant. He asked that the tree should be judged by its fruit. The bible was a propositander of a system and he demanded that it be judged by the work it produced. Christianity did not depend upon the inspirations of the scriptures. He liked the sentiments of the lecturer on some points, and would like to take him into the church and make a local preacher of him. He believed in enquiry. O'Connell cried "agitate, agitate, agitate!" and so won a bloodless revolution. So he (Dr. Burns) said, agitate the doctrines of Christianity. Why, Christ was the greatest radical that ever lived, and though the world became more radical every day, it could never be so radical as Christ. He appealed to his hearers to study Christ's teachings, and not be content with the stuff that was preached formerly as the gospel. It was a standing reproach to Christians that they did not know their bibles, and so a lecturer could come before them and foist any stuff he liked upon them as scriptural. It was one thing for Mr. Watts to say that the subject of biblical inspiration was a difficult one, but quite another to upset it altogether, and in concluding an impassioned if somewhat disconnected speech, appealed to the audience not to readily give up a gospel that had unlocked the store houses of freedom and morality the world over.

After the applause which followed Dr. Burns' speech had subsided, the chairman asked that gentleman to fix a time and place to discuss the whole subject with Mr. Watts.

Mr. Watts then, in an eloquent and impassioned speech, replied on the whole. He said the speech of Dr. Burns was that of an advancing free thinker, and asserted there were not twelve christians in Hamilton who could understand the doctor's position. If all christians were like him there would be no need for Mr. Watts to lecture. In fact, Dr. Burns was the best specimen of a free thinker, without knowing it, that he had ever seen. He concluded by challenging Dr. Burns to three hours' public discussion, wherein he (the lecturer) would undertake to prove that the teachings of secularism were superior to the teachings of christianity, and that the bible is opposed to modern science, or he would demonstrate that the new testament preached the doctrine of belief in Christ or eternal damnation.

In the course of an interruption, Dr. Burns admitted that it was not possible to maintain the literal and complete inspiration of the scriptures, but declined to entertain Mr. Watts's challenge, alleging that christian theology was progressive, and was in swaddling clothes yet. It was not necessary to combat the attacks of secularists—that had been done already. Intelligent christians did not care about them, and he should reserve to himself the right to prepare and deliver a lecture on the bible at his convenience, as the lecturer had done. Mr. Watts made another appeal to Dr. Burns, but the latter refused to debate, and the meeting adjourned about 11 o'clock.

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FINANCE AND TRADE

Toronto Stock Exchange.

TORONTO, Sept. 21.—Banks—Montreal, asked 197½, bid 197¼. Ontario, asked 115½, bid 115¼. Toronto, asked 182, bid 181½; transactions 50 at 182. Merchants, asked 121½, bid 121¼. Commerce, asked 132½, bid 132. Imperial, asked 143½, bid 143; transactions 50 143½. Federal, asked 162½, bid 162; transactions 50 at 162½, 50 at 162½, 50 at 162, 106 at 162½ bid. Dominion, asked 202, bid 202½; transactions 55, 20, at 202, 50 at 202 after board. Standard, asked 116, bid 115; transactions 42, 8 at 115. British America, asked 113, bid 112. Western Assurance, asked 135 bid 132 Consumers' Gas Co., asked 147, bid 146. Dominion Telegraph Co., asked 88. Lobster Canning Co. asked 100. Noxon Bros. Manufacturing. Co., asked 110, bid 100. Ontario and Qu'Appelle Land Co. asked 125. Northwest Land Co., asked 67½, bid 67; transactions 100, 100 at 67, 50 at 67½. Canada Permanent, bid 222, transactions 30 at 222½, after board. Freehold, asked 168. Western Canada, bid 191; transactions 13 at 164½, 7 new stock at 170½. Union, bid 133. Canada Land & Credit bid 122. Building and Loan Association, bid 102½. Imperial Savings and Investment, bid 108, transactions 12½ at 108½. Farmers' Loan and Savings bid 126. London and Canadian Loan and Aid bid 140. National Investment, bid 105. Peoples' Loan, bid 100. London and Ontario bid 116. The Land Security Company, bid 141. Huron and Erie asked 169½, bid 162. Canadian Savings and Loan, asked 124, bid 120. Hamilton Provident, asked 126, bid 125. Ontario Investment Association, asked 128, bid 124, transactions 50 at 125. Farmers and Traders, asked 110. Manitoba Investment Association, asked 110.

