

# SECULARISM:

IS IT FOUNDED ON REASON, AND IS IT SUFFICIENT TO  
MEET THE NEEDS OF MANKIND?

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DEBATE BETWEEN THE EDITOR OF THE *EVENING  
MAIL* (HALIFAX, N.S.) AND CHARLES WATTS,  
EDITOR OF *SECULAR THOUGHT*.

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*WITH PREFATORY LETTERS*

BY

GEO. JACOB HOLYOAKE AND COLONEL R. G. INGERSOLL

*AND AN INTRODUCTION*

BY

HELEN H. GARDNER

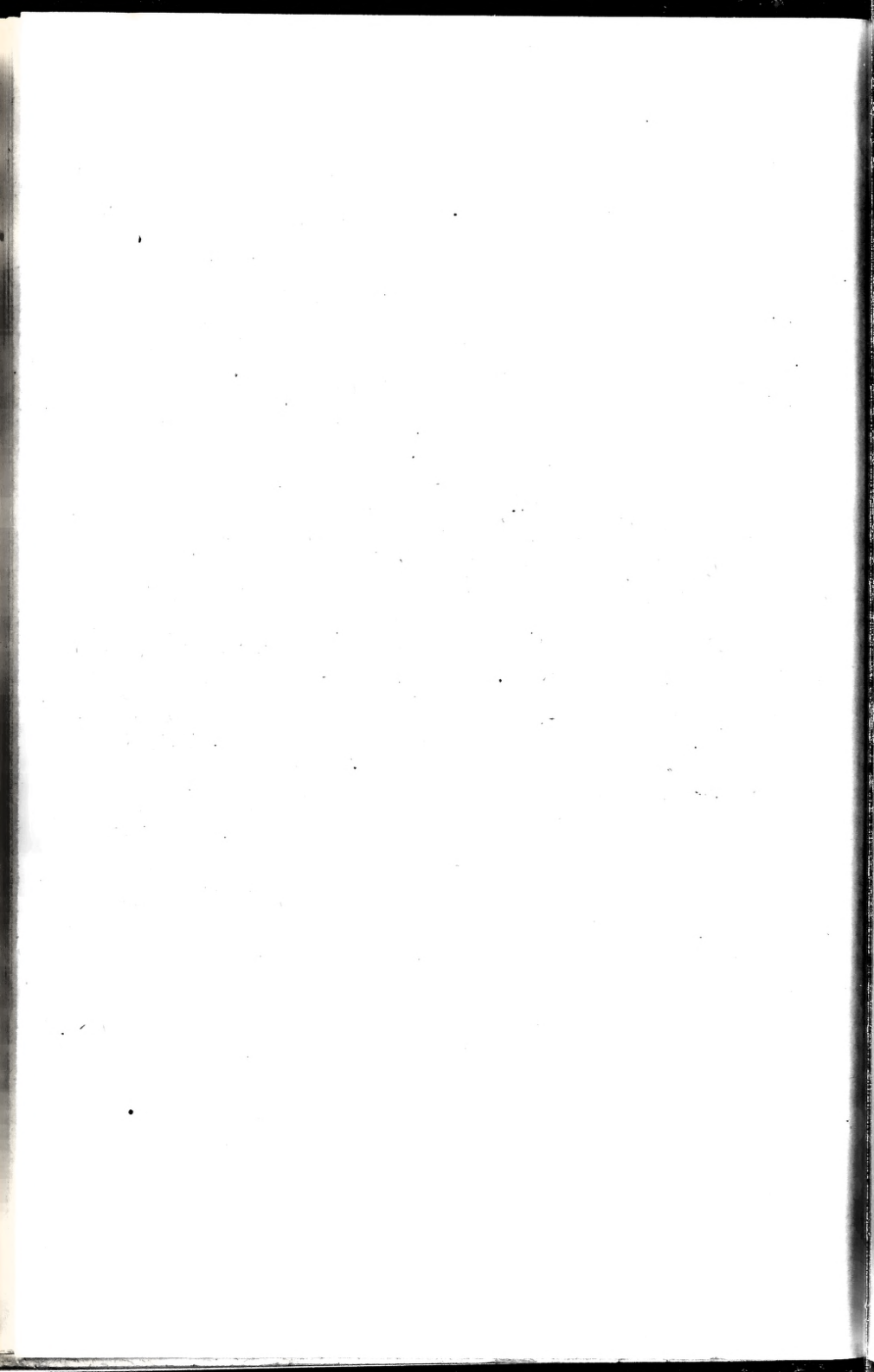
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## PREFACE.

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THE following discussion was conducted during 1889, the paper of each disputant appearing both in the Halifax *Evening Mail* and in *Secular Thought*. The debate originated in the Editor of the *Mail* issuing, in his paper of July 3rd, 1889, the sub-joined challenge to Mr. Watts, which, it will be seen, contains also the conditions that governed the controversy:—"If Mr. Watts is anxious to present his views to the public, the *Evening Mail* offers him an audience larger than could by any possibility be packed in any public building in Halifax. The *Evening Mail* denies Mr. Watts' affirmation: 'That Secularism is based on human reason and is sufficient to meet the needs of mankind.' To the discussion of this question we challenge Mr. Watts to a controversy, he to take the initiative. Mr. Watts on his part will have the privilege of publishing three articles in our columns alternately with three articles written by the Editor of the *Evening Mail*, Mr. Watts to close the controversy in a fourth article one-third of a column in length, in which he shall be allowed to introduce no new matter." On July 10th Mr. Watts sent the following reply: "To the Editor of the *Evening Mail*: Sir,—My attention has been called to an editorial in your issue dated July 3, in which you invite me to discuss the proposition, 'That Secularism is based on human reason, and is sufficient to meet the needs of mankind.' This you deny, and challenge me to affirm the proposition in your columns. Your invitation is given in such courteous language, and accompanied with stipulations so fair, that I accept your challenge upon the following conditions, viz.: That my opening article appear first in *Secular Thought*, from which you can copy it in the *Mail*, wherein you will also insert your reply, which I will reproduce in *Secular*

*Thought*; the subsequent articles in the debate to also appear in a similar manner in each of the above-named papers."

The conditions mentioned above being mutually agreed upon, the discussion commenced in *Secular Thought* August 3rd, 1889.

That what has been advanced by either disputant may be carefully read and studied is my earnest and sincere wish.

CHARLES WATTS.

February 27th, 1890.

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THE OPINION OF THE "FATHER OF SECULARISM."

"Mr. Watts' statement of Secular principles and policy, in his debate with the Editor of the Halifax *Evening Mail* is the best I have ever seen. He distinguishes clearly and boldly that the Secularist moves on the planes of Reason and Utility.

"GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE."

(In his letter to the Toronto Secular Convention, 1889.)

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## COLONEL INGERSOLL'S OPINION.

