

mastered the facts of science, and made himself familiar with the results of historical research, can in any sane moment say that he sincerely disbelieves all he has learned. A man who has never concerned himself about the truth of the dominant faith may subscribe to different aspects of it. On matters of opinion we expect men to change, but that does not apply to physical or logical demonstrations. If it is clearly ascertained that the New Testament is contradictory and its teachings injurious, it is not in our power to recognize the sincerity of one who once declared it, and now declares that it does not lie open to these objections. We can understand it being to a man's apparent interest to say he was mistaken in disbelieving it, like lawyers who affect to be on the side of the client who pays them to defend him.

To treat the matter candidly and seriously, if we must answer the question directly, we do not believe in the existence of a well-informed convert from unbelief to orthodoxy. It is impossible for a mind which has once been open to light and truth to be put back into a state of darkness and falsehood. A man who in the summer sees the ripe apples on the trees in his orchard, may retire into his house and close his eyes, but he will see the apples still. We are now speaking only of a healthy mind operating in a healthy body, and not of one afflicted with jaundice, to which everything appears yellow.

But why should it be believed that only a man in advanced life can see things in the right light? Surely the mind when in its fullest vigor is more competent to form true conclusions on disputed points. An exhausted state of mind is not conducive to clear thinking, any more than is an exhausted physical frame capable of endurance and energy.

There is one fact of great import in the discussion of this question—the general ignorance of what unbelievers believe, and why they believe it.

The apparently insurmountable difficulty is to get people to read freethought views, and exercise their minds in the most neglected art, the art of thinking. It is not only a want of time, but a want of inclination on the part of the general public, to investigate the foundations of what is generally believed. The history of enlightened views shows that the great secret of progress is the doubting of an established deified error known as the Christian religion. In support of this, under various denominations, there is a vast amount of wealth invested, and a large number of interests united on its side, hence its permanent existence. However strongly we may hold the desire to establish a sounder view of life and conduct, the immediate work before us is to popularize a belief that the church teaches palpable errors, and the success obtained will determine the advent of more enlightened views of life and duty.

Any one standing at the door when a fashionable church is being emptied of its congregation, will observe the character of the congregation in so far as external appearances are concerned. It is really an entertainment and a social function, the only available place of meeting. One of its regular attendants on being questioned by me admitted that the principal point in which he agreed with the church was in its declaration that there are not three incomprehensibles, but only one incomprehensible. The Mayor presiding at one of the meetings made the curious observation that many people con-