

was the "noblest appeal to the intellect as well as to the conscience that had ever been made," it is simply absurd to talk about it having "dominated the world's civilization in less than three centuries." It can only be said to have done so if it be meant by the term used that it destroyed that civilization and replaced it with its own barbarous superstitions. To designate it, however, as the "noblest appeal to the intellect" that had ever been made seems to us to be hyperbolic in the extreme, when its essential feature is that of unquestioning faith; and if it be pretended that to-day its professors do appeal to the intellect, we can only reply that they differ in this respect from nearly all Christian advocates that have gone before them. The few men who have attempted to defend Christian dogmas on rational grounds have been as but a drop in the ocean compared with those who have persistently demanded belief at the peril of life or liberty. If the *Tribune* writer thinks the Church can save the "fundamentals of the faith," while allowing some of the dogmas to be called in question, he must also be blind to the lessons of history and philosophy. The dogmas of the church which have grown up around the original "simple creeds" mark stages of its evolution. They are necessary links in a chain which must inevitably break when any one of them is broken. How near the strain has already reached the breaking point it is difficult to judge. The man who speculates upon the sudden collapse of Christianity is hardly a philosopher or an evolutionist. The question is, What is the nature of the religion which is being evolved out of the chaotic mass known as Christianity? It will take ages before the crude theological dualism will be done away with for the masses of mankind, but while among the thoughtful and intelligent classes an ethical ideal of individual duty, of the dignity of manhood, and the claims of the human race will gradually take its place, among those who are, on the one hand, too busy with pleasure, and those who, on the other, are too busy struggling for an existence to devote time to thought, the vagaries of some sort of prophet and seer will still rule the world. On no other hypothesis can we account for the immense mass of "literature" that to-day floods us from all parts of the world, much of it full of the wildest and most incoherent "spiritualistic" and theosophical speculation and dreaming.

### Some "Tribune" Fallacies.

Among the many fallacies with which the *Tribune's* article fairly bristles, the first that will be noted is that there is a "popular outcry against the conclusions of eminent scholars." Now, two things must be patent to any one who watches what is transpiring in the religious world. One is, that the "outcry" is almost invariably raised by clerical opponents of their more liberal and scholarly conferees; and the other is that the preachers who accept, and as far as possible teach, the conclusions of modern scientific investigation and religious criticism are just those whose ministrations seem to be the most popular. Another fallacy may be seen in the statement

that the conclusions just referred to "would puzzle and alarm the simple and the ignorant." It has hitherto been held that some sort of faith in a hereafter, with its heaven and hell, is necessary to keep the simple and ignorant in order. A sample of this argument occurred some years ago in the columns of this paper, in which the Rev. Thos. Fenwick, a Church of England preacher, of Woodbridge, Ont., declared that without his faith in God and fear of hell, he would be "the biggest scoundrel in Canada." Of course, Mr. Fenwick might object to being classed among the "simple and ignorant;" but, though he may have attended a college for some years, his declaration simply proved him to be, ethically, a mere ignorant savage or an unscrupulous special pleader. It is, indeed, a ridiculous assumption that taking away the fear of hell, and any others of the unworkable dogmas of the Christian faith, and replacing them with the most rational conclusions of scholarly men, could "alarm" or "puzzle" anybody, ignorant or intelligent. The assertion that Christianity is "the noblest appeal to the intellect as well as to the conscience that had ever been made" could only be made by a writer who either deliberately ignores everything outside his own church, or who is one of the "simple and ignorant" persons already referred to. It is impossible to deny a certain strain of "loftiness" in some portions of the Bible, and the writings of Paul are probably as "lofty" and "spiritual" as any; but to call them appeals to the "intellect" is to misuse terms. Paul has given us a magnificent burial service, but how does it stand an intellectual examination? In his first letter to the Corinthians he beseeches (v. 10) his correspondents "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you." Is this an intellectual way of settling religious controversies? "The common people heard Christ gladly," we are told, "not because he appealed to their ignorance." But certainly the appeal was one that could not have been accepted by intelligent men, who would never admit that "belief" in any doctrines or persons, which is the essence of Christ's teachings, could avail as an atonement for misdeeds. This, indeed, has always been the "message" of Christianity; and when the *Tribune* suggests—as many other advocates have suggested—that the Church should modify this message, it simply ignores the patent fact, that "the fundamentals of the faith" essentially depend upon an "unconditional surrender" to the dogmas that have naturally developed out of them. To allow these to be qualified is to cut away the foundations of the whole structure. A Catholic who disbelieves in the infallibility of the Pope is no longer a Catholic, though that may have been the last dogma developed out of the Christian assumption; and a Protestant who has doubts about the inspiration of the Bible has certainly no standing-ground inside the Church. If the *Tribune* wishes to give some substance to its advocacy, let it put forward a schedule of the Christian dogmas which may be modified and the "fundamentals" which must be maintained at all costs, and let us see how far we can go in swallowing one set or the other.