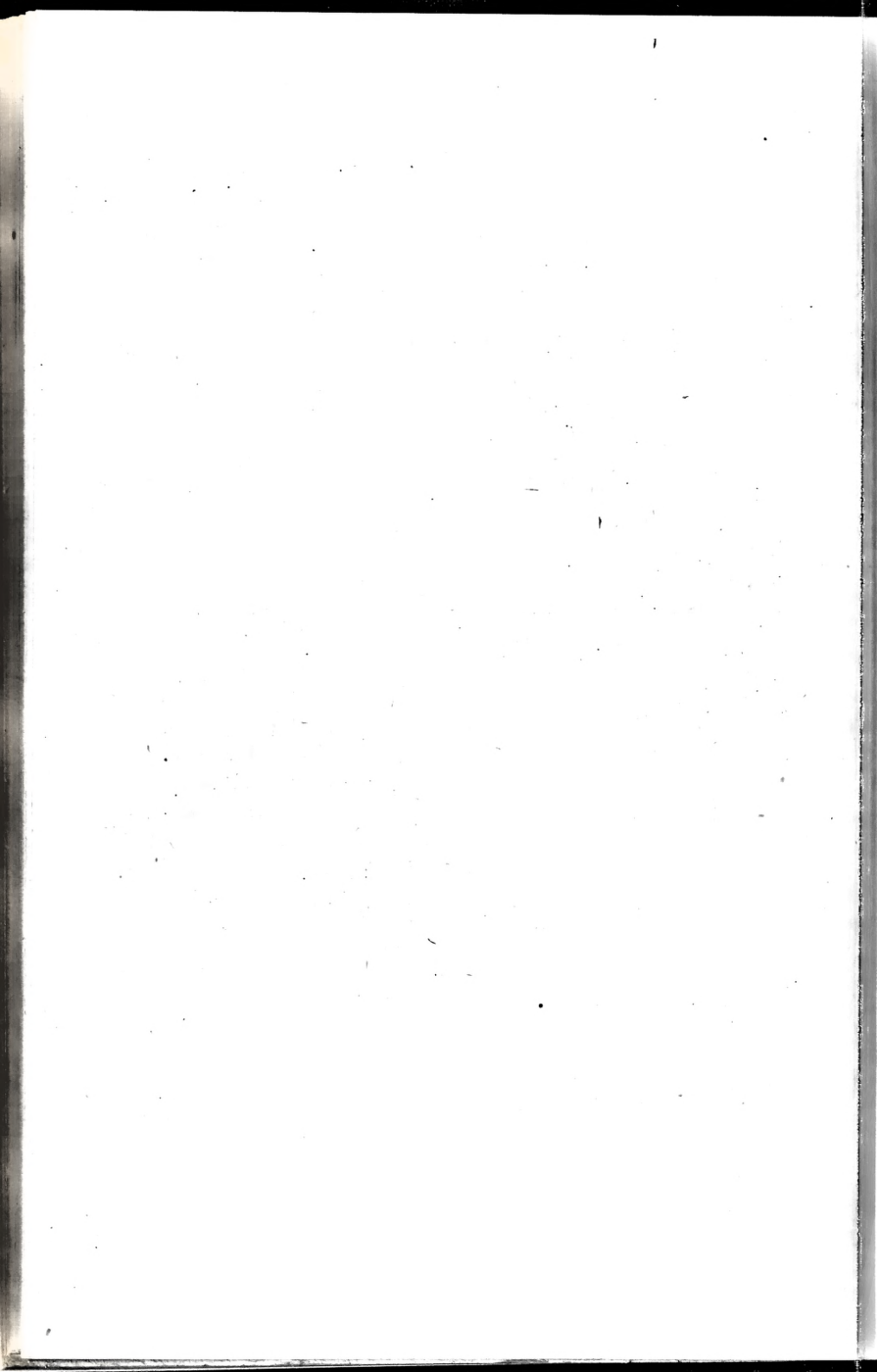
400 FIFTH AVENUE, Feb. 9th, 1890.

MY DEAR MR. WATTS,—I have just read the debate between yourself and the Editor of the Halifax *Evening Mail*, N. S. Your statement as to what Secularism is could not be improved and your definitions of certain terms are accurate and lucid. I have never read better. The Editor of the *Mail* does not understand you. He has not enough intelligence to grasp your meaning. When you ask for a better guide than *Reason*, he does not see that he cannot *even deny* that reason is the best of all guides without admitting *that it is*. Suppose he had said that the Bible is a better guide than reason, he would have been compelled to have given his *reasons* for the assertion, and in doing this would have admitted that reason had been his guide. I can hardly call this a debate that you had with the editor of the *Mail*. In a debate there ought to be arguments on *both* sides. All the argument is on your side. Your antagonist refused to come into the ring. He kept outside the ropes and even in that place threw up the sponge.

You are doing a great and splendid work in Canada. Every Freethinker ought to stand by you, and no one can afford to do without *Secular Thought*. Best regards to Mrs Watts from us all and to you.

Yours always,

R. G. INGERSOLL.



# INTRODUCTION.

BY

HELEN H. GARDENER.

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WHEN Mr. Charles Watts told me, about four years ago, that he was going to Canada to start a Freethought paper I made up my mind that he had taken leave of a large part of his usual good judgment and was about to fly in the face of providence—so to speak.

Canada and a Freethought paper impressed me as elements that would refuse to mix. I thought I knew the characteristics of both, somewhat intimately. I expected to hear of the arrest of Mr. Watts and the discontinuance of his paper by the end of the first month. I did not believe that Canada was ready for his sturdy, vigorous style of advocacy of Secularism.

It appears, however, that I mistook the temper and trend of the times and things in Canada, and that the past ten years have made a vast change, not only in the States, but over the border as well. And so to-day we see Mr. Watts not only successfully conducting an able and fearless Freethought journal in Toronto, and lecturing throughout the provinces; but, also, able to induce one of the editors of a leading daily paper to engage in a debate on the relative merits of Secularism and Christianity, and to publish the same in the columns of his paper—the *Halifax Evening Mail*. Thus Mr. Watts reaches not only the avowed Liberal thinkers, but the conservatives also.

In reference to the debate, it is not necessary for me in this Introduction to go into the merits of the case and attempt to point out the defects in the argument of the Editor of the *Mail*. Mr.

Watts has proved himself fully able to do that. Indeed, the first time I heard Mr. Watts debate in public I was so sorry for his opponent that I felt almost inclined to take his side of the argument. Mr. Watts gave him such an unmerciful intellectual drubbing that it seemed to me every mental bone in his body must have been broken, and that when Mr. Watts should let go of his collar—as one might say—he would sink into mere pulp. Yet it was all done with that courtesy of language and manner which distinguishes Mr. Watts in debate.

Mr. Watts does not find it necessary to “call names” in lieu of argument. He has facts on the tip of his tongue and logic always “on call.” He is not compelled to dodge the issue and take refuge in vocal pyrotechnics—mere mental and verbal gymnastics—to befog the minds of his readers and so cover his own retreat. In short, I have always looked upon Mr. Watts as a masterly debater, and I know of few people—if any—who would not be running a very serious danger of defeat in venturing to join issue with Mr. Watts on the platform. There is one point to which I wish to call especial attention touching this discussion. It is to the splendid fact that the day is past when such a debate as this can be suppressed. Only a little while ago not only Mr. Watts would have “found his occupation gone,” but the editor of the *Evening Mail* would not have dared to give an honourable, honest hearing to his opponent through the columns of his paper. He could not have ventured to give Mr. Watts an open field and to print ungarbled what was said by his antagonist in belief. Canada is to be congratulated that she is now free enough to do this and that some of her editors dare give the real arguments and opinions of the unbelievers in organised superstition. Until the Press is wholly free to do this; until it cannot be boycotted or intimidated for it, there will be no such thing as a free Press, and without an absolutely free Press all liberty is in constant danger. This debate, therefore, serves a double purpose. It not only enables Secularism and Christianity to try conclusions; but it gives the measure of liberty and freedom of speech and Press to which Canada has attained in the year 1889.

The daily papers are a reflex of the public pulse. It is the easiest and surest way to determine the stage of civilisation at which we have arrived to simply watch the daily papers and read between the lines.

If any subject or class is refused an honest hearing we may be very sure that there is an iron hand on the throat of somebody. The grip is loosening when an editor here and there dares to give space to both sides—to *all* sides. The measure of manhood is lengthening. The power of superstition is broken. A better day is dawning. The Press no longer crawls at the feet of dogmatic belief chained to the dead and ignorant past.