Montreal Stock Exchange.

MONTREAL, Sept. 21.—CLOSING BOARD.—Bank of Montreal 197½ and 197¼, sales 25 at 197½ Ontario 116½ and 115. Du Peuple 67½ and 67, sales 25 at 67½ Molsons 122. Toronto 182½ and 181½. Merchants 121½ and 121, sales 20 at 121½. Canada Pacific Railway Co., 56 offered. Union, 57½ and 80. Commerce 132½ and 131½. Exchange 50 and 29. Imperial 162½ and 162. Northwest Land Company, 72 and 65. Montreal Telegraph Co. 122½ and 122. Richelieu and Ontario Navigation company 65 and 64½, sales 80 at 65½, 335 at 65. City Passenger Company 119 and 117½. Gas Company 177½ and 176, sales 25 at 176½. Canada Cotton 75 and 70. St. Paul, M. & M. 110 and 108½

Corn Exchange Transactions.

TORONTO, Sept. 21.—Corn exchange, 12 noon—No transactions on the call board.

Local Markets.

TORONTO, Sept. 21.—THE FARMERS' MARKET—The receipts of grain on the street to day were only moderate, and prices unchanged. Some 400 bushels of wheat offered; one load of poor new fall sold as low as 96c, and a poor load of spring at 99c; fair to good fall ruled at $1 06 to $1 18, and spring at $1 06 to $1 10. Three loads of barley sold at 66 per bushel. Oats steady with a sale of a load at 43c. No peas or rye offered. Hogs sold at $6 25. Straw unchanged; about 20 loads sold at $10 to $14. Hay steady, a load of loose sold at $7, and a load of bundled at $11.

ST. LAWRENCE MARKET.—This market to-day, was quiet, and values remain unchanged. Following are the retail prices in St. Lawrence market: Beef—roast 12c to 15c; sirloin steak 14c to 15c, round steak 12½c to 14c; mutton, legs and chops 12½c to 15c, inferior cuts 8c to 10c; lamb, per pound, 8c to 12½c; veal, best joints 12c to 13c, inferior cuts 6c to 8c; pork, chops and roast 12c to 13c; butter, lb rolls 18c to 20c; large rolls 15c to 17c, cooking 12c to 14c; lard 15c to 15c; cheese 12c to 14c; bacon 12c to 14c, eggs 19c to 21c; turkeys $1 to $2; chickens, per pair, 35c to 50c; ducks 40c to 60c; potatoes, per bag $1 00 to $1 15; cauliflower 10c to 20c; radishes, per bunch 3c; cabbages, new, 4c. to 10c., onions, per peck, 30c; corn, per doz, 12c to 18c; beets, new, bunch 3c; carrots new, bunch 3c, cucumbers, 2c to 5c; pears, per basket. 75c to $1 25; plums, per bush, $1 25 to $2; beans, peck, 15c to 17c; tomatoes, bushel, 80c to $1 00.

Markets by Telegraph.

MONTREAL, Sept. 21.—Flour—Receipts 3750 brls Sales reported 1000 brls. Market quiet but firm, at full rates. Quotations — Superior extra $5.65 to $5 70; extras $5.40 to $5 50; spring $5.20 to $5.30; superfine $4.90 to $5.00; strong bakers' $5.50 to $6.75; fine $4 20 to $4.30; middlings $3.90 to $4. pollards $3.50 to $3.75. Ontario bags $2.250 $2 75; city bags $3 to $3.05. Grain—wheat nominal: red winter $1.18 to $1 21; white, do $1 15 to $1 17; spring do. $1 16 to $1 18. Corn 61c. Peas—98c. to $1. Oats—34c to 35c. Barley—nominal. Rye —98c to 99. Oatmeal—$5.25 to $5 30. Cornmeal —$3 50 to $3 75. Provisions—Butter—Creamery, 20c to 21c.; townships, 18c to 20c; Morrisburg, 16c to 18c. Pork—$15 to $16 00. Lard—11½c to 12c. Bacon—13c. Hams—13c to 14c Cheese—9½c to 10½c. Ashes—Pots $4 60 to $4 65. Pearls nominal. Sales—125 brls superior extra at $5 02½ 125 do. at $5.25; 300 brls. do. at $5 70; 100 bls. spring extra at $5.25; 100 brls. superfine at $5; 200 Ontario bags superfine at $2 50; 250 brls. do. medium bakers at $2 97½.

