

become established) in their sacred books or religious systems. Soon they claim these religions are entitled to exclusive credit of having produced the beneficent changes which they have been powerless to prevent. Thus, while the Bible teaches the subordination of woman in plain and unequivocal language, sanctions and authorizes human slavery, and consigns to unrelenting submission to their condition the subjects of oppressive governments, to-day the orthodox believers deny the plain signification of the Bible on these points, and claim that it has been effective in the destruction of all kinds of political and social bondage; this, too, in spite of the fact that its most zealous advocates, within the memory of men who are yet young, were quoting its texts to show the wickedness of the reforms which they now have the hardihood to claim as the outgrowth of that book! Those portions of a religious system or book revelation which are shown to be false, or which come to be repudiated by the enlightened moral sense of the age, are absolutely ignored, or twisted out of their obvious and natural meaning. By keeping in the background the teachings of the Bible which have been outgrown, by giving prominence to the precepts of morality which are attached to all systems of religion, by stamping them all as *Christian*, although they were known and practiced before Christianity was ever heard of, theologians impress the masses with the conviction that the Bible and the Christian religion are the foundation of all virtue, and the only hope of the world. It then presents the theological dogmas—which have nothing whatever in common with morality, which, indeed, have been the faith, the sincere, unquestioning faith of multitudes of the most cruel and vicious men of all ages since they have been taught, and demand their acceptance from purely moral considerations!

Making all allowance for the fact that transitional periods, such as the present, are always characterized by grave inconsistencies which imply no dishonesty, it is difficult to believe that in these common representations regarding Christianity and morality there is not a good deal of disingenuousness and selfish disregard of the rights of those who will not sustain the theologians in the religious doctrines they advocate, and the advocacy of which with them is a business, a profession by which they sustain themselves and have consideration among men.

The following, from the pen of our old friend Phillips Thompson ("Jimuel Briggs,") appeared in the *Boston Traveller* :—

EDITOR OF THE TRAVELLER.—The Rev. Joseph Cook, in the prelude to his lecture of last Monday, exulted over the sale of the Paine Memorial Hall by the mortgagee, in consequence of the accumulation of demands which the receipts were insufficient to satisfy. This is fair enough from the Orthodox stand-point, and I suppose the Infidel sentiment of the community would regard the sale of a church under similar circumstances with feelings not unmixed with complacency. But there is one which will strike the impartial observer as hardly in accordance with good taste, and certainly in striking contrast with the spirit of early Christianity—the reference to the comparative poverty of Infidels in a sneering fashion, as though it were a disgrace to them! Infidels are poor as a rule—and their infidelity is largely the cause of it—because even in this age of free opinion, the expression of Infidel sentiments in many places means social and business ostracism, and closes the door at once to many avenues of wealth. That it does so is a guarantee of the conscientiousness of men who are willing to make the sacrifice, and it ill becomes one who makes such high sounding professions of sincerity and earnest conviction to sneer at those whose acceptance of the unpopular side proves their honesty of purpose. There was another utterance which came with a very ill grace from a member of a class who are by law the favored pensioners on the earnings of their fellow citizens. When Mr. Cook ridicules the idea of the infidels of Boston being unable to keep Paine Hall, he should remember that among the items of constant expense, as quoted by himself, is \$1,000 for taxes. By an unjust legal discrimination the churches are exempt from taxation. A yearly tax of \$1,000 would bankrupt half the churches in Massachusetts, as Mr. Cook very well knows. When the parsons and the churches have the common honesty to pay for

the privileges they enjoy at the hands of the State and municipal governments, it will be time for them to ridicule the failure of Infidels to support their organizations. Mr. Cook frequently disavows the title of "Rev." He probably is not so eager to decline the exemption privileges attaching to the ministerial status. Did he pay taxes while in pastoral charge at Lynn? and does he pay them now on the receipts from his lectureship? With regard to his slander on the dead I say nothing. When he has the courage to venture out of his "coward's castle" in Tremont Temple and meet in fair debate Ingersoll, Underwood, or some other Infidel champion, his rehash of the lies a thousand times refuted may be worth some consideration. But he dare not do it for the life of him.

Boston, Nov. 8, 1877.

P. T.

#### CANADIAN FREETHOUGHT CONVENTION.

A mass Convention of the Freethinkers of Canada will be held in Albert Hall, on Tuesday and Wednesday, Jan. 22nd and 23rd, 1878, when it is hoped a very large number of the Freethinkers of Canada will be present for the following reasons :—

1st. Honest Freethinkers are now debarred from seeking their just rights in any Canadian Court of Law, or from any place of honor or emolument requiring the taking of the Christian oath, whilst the dishonest hypocrite by taking the oath prescribed by law may cheat or despoil the Freethinker, whose very honesty has been a bar to success.

2nd. The immense amount of Church property exempt from taxation in Canada, and consequently receiving to that extent aid and support from the State, makes it incumbent upon Freethinkers to take measures for the entire separation of Church and State. At present this is only so in theory, for the simple fact that millions of dollars of extra taxation are paid by the people that should be paid by the Church, conclusively shows that practically there is now in Canada the closest union between Church and State.

3rd. The exclusion from our public schools of every shade of Theology that the children of all may receive the best practical and secular education, without the introduction of the Bible or other sectarian books. In a community of mixed religious beliefs every good citizen should bestir himself to obtain this end.

4th. For the more thorough organization of the Freethought element of Canada, whereby the Freethinkers of the Dominion may become united and known to each other. The Freethinkers of Canada are sufficiently numerous to make their wishes respected in the councils of the country, and therefore the fault is theirs if they do not procure the remedies for their legal, social and other disabilities their position, numbers and influential character at once demands. In union there is strength.

In making the above call for the second convention of the Freethinkers of Canada, the officers of the Canadian Freethought Society are not unmindful of the fact of the thoroughly independent character of Freethinkers generally. Unlike the members of religious bodies they do not give play to the mere emotional part of their humanity, and consequently there is always absent from their proceeding every element of blind enthusiasm. But in asking for thorough union of Freethought its promoters are only asking for the propagation and continuance of that which has only just sprang into life from the smouldering ashes of former persecutions. Let the Freethinkers of the Dominion testify by their next convention that Freethought in Canada is a living entity, worthy of the respect of its numerous enemies, and prepared to claim for ever the esteem and gratitude of its many friends.

J. ICK EVANS, Pres. C. F. S.

W. J. R. HARGRAVE, Cor. Sec.

We may search in vain the Roman history before Constantine or a single line against freedom of thought, and the Imperial Government furnishes no instance of a prosecution for entertaining an abstract doctrine.—*Review*.