No honest cause ever needed suppression as an ally. The truth is not afraid to measure conclusions with a mistake and give the mistake an open field. Any argument that can hold its own only by silencing its antagonist by force, thereby proclaims itself built upon falsehood and sustained by fraud.

The pioneers of this new and real liberty of speech and Press are, therefore, the landmarks in the new era. For this reason I feel like congratulating Canada that the *Halifax Mail* and its editor as well as Mr. Charles Watts chose homes within her borders. I think we may say that all thoughtful people will be interested in the arguments of the Christian editor, who not only has the courage of his own convictions, but the courage and manliness to present to his readers the ungarbled convictions of his opponent also. Courage is a noble quality, and when it is mental and moral as well as physical its possessor is well on his way to a high order of civilisation.

I need not commend Mr. Watts and what he says to the Liberal public. He has done that for himself; but I want to repeat that there are other reasons than admiration of his ability why such a debate as this should be welcomed and widely read by both sides. It shows which way the wind is blowing in more ways than one. It shows what thoughts and opinions are on the down grade. It is a landmark of our progress toward fair play, and there is something for both parties to be proud of when neither one skulks behind silence and suppression. Which ever



argument the reader finds to his liking, therefore, he need not be ashamed to say, "This is my champion. He has come to the front like a man for our cause and he has refused to take advantage of his adversary." This is a proud boast, and it could be made of few debates where a representative of organised superstition had charge of one end of the arrangements and of an organ which printed the discussion.

Therefore let us congratulate Christianity that she has at last reached a point where she feels herself capable of fairness and possessed of sufficient courage to be honest. And let us felicitate Secularism that she had within her ranks the right man to ably, courteously, and with the self-poise of the veteran, conduct her side of the debate on a plane of thought and with a dexterity of touch which all who know Mr. Watts so greatly admire.

HELEN H. GARDENER.



# SECULARISM:

A DEBATE BETWEEN THE EDITOR OF THE HALIFAX,  
N.S., "EVENING MAIL" AND CHARLES WATTS.

*The Proposition*: "Secularism is based on human reason, and is sufficient to meet the needs of mankind."

MR. WATTS AFFIRMS; THE EDITOR OF THE *Evening Mail* DENIES.

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## OPENING OF THE DEBATE.

BY CHARLES WATTS.

IN supporting my affirmation of the above proposition, I have been requested by my opponent to do three things: First, to explain what Secularism is; secondly, to define the leading terms in the proposition; and, in the last place, to show in what way Secularism is sufficient to meet the needs of mankind.

*What is Secularism?* In its etymological signification, it means the age, finite, belonging to this world. Secularists, however, use the term in a more amplified sense, as embodying a philosophy of life and inculcating rules of conduct that have no *necessary* association with any system of theology. By this is meant that, while there are some phases of theology to which a Secularist could give his assent, it is quite possible to live noble and exemplary lives apart from any and all theologies. For instance, Theists who are not orthodox can belong to a Secular Society, as can also Atheists, although Secularism does not exact either the affirmation of the one or the negation of the other. The word Secularism was selected about 50 years ago by Mr. George Jacob Holyoake to represent certain principles which recognized "the moral duty of man in this life, deduced from considerations which pertain to this life alone." Such a selection was deemed desirable, in order to enable those persons who could not accept orthodox Christianity as a guide in mundane affairs to find elsewhere principles to direct and sustain them in the cor-

rect performance of their respective duties. Secularism is, as far as possible, the practical application of all knowledge to the regulation of human conduct, and apart from speculations and beliefs which are unfounded, or unproved, or opposed to reason.

*Secular Principles.* These, as Mr. Holyoake has frequently explained, "relate to the present existence of man and to methods of procedure the issues of which can be tested by the experience of this life. . . . Secular principles have for their object to fit men for time. Secularism purposes to regulate human affairs by considerations purely human. Its principles are founded upon nature, and its object is to render men as perfect as possible in this life," whether there be a future existence or not. The Six great Cardinal Principles of Secularism, as officially taught by the Canadian Secular Union (incorporated under the general Act of Parliament in 1877-1885), are briefly as follows:—

1. That the present life being the only one of which we have any knowledge, its concerns claim our earnest attention.
2. That Reason, aided by Experience, is the best guide for human conduct.
3. That to endeavour to promote the individual and general Well-being of Society to the best of our ability is our highest and immediate duty.
4. That the only means upon which we can rely for the accomplishment of this object is human effort, based upon knowledge and justice.
5. Conduct is to be judged by its results only—what conduces to the general Well-being is right; what has the opposite tendency is wrong.
6. That Science and its application is our Providence, or Provider, and upon it we rely in preference to aught else in time of need.

*Secular Teachings.*—(1) That truth, justice, sobriety, fidelity, honour and love are essential to good lives. (2) That actions are of more consequence to the welfare of Society than beliefs in creeds and dogmas. (3) That "prevention is better than cure;" we therefore, as Secularists, seek to render, as far as circumstances will permit, depraved conditions impossible. (4) That the best means of securing this improvement are, self-reliance, moral culture, physical development, intellectual discipline, and whatever else is found necessary to secure this object,

provided our actions do not, unjustly and unnecessarily, infringe upon the rights of others. (5) That the disbelief in Christianity, or in other systems of theology, may be as much a matter of honest conviction as the belief in it or them. (6) That persecution for disbelieving any or all the doctrines of theology is a crime against society, and an insult to mental freedom. (7) That the Secular good and useful in any of the religions of the world should be accepted and acted upon, without the obligation of having to believe in any form of alleged supernaturalism. (8) That a well-spent life, guided and controlled by the highest possible morality, is the best preparation for a safe and happy death. (9) That the principle of the "Golden Rule" should be observed in all controversy, and that courtesy, goodwill, kindness, and a respectful consideration for the opinions of those who differ from us should characterize our dealings with opponents. (10) That from a domestic standpoint there should be no attempt at superiority between husband and wife; that equality should be the emblem of every home, and that the fireside should be hallowed by mutual fidelity, affection, happiness, and the setting of an example worthy of children's emulation. These principles and teachings form the basis of the Secularists' faith—a faith which rests not upon conjectures as to a future life, but upon the reason, experience, and requirements of this.

*Basis of Secularism.* The exercise of Freethought, guided by reason, experience, and general usefulness. By Freethought is here meant the right to entertain any opinions that commend themselves to the judgment of the honest and earnest searcher after truth without his being made the victim of social ostracism in this world, or threatened with punishment in some other. The law of mental science declares the impossibility of uniformity of belief upon theological questions, therefore, Freethought should be acknowledged as being the heritage of the human race.

*Secular Morality.* This consists in the performance of acts that will exalt and ennoble human character, and in avoiding conduct that is injurious either to the individual or to society at large. The source of moral obligation is in human nature, and

the sanctions of, and incentives to, ethical culture are the protection and improvement both of the individual and of the community.

*Secularism and Theology.* The relation of Secularism to the great problems of the existence of God and a Future life is that of Agnosticism, neither affirming nor denying. If a person think that he has evidence to justify his belief in a God and immortality, there is nothing in Secularism to prevent his having such a belief. Hence, Atheism should not be confounded with Secularism, which is quite a different question. The subjects of Deity and a Future life Secularism leaves for persons to decide, if possible, for themselves. Being unable to inform, it refuses to dogmatize upon matters of which it can impart no information. Secularism, therefore, does not exact Atheistical profession as the basis of co-operation. Atheists may be Secularists, but it is not considered necessary that a man should accept Atheism to enable him to become a Secularist. The Secularist platform is sufficiently broad to admit the fellowship of Atheists or non-orthodox Theists. Secularism fetters man with no theological creeds; it only requires moral conduct, allied with the desire to pursue a progressive career independent of all speculative theology.