BEERBOHM—LONDON, Eng., Sept. 21.—Floating cargoes — Wheat steadier. Corn, dull. Mark Lane —Wheat and corn steady. Arrivals off coast for orders—Wheat and corn small. Weather in England wet. Liverpool—Spot wheat quiet. Cal. ayers red winter 1d cheaper Corn turn dearer 1d higher. Paris—Flour and wheat steady.

LIVERPOOL, Sept. 21.—Flour 10s 6d to 11s 6d; spring wheat 8s 3d to 8s 6d; red winter 8s 5d to 8s 10d; No. 1 California 9s 0d to 9s 6d; No. 2 California 8s 9d to 8s 0d; corn 5s 3d; barley 5s 6d; oats 5s 6d; peas 7s 5d; pork 74s; lard 42s 3d; bacon, 35s to 36s; tallow 42s; cheese 52s 0d.

NEW YORK, Sept. 20.—Cotton steady, uplands 10½c. Flour—Receipts 17,0 0 bbls, stronger, sales 18,000 bbls, No. 2 $2 50 to $3 50, superfine, etc, $3 40 to $3 80, common $3 35 to $4 30, good $4 35 to $7, western extra $6 25 to $7 00, extra Ohio $3 85 to $6 75, St. Louis $3 85 to $7 00. Minnesota extra $5 75 to $6 75, double extra $6 80 to $7 50. Rye flour and cornmeal un-changed. Wheat—Receipts 59,000 bush, higher, sales 3,663,000 bush, exports 71,000 bush; No. 2 spring $1 06, No 2 red $1 12½ to $1 13, No 1 red and white state $1 16½, No. 2 red Sept. $1 12. Rye firmer, No 2 67½c. Barley nominal. Malt unchanged. Corn—Receipts 59,000 bush, higher; sales 1,557,900 bush; exports 105,000 bush; No. 2 62½c to 62¾c, yellow 63c, No. 2 Sept. 63c. Oats—Receipts 53,0 0 bush, firm; sales 671,000 bush, mixed 33c to 36c, white 34½c to 43c, No. 2 Sept. 34½c to 35c. Hay firm at 55c to 60c Hops dull and unchanged. Coffee dull and fair, Rio 10½c to 10¾c. Sugar steady, standard 8 5-16c to 8 3-8c, cut loaf and crushed 9c. Molasses firm. Rice steady and unchanged. Petroleum—Crude unchanged, refined 8½c to 8¾c. Tallow firm at 7¾c. Potatoes un-changed. Eggs unchanged. Pork firm, mess $12 00 to $15 00. Beef nominal. Cut meats steady. Pickled shoulders 6c; hams 13½c to 15c. Lard irregular at $8 45. Butter and cheese unchanged.

CHICAGO, Sept. 21.—Flour unchanged. Wheat active, regular at 93½c September, 95½c October, 97½c to 97¾c November, No. 2 spring 94c, No 2 red $1.01½. Corn unsettled at 50½c to 50¾c cash, September and October, 50c to 5 ¼c November. Oats firm at 27½c cash and September, 27½c to 27¾ October, 28½c November. Rye higher at 55½c. Barley dull and unchanged. Pork higher at $10 75 cash, $10 70 to $10 75 September, $10 72½ to $10 74 October. Lard quiet at $7 95 to $7 97½ cash, September and October. Bulk meats—shoulders $5 25, short ribs $6 15, short clear $6 50. Whisky steady and unchanged. Freights to Buffalo unchanged. Receipts—Flour 7000 brls., wheat 13,000 bush, corn 416,000 bush, oats 140,000 bush, rye 139,000 bush, barley 52,00 bush. Shipments—Flour 6000 brls, wheat 87,000 bush, corn 512,000 bush, oats 90,000 bush, rye 56,000 bush, barley 16,000 bush.

A letter from P. O. Sharpless, druggist, Marion, Ohio, in writing of Dr. Thomas' Eclectric Oil, says: One man was cured of sore throat of eight years' standing with one bottle. We have a number of cases of rheumatism that have been cured when other remedies have failed. We consider it the best medicine sold.

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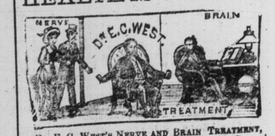

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