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## FREE-THOUGHT.

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"A General Conference of Liberal Thinkers was opened yesterday morning at South Place Chapel, Finsbury. From the circular issued it appeared that the object of the Conference was to give an opportunity for the exchange of thought to those persons who, though working in connection with particular organizations, yet, 'acknowledged no authority above truth, and are interested in the tendency to that universal religion which would break all partition walls raised by dogma and superstition between race and race, man and man.' Dr. Wyld occupied the chair, and amongst those present were Mr. C. Voysey, Mr. W. Higginson, Newport, U.S.A.; Sir G. W. Devys, Mr. E. G. Devys, Mr. H. M. Judge, Mr. Leslie Stephen, Mr. G. W. Foote, Mr. Conway, Professor Levy, Professor Garrison, Chicago; Mr. R. Drummond, Edinburgh, &c."—*Daily News*, June 14th, 1878.

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TO THE REV. \_\_\_\_\_

DEAR SIR,—

Having felt morally constrained some few years ago to decline Mr. H.'s empressée invitation to become a member of your Committee, I have the greater pleasure in hailing your South Place Chapel programme (as above,) "acknowledging no authority above truth," as a hopeful stride towards accomplishment of Leigh Hunt's prophetic verdict, some 24 years ago, upon a small anonymous volume, of the period, as exhibiting "gleams of a dawning faith more expansive and more humane than Church or Sect had yet conceived."\*

Satiated even to nausea with ponderous tomes on conventional and "supernatural religion"—puerile apologies for the honest puerilities of a fettered understanding, and elaborate essays on the positive disbeliefs of pretentious orthodoxy, I shall be most happy to devote my intended small contribution to a "*Collège-Voltaire*," (had M. Edmd. About's suggestion been adopted,) to a similar purpose in

\* Leader, 19th August, 1854.

England—that is, to cultivation of “*la Sacrosanta libertà del pensiero*,” in absolute and untrammelled antagonism to the ubiquitous sacerdotal fraud of all *obligatory* religions, under whatever threatening penalties enforced.

At 77 years of age, and after 50 years of conclusions as definite and as absolute as Rapisardi’s “*a l'uom salute e morte a Dio*,” you will, I think, be neither surprised, nor, as I hope, offended at my constrained demur to the possible compatability of sacerdotal religion with sacerdotal integrity.

That Christianity was invented for insidious cultivation of all the basest instincts of the human animal for priestly profit, is palpable, even audaciously declared in its own pages, as its success, especially in England is equally palpable in our *civilized* extinction of the *ideal* gentleman in every class of English society.

In 1855-6, I received several letters from different parts of England (some of them still in my possession) suggesting an Association similar to that which you appear now to have formed with Mr. Conway, Mr. Leslie Stephen, and others, and much do I rejoice in the prospective triumph of human magnanimity so exultingly anticipated by the magnanimous Italian.—“*Lucifero*,” 2nd Edition, p. 14.

“ Nume a loro sarà l'unico nume  
 “ Degli onesti, il *Dover* ; la Ragion, fede,  
 “ Vessil la Libertà, patria la Terra ;  
 “ La coscienza del ben premio e salute.”

Breaking down “all partitions raised by dogma and superstition between race and race, man and man, as you now magnanimously propose.”

Stabiliatur veritas, ruat sacerdos !

Yours very truly,

G. R.

2 HOLLES STREET,  
 24th June, 1878.

## REPLY TO THE FOREGOING.

July 1st, 1878.

DEAR SIR,—

I thank you for your letter and its kind intention.

If you read the accompanying paper and sermon, you will see the position I hold and which I intend to maintain.

I am, dear Sir,

Very faithfully yours,

C— V—

## LUCIFERO.

“ . . . Dio, creatura a un tempo

“ E tiranno de l'uom, da cui soltanto

“ Ebbe nomi ed aspetti e regno e altari.”

“ Però quel Dio che fu, quale ancor vive,

“ E quanto ebbe e mantiene a l'uom soltanto

“ Il deve, a l'uom che d'ogni suo destino,

“ O prospero o maligno, arbitro è solo.”

“ *Lucifero*,” p. 43.

“ Chi ha distrutto l'idea di un Dio onnipotente e creatore? La Scienza.” Adunque la Scienza è Lucifero (the light-bringer). Chi s'è innalzato al disopra della Fede? La Verità e la Ragione. Dunque la Verità e la Ragione sono Lucifero.”

\* “ Che cosa è Dio? Un incubo, una fantasma della fede, una creazione fantastica della paura; un'ombra vana, una gran larva. Ma qual è il suo potere? Quello di presentarsi come un essere esistente agli occhi dei creduli.”

*Rivista Europea*, July, 1877

\* What verily is God? An incubus, an imaginary invention of faith; a fantastic creation of fear; an empty shadow; a monster phantom. But what its power? That of representing itself to the credulous as an existing entity.

G. R.

“ Strength, however, is often (as here) nothing more than the reputation of strength.”



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