*Negative Aspect of Secularism.* Secularism is positive to the true and good in every religion, but it is negative towards that which is false and injurious. Our destructive work consists in endeavouring to destroy that which has too often interfered with our constructive efforts. Our negative policy "has been to combat priests and laws, wherever priests or laws interfere with Freethought—that is, our mission has been to act as a John in the wilderness, to make way for science, and to make silence for philosophy."

*Definition of Terms.* Reason we define as being man's highest intellectual powers, the understanding, the faculty of judgment, the power which discriminates, infers, deduces, and judges, the ability to premise future probabilities from past experience and to distinguish truth from error. Reason, says Morell, is that which gives unity and solidarity to intellectual processes, "aiding us at once in the pursuit of truth and in adapting our lives



to the state of things in which they exist" ("Mental Philosophy," p. 232). "It is the guide and director of human activity" (*Ibid.*, p. 235). Hooker, in his "Ecclesiastical Polity," says reason determines "what is good to be done;" and Chillingworth, the eminent Christian writer, in his "Religion of Protestants," observes:—"Reason gives us knowledge; while faith only gives us belief, which is a part of knowledge and is, therefore, inferior to it. . . . *it is by reason alone that we can distinguish truth from falsehood*"\* (quoted by Buckle in his "History of Civilization"). Bishop Butler remarks, "Reason is indeed the only faculty we have wherewith to judge concerning anything, even revelation itself" ("Analogy of Religion," p. 176).

*Experience.* This represents knowledge acquired through study, investigation, and observation in the broadest sense possible. We do not use the word in the limited form, as Whately employs it, simply as individual experience, but as comprising the world's legacy of thought, action, scientific application and mental culture, so far as we are enabled to avail ourselves of these intellectual agencies.

*Intuition.* This I regard to be a mental recognition of an impression or sensation as being the truth without the process of reasoning. Intuition, therefore, differs from reason and experience inasmuch as it excludes the possibility of correcting a mental impression by reflection and philosophical investigation. The nature and value of intuition depend upon the intellectual condition of the person who has it, upon his training, and the surroundings which have formed and moulded his conceptions or beliefs. The intuition of a savage is very different from that of a civilized person, and the same difference obtains among the devotees of the different religions of the earth. Moreover, my opponent's intuition may suggest to him that a certain thing was right which my intuition in all probability would consider wrong. In such cases, what is the factor that is to decide which is the correct decision? Secularism says that although Reason, when assisted by Experience, may not be a perfect guide, it

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\* The italics are mine.

is the best known to us up to the present time. If the editor of the *Evening Mail* has a monitor superior to the one selected by Secularists, let him produce it, and then we can judge which is the better by comparison.

*The terms "Needs" and "Sufficient."* I place the following interpretation upon these words in connection with the proposition under debate. By needs is meant that which is actually necessary, essential to the physical intellectual moral and emotional development of the human family. In this controversy needs should be distinguished from wants, inasmuch as in many cases a want is only a desire caused by habits not necessary to the well-being of society. I regard that as being sufficient the nature of which is adequate to meet the requirements and to satisfy the demands of the needs of mankind.

The request of my opponent has now been complied with, so far as the space allowed me would permit. I have stated what Secularism is, and have given a brief intimation of its principles, teachings, and ethical basis. A definition has also been furnished of what we mean by the terms reason, experience, intuition, needs and sufficient. A statement of what human needs are and wherein Secularism is sufficient to satisfy them must be reserved for my next article. In the meantime I shall read with considerable interest whatever my respected opponent may have to say in reply to what is herein set forth.

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THE "EVENING MAIL'S" FIRST ARTICLE, IN REPLY TO CHARLES WATTS.

IN consenting to this debate we desired such a precise definition of terms as would enable us both at the outset clearly to comprehend the subject matter and scope of the discussion. Though Mr. Watts' thesis bears the stamp of sincerity, its definitions are laboured and involved, vague or tautological; and the difficulties which perplex his mind and unnerve his hand are manifestly those which have for the most part entirely disappeared before the enlightened thought of these more modern days.

We asked Mr. Watts for a clear and precise definition of

"Secularism;" but he responds with numerous variations and repetitions which only serve to confuse the reader's mind, while demonstrating beyond a doubt that Mr. Watts has never yet obtained a clear and comprehensive conception of the tenets of the so-called Secularist faith. For instance, under "Secular principles," we are furnished with "the six great cardinal principles of Secularism as officially taught." But not content with this "official" statement, Mr. Watts reinforces it with a statement of "Secular teachings," six [ten] in number, which differ more or less from the preceding principles as they are "officially taught." Then, as if fearful that "Secular principles" as "officially taught," even though combined with "Secular teachings," might not convey a clear conception of what "Secularism" is, Mr. Watts proceeds to state "the basis of Secularism" and to define "Secular morality," as if these were different and distinct from the "principles" and the "teachings." And to complete the confusion, although under "Secularism and theology" we are informed that "Secularism fetters man with no theological creeds,"—a purely negative aspect,—Mr. Watts proceeds to define under another head "the negative aspect of Secularism." All this serves to convince the reader that even Mr. Watts, the professed exponent of this new faith, is in the unfortunate predicament of having no clear and definite conception of his own beliefs, and that, as a result, his attempts at elucidation only serve to bewilder, confuse, and perhaps amuse those who intelligently strive to follow him through his illogical and labyrinthine meanderings.

Equally unhappy is Mr. Watts in his antiquated allusion to reason as a faculty of the mind, more especially as it is coupled with the affirmation that "Secularism is based on human reason." As if a faith, which is supposed to satisfy all human needs, could be based on a faculty of mind! But our purpose is not to raise mere quibbles in this debate, but rather to tear aside the covering of antiquated verbiage with which Mr. Watts has cloaked his views, and to consider these, carefully yet courteously, in all their naked reality. It is gratifying to us, therefore, that Mr. Watts has not been completely bewildered by his wide knowledge

of philosophical antiquities, but that his sound common sense leads him to reject the discarded conceptions of Butler, and more correctly to define reason as "the understanding, the faculty of judgment, the power which discriminates, infers, deduces and judges." With this view we are more disposed to coincide, and therefore, for the purposes of discussion we will consent to personify reason as that which "discriminates, infers, deduces and judges;" in a word, as THAT WHICH WEIGHS EVIDENCE.

Even Mr. Watts appears to have been convinced of the absurdity of his own affirmation that the Secularist faith is based on a faculty of mind, and to have inclined to his other view that reason is that which weighs evidence; for he immediately proceeds to define Experience and Intuition as two sources of evidence, although these terms had hitherto been utterly foreign to the controversy.

In closing Mr. Watts says: "A statement of what human needs are and wherein Secularism is sufficient to satisfy them must be reserved for our next article"; and therefore we are forced to restrict ourselves for the present to Mr. Watts' first affirmation "that Secularism is based on human reason"; in a word, that Secularism is based on evidence.

What then is Secularism? Its first principle is, we are told, "that the present life being the only one of which we have any knowledge, its concerns claim our earnest attention." But herein lies the assumption that our present individual existence is the only life of which we may be cognizant. Where is the evidence to support that assertion? The "concerns" of this life "claim our earnest attention!" What evidence is there of the validity of this claim? What obligation is there to live at all?

