

we can learn the disposition of the priests by the character of their followers.

This coming struggle must be fought square upon the question of the Natural against the Supernatural. All side issues will shiver to pieces in the greater shock of these two. Liberal forces must stand up and be counted, must show their hand, must choose between science and superstition, between the logic of truth and the lies of fable. "Liberalism," "Free religionist," "Spiritualist," "Infidel," and what not, must sink out of sight and leave only men and women standing by truth as we know it to day, on the one side, or standing by falsehood and superstition on the other.

The power of Doubt must rise to control humanity on this continent, or it will sink beneath the dead sea of Supernaturalism. Let the example of Montreal be followed throughout the country, let our cities surrender to the demands of Catholic mobs, and the next year faith in the revealed will of God will be forced down our throats with the alternative of having our bodies stoned, clubbed, torn and destroyed by infuriated beasts, in the name of God, for the expression of honest doubt! And then, farewell knowledge, farewell intellectual achievements, farewell strengthening science, farewell inspiring art, farewell liberty for another thousand years of Christian barbarism.

In this view of the situation it behooves us to do—SOMETHING. And perhaps a very essential thing to do is to realize and remember that "until doubt began progress was impossible." Remember also that until doubt is forbidden and suppressed, progress may be continued—aye, perhaps forever. In the triumph of faith, in the "revealed will of God," is our bondage. In the triumph of doubt is our freedom, growth, happiness. The "Something" to do, then, might be to choose upon which side you shall stand. And as a final word of caution let us remember that as we choose to place ourselves upon the side of faith in revealed religion, or upon the side of doubt, intellectual and moral growth, we shall detract from or add to the sum of virtue, wisdom and happiness upon the earth.

THE INQUISITION MUST NOT BE ALLOWED IN NORTH AMERICA.

Boston, Mass.

#### AN OPEN LETTER TO THE FRIENDS OF LIBERALISM.

I have long wished to propose that each one who has a real interest in the spread of truth should make himself or herself a committee of one, and select a pious correspondent—as intelligent a one as possible—even in your own vicinity if no far-off one can be had—and ask of them that they defend the faith they hold; that they give proof that there is a God; that he had a son, and that the Bible is the divine word.

By being thus called upon to tell why he or she believes, thought is awakened, authorities hunted up, and truth invariably comes to the surface. The Liberal who is doing this good work will find that he is not only giving knowledge and light to the ignorant and blind, but by sharing his information he increases and adds to it by each effort he makes. There are few gentlemen who would not enjoy a pleasant, good-natured contest with some well-informed young lady, and vice versa.

I speak from experience. I have always had one or two such correspondents ever since I was 14 years old and still continue to practice, generally choosing preachers if I can get them! Try it, one and all. If the first correspondent does not answer your expectations try another. It costs but little, and the benefits to all will be great. No one knows how little nor yet how much he knows till he attempts to tell it. To tell well what you know is one of the greatest acts, and should be striven for as a blessing all should highly value. I hope every one who reads this will sit right down and write to some one, and get up a regular debate, and send papers, tracts, and books as a "means of grace."

Yours not in Christ,

ELMINA DRAKE SLENKER.

Snowville, Pulaski Co., Va., July 18, 1878,

#### "BELIEVE, OR BE DAMNED."

EDITOR FREETHOUGHT JOURNAL.

Sir,—As the old orthodoxy is still preached by those who ignorantly or recklessly ignore the biblical criticisms of the last twenty years, some of their utterances may at times, in the interests of Freethought, call for remark. I have been attending lately a series of preachings, wishing to hear, if I could, the old orthodoxy modified by a subtle transition from the letter to the spirit, which many, educated in the ideas of the day, begin to expect. I heard, of course, the great bugbear "infidelity" denounced; that infidels selected certain passages alone to prove their case, while the true way was "to look at and accept the Bible as a whole." It was not explained, since you were thrown, in the absence of external evidence, upon internal, how you were to judge the whole without verifying the parts. Christianity is either a history or is nothing. The known contradictions, inconsistencies and legendary incredibilities in the gospel account prevent, to critical science, its being accepted as history—yet the listeners were told to make believe that it was all right, and to "accept it as a whole." You give me, I suppose, what you tell me is a sound apple. I point out worm-holes and bruised, discolored parts, and you say to me, "Never mind, the apple is sound as a whole."

To what this suggestion of the soundness of the whole, while the unsoundness of some of the parts was tacitly admitted, tended, came to be seen when the speaker all at once clinched the matter by saying with great emphasis, "I tell you, you must believe all this book or you will be damned." Infidelity leaves to man all his inborn generous and affectionate human sympathies, his cultivated reason and sense of justice; no "infidel" would anathematize a believer as the believer does the infidel for not accepting as truth what does not convince him; but the "odium theologium stifles, and perverts the natural human goodness. The passage cited, too, makes belief depend upon the will. Belief is the result of conviction—a reasoning process—and yet for not believing you shall be damned. Pope is more modest:—

"Teach me thy way to know,  
Nor deal damnation round the land  
On all I deem thy foe."

No wonder it is advisable to keep out of sight such passages as this. But if Jesus rebuked the savagery of the apostle who urged him to call down the fire from heaven on the village which refused to accept him, it is incredible that he should have uttered the fiendish denunciation put in his mouth; not, however, by Mark. The passage is to be found only in those last few verses of the 16th chapter, which biblical critics reject as spurious. To propose to frighten people into joining the church by imposing on them, as "the word of God," the repudiated ravings of ecclesiastical hatred, is surely inexcusable.

The time cannot be far off when congregations will no longer be led by the nose, and accept mere words for things; when they will become more enquiring, and will ask themselves whether there really is behind all this theological verbiage the true idea.

On one point, however, the preacher kept within the bounds of rationalism and psychology, in warning his hearers not to attribute, by a gratuitous assumption, to supernatural inspiration those occasional paroxysms of moral exaltation and devotional enthusiasm, which develop themselves under the stimulus of eloquent and fervid oratory, or the magnetism of devotional orgasms common at revival meetings, which are known to science to be merely special phases of nervous excitement and enthusiasm, and like other outbursts of nervous exaltation, lie entirely within the emotional possibilities of human nature.

I do not make these comments in the spirit of the mere scoffer who sneers, and gives no reasons. I give them as Schliermacher, Bishop Colenso, Dr. Davidson, and others have given their criticisms, from an honest love of truth. If we accept as generally undisputed that the religious sentiment in man is one of the eternal facts of the universe, it seems to me that a reconciliation between religion and science might be found, if both parties could be brought to accept as a common ground of agreement this conclusion as a solution of the conflict: That while it must be conceded that all so-called popular religions are objectively false, all are subjectively true. G. H.

Work is the mission of man in this earth. A day is ever struggling forward, a day will arrive in some approximate degree, when he who has no work to do, by whatever name he may be named, will not find it good to show himself in our quarter of the solar system, but may go and look out elsewhere, if there be any idle planet discernable. Let the honest working man rejoice that such law has been made good, and hope that, by and by, all else will be made good.—*Carlyle*.