2. "That reason aided by experience is the best guide for human conduct." Then reason alone is not the sole basis of Secularism! And again we are told that "although reason, when assisted by experience, may not be a perfect guide, it is the best known to us up to the present time." Again we call for evidence to substantiate this statement. Surely Secularism would make no assumptions?

3. "That to endeavour to promote the individual and general



well-being of society, to the best of our ability, is our highest and immediate duty." Again we ask what right has Secularism to assume that there is any "duty" obligatory upon us? Can we impose such a "duty" upon ourselves? If not, who has imposed these duties upon us?

4. Thus we might go through the list of "Secular principles," and ask if "knowledge and justice," as alleged, are alone sufficient to promote the highest well-being of the individual and of society. Are not benevolence and self-sacrifice equally essential?

5. What claim to validity has the suspicious statement that conduct is to be judged by results alone? The doctrine of these "expediency moralists" has been rejected by the vast majority of men since it was first propounded over twenty centuries ago. What evidence is there forthcoming to show that this principle is based on reason?

6. That we should rely upon Science as our Providence or Provider in preference to aught else! Science may provide food, drink and apparel. But it depends upon the nature of the man as to whether these provisions are complete and satisfactory. The Hottentot knows few scientific appliances, and discards fine raiment as well as savoury viands. Neither Hottentot modes of life nor Hottentot morality may be expected to satisfy the needs of this nineteenth century civilization.

These six Secular principles are assumed by Mr. Watts, who furnishes no evidence whatever as to their validity. The ten teachings of Secularism must also be proved on grounds of utility alone, since Mr. Watts accepts without evidence the utilitarian tenet that "whatever conduces to the general well-being is right, whatever has the opposite tendency is wrong." But if Mr. Watts will only furnish evidence of our personal obligation to speak the truth, it may, perhaps, surprise him to find equally reliable evidence of his obligation to believe in the existence of a God. But these Secular teachings are of slight importance to this controversy. They are not new to Christian morality. That actions are of more consequence than beliefs may, doubtless, be disputed, since beliefs may be the ultimate source of actions. The third teaching that "prevention is better than cure" cannot be accepted

as a Secularist novelty, seeing that centuries ago it passed into a proverb. The fourth teaching is the theme of every Sunday school teacher as well as of the Secularist; and what is more to the point, the Sunday school teacher may make a claim of priority to this teaching. The fifth teaching that disbelief may be as much a matter of honest conviction as positive belief makes against Secularism as much as against Catholicism. As for persecution, it is not now upheld in this free country. And as for the prejudice which Mr. Watts has against "alleged supernaturalism," that would doubtless be allayed if he would but persist in making a closer study into the deepest of these problems. The dividing line between the natural and the supernatural was always an arbitrary one, and is now scarcely recognized. What more natural than thought? What more supernatural than the existence of the thinker? The "golden rule" and the rule for domestic government make up the ten teachings of Secularism? The body of these teachings is accepted by all? They are chiefly more or less crudely expressed tenets of an ethical system which is recognized by the majority, and to which Secularism can make no special claim.

Nor is there any novelty in the basis of Secularism, which is defined as the exercise of "the right to entertain any opinions that commend themselves to the honest and earnest searcher." That is, in exactly the same sense, the basis of politics, of journalism, of digging drains or breaking stones. Nor does this basis find any support in what is here crudely expressed as "a law of mental science." No "law of mental science" declares the "impossibility of uniformity of belief upon theological questions." We simply find from experience that men think differently about the same thing, whether it be theology or the best methods of drainage.

Nor is "Secular morality" more properly so described. The doctrine, that the end of life consists in the perfection of individual character and the good of the race, is as much a part of "Methodist morality" as of "Secular morality."

Here then is the conclusion of this prolonged investigation. "Secularism" is an arbitrarily selected part of our prevalent

moral beliefs. Such additions as are made are of very dubious validity. The emendations are made without authority; and the selections are accepted without evidence. For if evidence were forthcoming it would be found to make the belief in God as the belief in the morality of truth or justice. Herein is Mr. Watts' dilemma. He accepts in part a system of morality which all accept; or else Secularism is Scepticism, or Agnosticism, pure and simple. Scepticism which rejects one portion of our moral beliefs will find no validity or obligation in the other portions which Mr. Watts accepts. On the other hand, the evidence by which Mr. Watts could establish the validity of one portion, gives a like support to all. Secularism must be either identified with orthodox morality or with scepticism; it cannot be differentiated from them both.

But, Mr. Watts adds, by way of excuse for the anomalous position which he has assumed, "the subjects of deity and a future life Secularism leaves for persons to decide, if possible, themselves. Being unable to inform, it refuses to dogmatise upon matters of which it can impart no information." But herein lies the abject weakness of Secularism. Kant has said that we cannot assume an air of indifference toward God, freedom of the will, and immortality, which are always of deepest interest to mankind. Mr. Watts refuses to think of these problems which are of deepest interest to mankind; so other men might determine to give up thinking altogether and live the life of the brutes; but could they expect the majority of mankind to follow their example? Secularism refuses to inform us upon these problems, and very properly so! So might the savage refuse to inform us of the moral principles which obtain even in Mr. Watts' meagre system of ethics.

In conclusion we scarcely need to remind Mr. Watts that it yet remains for him to establish that Secularism "is sufficient to meet the needs of mankind," a proposition which he has elected to deal with in his second article. But before entering upon that discussion it will be pertinent to the enquiry upon which we have already entered for him to establish the validity of those ethical principles and teachings which even Secularism



is found to uphold. Mr. Watts professes to reject unreservedly the Theistic system of ethics, and yet holds to certain of these very same ethical teachings. He can only satisfy the needs of this discussion by bringing forward evidence of the validity of these accepted teachings, which evidence must, if he is consistent, be found to have valid authority, even though the Theistic belief be utterly rejected.

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MR. WATTS' SECOND ARTICLE.

IN times before science had demonstrated the folly of the belief in witchcraft and in the existence of a peregrinating devil, there lived, it is said, a great magician. He claimed to have a secret by which he could at any moment summon King Beelzebub and compel him to do his bidding. The magician had an apprentice who one day listened at the keyhole of his master's sanctum, and learned the great secret of raising the Devil. The next day during the absence of the magician the boy performed the necessary incantations, and, lo and behold the devil came up at his bidding. But, horror of horrors! the boy got terrified and he wanted his satanic majesty to retire again by the way he had come. But this could not be accomplished, and the devil remained, sadly to the discomfort of the poor lad.

This story aptly illustrates the present position of the Editor of the *Evening Mail* in this debate. Enamoured by certain theological incantations, he probably thought that he could call forth such definitions that would paralyze the force of the affirmation of the proposition. But, lo and behold when the said definitions appeared they so terrified him as to "perplex his mind and unnerve his hand," and he could take no definite exception to any of them but the first, and with this one he actually imagined "difficulties which have for the most part entirely disappeared before the enlightened thought of these more modern days."

My opponent in issuing his challenge to debate this question very properly made the "demand" that I should define Secularism and give its "basic element"; that I should explain "reason

as distinguished from intuition and from experience"; that I should present a "statement of the ethical teachings of Secularism, and the grounds of their validity." Furthermore, he requested a specification of the interpretation to be placed upon the terms "sufficient" and "needs." To these fair requirements I readily acceded in my opening article. Unfortunately, however, in doing so I failed to please my opponent. Frankly, this did not surprise me; still, it might, perhaps, have been more dignified on his part if, instead of finding so much fault with my style of writing, he had tried to answer my arguments.

According to my opponent I do not understand Secularism. He says that "beyond a doubt" I have not a clear and comprehensive conception" of Secular tenets; and he charges me with "repetitions," ignoring the fact that he does the same thing himself in repeating, in almost the same words, this very charge. But it is significant that he does not once make an effort to substantiate his allegation; neither does he offer any other definition of Secularism than the one given by me. In a debate of this kind mere assertion is not enough, therefore, I await the proof for the statement that "Mr. Watts is in the unfortunate predicament of having no clear or definite conception of his own beliefs." It may also strengthen my opponent's position if he can verify his assertion that the Secular teachings which I mentioned "differ more or less," from the Secular principles as "officially taught." The gentleman is also premature in charging me with affirming that "the Secularist faith is based on a faculty of the mind." The term "mind" is not used by me in any of my definitions, but as my opponent has introduced the word perhaps he will define in what sense he employs it, and then I may deal with his exclamation, "As if a faith, which is supposed to satisfy all human needs, could be based on a faculty of mind!" We are next told that Experience and Intuition are terms that had hitherto "been utterly foreign to the controversy," and yet my opponent demanded in his challenge that I should define these very terms. Is not this "verbiage," and a fair specimen of "illogical and labyrinthine meanderings?"

As I am pledged to deal in this article with the second part of

our proposition, namely, the sufficiency of Secularism to meet the needs of mankind, I am compelled to reserve for my third article a review of my opponent's remarks upon Secular principles and teachings. These remarks, though bearing "the stamp of sincerity," appear to me to be exceedingly "laboured, vague, and tautological."

In order that I may not misrepresent the position of my no doubt well-intentioned antagonist when I further reply to his criticism, will he kindly answer in his next article the following questions? (1) Does the first Secular principle *necessarily* involve the "assumption" that there is no future life? (2) What better guide is known for human conduct than that which Secularism offers? (3) Where does Secularism teach that "knowledge and justice alone" are sufficient to promote the welfare of society? (4) What does my opponent understand by the term "expediency moralists"? (5) In what part of Christian morality is it taught that any or all of the theological systems of the world can be rejected by the honest searcher for truth, without his incurring the risk of punishment hereafter? (6) In what way does the fifth Secular teaching, as given in my previous article, "make against Secularism"? (7) What evidence is there that the "existence of the thinker is supernatural"? (8) Did Kant admit that by reason the existence of God and the belief in immortality could be demonstrated? (9) Where is the proof that "Mr. Watts refuses to think of these problems"?

I am requested to establish the validity of Secular principles and teachings. Does not my opponent see that such validity consists in the necessity and adaptability of Secularism to human needs? In the second paragraph of my opening article I mentioned one fact to prove the necessity of Secular philosophy, namely, that inasmuch as moral conduct is indispensable to the well-being of society, Secularism has been found necessary to enable those persons who could not accept orthodox Christianity as a guide in mundane affairs to find elsewhere principles to direct and sustain them in the correct performance of their respective duties. Upon this point my opponent has hitherto remained silent.

I will now show in what way Secularism is sufficient to meet the needs of mankind. What are these needs?

(1.) *Development of Man's Physical Organisation.* This is regarded by Secularists as being the first important need, inasmuch as upon the due observance of the laws of health depend not only personal and general physical soundness, but also, to a large extent, mental vigour and intellectual usefulness. To satisfy this need Secularism urges the necessity of studying and adopting the best means possible to secure sound bodies and pure surroundings. Experience proves that health has obtained and life has been prolonged, in proportion to practical attention being given to the facts of science. This truth establishes the reasonableness of the Secular principle that applied Science is the Providence of Man.

(2.) *Cultivation of our Moral Nature.* To put it plainly and briefly, by moral action we mean the performance of deeds that will encourage virtue and discourage vice; that will foster truth, honour, justice, temperance, industry, and fidelity; and that will enhance the welfare both of the individual and of society. Secularism teaches that the source of morality is in human nature, and that its inspiration is in the happiness, progress, and elevation of the human race. Experience furnishes the means that enable us to judge of the ethical superiority of some actions over others, and reason is the standard whereby we can discriminate and judge right from wrong.

(3.) *Cultivation of our Intellectuality.* Secularism alleges that such cultivation can be effectually acquired only by the possession of knowledge and its correct application, which constitutes true education. This, as Taine remarks, "draws out and disciplines a man; fills him with varied and rational ideas; prevents him from sinking into monomania or being exalted by transport; gives him determinate thoughts instead of eccentric fancies, pliable opinions for fixed convictions; replaces impetuous images by calm reasonings, sudden resolves by the result of reflection; furnishes us with the wisdom and ideas of others; gives us conscience and self-command." Surely such a course of



training as this must be admitted to have its source in reason and to be justified by experience.

(4.) *Fostering of domestic happiness.* Secularism alleges that happiness and just contentment in the home are of paramount importance. Domestic misery destroys the usefulness of individuals, robs life of its sweetest charms, and wrecks the peace and comfort of whole families. To avoid this deplorable evil, Secularism teaches that purity, love, fidelity, mutual confidence, and connubial equality should reign in every household; that between husband and wife there should be no claim to superiority in their matrimonial relationship; that "a man possessing the love of an honourable and intelligent woman has a priceless treasure, worthy of constant preservation in the casket of his affections." It is, therefore, but just that the wife should maintain her position of equality in the domestic circle, for without this the blessings of unalloyed happiness and the inestimable advantages of pure love will never adorn the "temple of home."

(5.) *Promotion of social harmony.* This, according to Secularism, consists in the human family living peaceably and amicably together upon the principle of the brotherhood of man. The strong should help the weak, and the wealthy should respect the interests and rights of the poor. Benevolence and self-sacrifice should be ever ready to bestow a service when and where necessity calls for their aid. Personal pleasure should never be had at the cost of the public good, and the utmost individual freedom should be granted, provided that in its exercise the rights of others are not invaded. To fully realize such harmony, there should be no forced theological belief and no persecution, or social ostracism, for unbelief. Other things being equal, the sincere sceptic should be regarded with the same degree of respect and fairness as the honest Christian. No one system has all the truth, and no one religion can command universal assent; therefore Secularism says that differences of opinion ought never to be allowed to sever the ties of love and friendship, or to mar the usefulness of mutual fellowship and co-operation.

(6) *Religious aspirations and emotional gratification.* To meet these needs, Secularism would substitute personal liberty



for theological dictation. It is not claimed even by theologians that religious aspirations are uniform in all nations and among all peoples. Such aspirations depend for their distinctive features upon climate, organization, birth, and education. They assume very different forms among the Chinese, the Buddhists, the Mohammedans, the Jews and the Christians. Recognising this diversity of feeling, Secularism deems it right that each person should be permitted to believe or to disbelieve as he feels justified, and to worship or not to worship as his reason dictates. The Secular motto is, Freedom for all and persecution for none. The emotional part of human nature is to the Secularist a reality to be regulated by cultivated reason and to be controlled by disciplined judgment. Where this is the case pleasure will not degenerate into licentiousness and religion will not be degraded into fanaticism.

The affirmation of the proposition under discussion has now been stated. In the remaining two articles which by arrangement I am to write, my duty will be to analyse my opponent's objections to Secular philosophy, and in doing so (to use my opponent's words), my object will be "not to raise mere quibbles, . . . but rather to tear aside the covering of antiquated verbiage with which" the Editor of the *Evening Mail* "has cloaked his views, and to consider these, carefully yet courteously, in all their naked reality."

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THE EDITOR OF THE "EVENING MAIL'S" SECOND ARTICLE  
IN REPLY TO CHARLES WATTS.

It will have been made clear to thoughtful readers of the preceding articles that, stripped of all extraneous matter, the vital issues at stake in this discussion are those which Mr. Watts has deemed it expedient to avoid as much as possible in his second contribution to the controversy. At the same time, our opponent manifests an altogether undue anxiety to win unmerited prestige by intimating that in calling him forth from the quietude of his sanctum we have succeeded in "raising the Devil." We were very suspicious at the outset, and this second article has only

served to confirm the impression, that Mr. Watts is a far less formidable adversary. For, if the traditions brought down from the olden times may be relied upon as accurate, his satanic majesty, though equally clever at begging the question, had nevertheless the courage of his convictions, and was withal ever ready to give a plausible reason for the faith that was in him.

Without being intentionally offensive, we must confess at the outset that Mr. Watts appears to have coloured the whole religious, moral and social life of man with the false light of his own personal prejudices. He appears most apprehensive lest his free expression of opinion should subject him to religious persecution, to moral obloquy or to social ostracism. While sympathizing deeply with Mr. Watts, if it has been his misfortune to experience such indignities, we may declare at the outset that for the sincere seeker after truth, no matter where his investigations may lead him, we entertain the most profound respect. Though educated in the Christian faith, we have the same respect for Francis Newman, whose deep erudition drove him into scepticism, as for his brother, John Henry Newman, whose equally undoubted conscientiousness and profundity of thought drew him within the pale of the Roman Catholic Church.

Secularism, as somewhat crudely defined by Mr. Watts, embraces nothing more than a few arbitrarily selected tenets of our prevailing moral beliefs. Christianity finds the authority and validity of its ethical code, and an explanation of the personal obligation of man, his sense of duty, in the existence of a personal and intelligent God, who has a purpose concerning man, in accord with which he has committed to man's care an immortal soul, a personality and consciousness that survive the death of the body. The Christian religion which prescribes these ethical teachings as the direct commands of God, gives a meaning to this sense of duty, of personal obligation, by directly appealing to our fear, our hope, our love, the most potent passions of the human heart. Secularism, on the other hand, says Mr. Watts, assumes the attitude of Agnosticism, neither affirming nor denying the existence of God nor the immortality of the soul. In a word, it declares that there is no evidence for such beliefs; and

therefore the moral code which Secularism arbitrarily selects from the Christian code is by that affirmation denied the authority for its validity which Christianity finds in the Theistic belief. Secularism Mr. Watts has defined as "embodying a philosophy of life and inculcating rules of conduct which have no necessary association with any system of theology." If we would question the authority of this Secularist code of morals, we are told by Mr. Watts that "the sanctions of and incentives to ethical culture are the protection and improvement both of the individual and of the community."

So far as morality is concerned, Mr. Watts practically denies the existence of God, at least he would exclude all such considerations from the discussion of his fragmentary moral code, and would find in considerations alone affecting the well-being of society and of the individual, the meaning and authority of duty which Secularism declines to derive from theologic religion. On first analysis it will be found that the underlying assumption here is that society is constantly improving and approaching perfection; and that this consummation, devoutly to be wished, is sufficient to incite men to live moral lives, purely from a desire to accomplish this end. But Professor Huxley, the leader of this Agnostic school, has himself shown that this theory is wholly inadequate and ineffective. Instead of finding such progress exemplified in history as would incite men to worship humanity, to live for humanity for humanity's sake, the results of his study are declared by himself to have proved unutterably saddening; and, whatever their real merits may be, his words will doubtless have due weight with Mr. Watts:

"Out of the darkness of pre-historic ages man emerges with the marks of his lowly origin strong upon him. He is a brute, only more intelligent than the other brutes; a blind prey to impulses which, as often as not, lead him to destruction; a victim to endless illusions which, as often as not, make his mental existence a terror and a burden, and fill his physical life with barren toil and battle. He attains a certain degree of physical comfort, and develops a more or less workable theory of life, in such favourable situations as the plains of Mesopotamia or Egypt, and then, for thousands and thousands of years, struggles with vary-

ing fortunes, attended by infinite wickedness, bloodshed and misery, to maintain himself at this point against the greed and the ambition of his fellow-men. He makes a point of killing or otherwise persecuting all those who try to get him to move on; and when he has moved on a step foolishly confers post-mortem deification on his victims. He exactly repeats the process with all who want to move a step yet further. And the best men of the best epoch are simply those who make the fewest blunders and commit the fewest sins. . . . . I know of no study so unutterably saddening as that of the evolution of humanity as it is set forth in the annals of history; . . . . [and] when the Positivists order men to worship Humanity—that is to say, to adore the generalized conception of men, as they ever have been, and probably ever will be—I must reply that I could just as soon bow down and worship the generalized conception of a ‘wilderness of apes.’”

But let us admit that from a scientific study of the history of mankind—in a word, that from human experience it has been ascertained that certain lines of conduct must be adhered to in order to conserve the best interests of society as a whole. Society may enact certain laws embodying that code of morals, and affix pains and penalties for their transgression; yet our conception of the necessity for such laws is very different indeed from our sense of duty, of personal obligation to pursue a certain line of conduct in strict conformity with them. The “must” and the “ought” are nowise identical. Passive obedience to an external law differs altogether from a voluntary and active obedience to a law that is internal. The Secularist fails utterly to give any satisfactory account of duty; and we make bold to assert that no satisfactory account ever has been found beyond the pale of Theism.

But before proceeding further we must congratulate Mr. Watts upon having radically improved his Secularist code since the composition of his first article. Benevolence and self-sacrifice have now for the first time in the discussion found a place among the Secularist virtues. The Secularist code is without doubt approaching completeness! To Mr. Watts some credit is due for having accepted the Christian code as his own, even though his ethical system is deficient in all that energises and ennobles its



prototype. Does Mr. Watts deny that his is, in the main, the Christian code? We repeat, as an historical fact, that Christian teaching first stamped benevolence and self-sacrifice upon the moral consciousness of the race. It was Christ who first taught that he who loseth his life shall find it, that life should consist not in getting for self but in doing for others. For the duty of benevolence and self-sacrifice, Secularism has, and can find, no satisfactory explanation. Acting the part of an intellectual Ananias it cloaks itself in the garb of Christian ethics, while dishonestly refusing to pay the only possible price, belief in the existence of God, the moral ruler of the universe. Secularism virtually admits that we ought to do something which many leave undone, and which involves in the doing a painful struggle, amounting even to self-sacrifice to do. We enquire, when and why should we undertake this struggle? Whenever necessity calls, says Mr. Watts. Which merely amounts to the declaration that when it is necessary that others should be happy, it is necessary that I should be miserable. But of this necessity Secularism gives no satisfactory explanation! On the one hand is the way of self-indulgence and of pleasure, on the other the way of pain and struggle, self-sacrifice, yea, even to the death. Though human experience may say that it is necessary for the good of the race that I should follow the path of pain, yet Secularism leaves unexplained the crucial mystery—that I feel that I ought to follow this path, not for the public good so much as for my own good—that though in the struggle I lose my life I shall nevertheless find it again. The mystery of that word "ought" has never yet been fully explained outside the pale of Christendom. Secularism, profiting from prevalent Christian teaching, may point out what its duties are; but it fails utterly to create an all-powerful desire to do them.

And just here it is admissible to revert to a question which Mr. Watts propounds: "Did Kant admit that by reason the existence of God and the belief in immortality can be demonstrated?" Certainly not. He did not admit that these facts could be demonstrated any more than that the law of the uniformity of nature can be demonstrated, or than Mr. Watts can demonstrate

that his own father once had an existence. Mr. Watts must know that he cannot, without making a vital assumption, demonstrate to me the fact of his own existence. All existence is supernatural; phenomena, as made known to the consciousness through the senses, is alone natural. What Kant did admit is briefly this: "My moral nature is such—I possess such a sense of obligation and feel such imperious calls to holiness—that unless there be a God and an immortality of the soul I can find no explanation for it." Nor does such a method of demonstration differ essentially from that pursued by the natural scientist. Prof. Huxley has told us that from the nature of ratiocination it is obvious that it must start from axioms which cannot be demonstrated by ratiocination, and that in science it must start from "one great act of faith"—faith in the uniformity of nature.

"If there be a physical necessity," says he, "it is that a stone unsupported must fall to the ground. But what is all that we know and can know about this phenomena? Simply that in all human experience stones have fallen to the ground under these conditions; that we have not the smallest reason for believing that any stone so circumstanced will not fall to the ground; and that we have, on the contrary, every reason to believe that it will so fall."

From the experience of a stone falling we, by "one great act of faith" in the uniformity of nature, a belief that is neither demonstrated nor demonstrable, we reach the law of gravitation, an axiom of natural science. The scientist finds that only by assuming the fact of the uniformity of nature by this "one great act of faith," can the universe of nature be satisfactorily explained. Theologic Religion, to use the pertinent words of W. H. Mallock, replies in like manner: "And I, too, start with faith in one thing. I start with a faith which you, too, profess to hold—faith in the meaning of duty and the infinite importance of human life; and out of that faith my whole fabric of certainties, one after the other, is reared by the hand of reason. Do you ask for verification? I can give you one only which you may take or leave as you choose. Deny the certainties which I declare to be certain—deny the existence of God, man's freedom

and immortality, and by no other conceivable hypothesis can you vindicate for man's life any possible meaning, or save it from the degradation at which you profess to feel so aghast." There is no other way by which the dignity of life may be vindicated! Our beliefs in the existence of God and in the immortality of the soul are facts ascertained by the same method and accepted for the same necessary reasons, and by an act of faith, in like manner as the law of the uniformity of nature is ascertained and accepted.

If Secularism accepts the teachings of natural science, it is only by exercising Huxley's "great act of faith." This Christian law of self-sacrifice which Secularism enjoins, finds its validity and authority only in a similar act of faith. Does not all metaphysics serve to show that the belief in the existence of nature, as well as in our own existence, rests on a similar act of faith? In fact, no less profound a philosopher than Berkeley has said: "I see God as truly as I see my neighbour." What I know is that I have certain sensations which I call sights and sounds. What I infer or reason is the existence of a being—my neighbour. In fact, does not that very act of reason rest upon the assumption, an ultimate unreasoned fact, of the existence of myself? It is precisely here in self-consciousness, that Descartes, Sir William Hamilton, Jacobi, and others, have found the fulcrum for the demonstration of the divine existence. In like manner by faith alone we choose the right and shun the wrong. I see that A is higher and better than B, and has the right to me; and I surrender myself to it in reverential obedience, though no science proves it, or no expediency makes it a duty to me. By faith alone Mr. Watts accepts the teachings of natural science. By faith alone can he accept the Christian law of self-sacrifice. What we demand to know now is, by what authority and on what evidence Mr. Watts would thus determine and limit the bounds of faith to science and to Secularist morality?

To Mr. Watts' general description of the needs of mankind we are not disposed to take special exception. Man's physical needs no doubt find their satisfaction in food, drink, sleep, exer-



cise, etc. Man's intellectual needs find their satisfaction in science, that is, knowledge in its widest signification. Man's æsthetic needs find their satisfaction in art. Man's social and political needs find their satisfaction in the family, in society, and in the state. Man's moral needs find satisfaction in right living. Man's religious needs are satisfied by religion. But the significant fact is that Secularism, which has proposed to satisfy all the needs of mankind, finds no place in Mr. Watts' category. In our opinion the omission is clearly vindicated by the fact that Secularism, as a distinct form of science, or as a distinct faith, has no proper place, either in the economy of knowledge or in the economy of religion. To declare that Secularism can satisfy our religious aspirations, and gratify our religious emotions, is an obvious disregard for the meaning of the terms. A man's clothes may remain after his body has mouldered away, but religious emotions, apart from a belief in God, are but the shrouds of a ghost. The laws of heredity may transmit them to the second or third generation, yet, except their object be revived, their ultimate extinction is inevitable. But are we to understand that Mr. Watts would substitute Secularism for theologic religion? With equal authority and no less presumption would another substitute sensuality for science. For a truth, our intellectual needs require for their satisfaction the focussing of the results of all science, of all knowledge. Such satisfaction theologic religion supplies in the conception of God. This is the ultimate intellectual principle as the law of gravitation is the ultimate physical principle. Secularism accepts the latter, but it utterly destroys its usefulness in rejecting the first.

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#### MR. WATTS' THIRD ARTICLE.

IN my last article, being anxious to give my reasons for affirming the latter clause of the proposition in debate, I was necessitated through the limited space at my disposal to omit a reply to many of the criticisms offered by the Editor of the *Evening Mail* in his first article. The reader is particularly requested to again



read that article and then note my answer here given. For the sake of brevity the paragraphs containing the criticisms will be taken in order. First, as to what my opponent has said upon Secular principles:—

1. Herein there is no "assumption," but a definite declaration "that the present life is the only one of which we have any knowledge." If my opponent possess a *knowledge* of another life, I shall be glad to ascertain what it is. The existence of *belief* upon this subject is not denied; but many persons are unable to discover sufficient evidence to justify their acceptance of such belief. If to some individuals the doctrine of immortality appears true, Secularism does not interfere with their convictions. The "validity" of our claim that the "concerns of this life" should command "our earnest attention" consists in the fact that its duties are known and their results are apparent in this world; whereas, if there be a future existence, its duties and results can only be understood in a "world that is to come." Our "obligation" to live is derived from the fact, that being here and being recipients of certain advantages from society, we deem it a duty to repay by life-service the benefits thus received. To avoid this obligation either by self-destruction, or by any other means, except driven to such a course by "irresistible forces," would be, in our opinion, cowardly and unjustifiable.

2. It is true that "reason alone is not the sole basis" of the Secularist's guide; hence, we avail ourselves of the aid of experience allied with moral and intellectual culture. The "evidence" that these constitute, although not a perfect guide, the best known to us, is shown in the absence of a better one. If my opponent is aware of a guide that is superior to the one we offer, let him mention it, but until he does we are justified in claiming ours as the "best."

3. By "duty" we mean an obligation to perform actions that have a tendency to promote the welfare of others, as well as that of ourselves. The phrase "self-imposed duties" is not mine. Obligations are imposed upon us by the very nature of things and the requirements of society.

4. Secular principles nowhere teach that "knowledge and

justice are alone sufficient" to secure the well-being of the individual and society. I have never made such an assertion either in this or in any other debate. Certainly, benevolence and self-sacrifice are, as Secularism teaches, sometimes "essentials" in the battle of life.

5. The "validity" of this principle appears to me to be exceedingly clear, in the fact that actions which conduce to general and personal improvement must be a benefit to the human race. All modern legislation that is approved by the general public is based upon the usefulness of actions. Even Christ is said in the New Testament to have taught a similar principle. [See Matt. 7: 16-20: 25: 34-40; 1 Tim. 1: 8.] To borrow an idea from Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, that which is good both for the swarm and for the bee must be of reasonable service to the community, and, inasmuch as the fifth Secular principle inculcates such service, it is "based on reason."

6. No doubt it depends upon "the nature of the man" as to how far scientific appliances "are complete and satisfactory." This is one reason why Secularists recognise the necessity of moral and intellectual cultivation. It enables individuals the better to receive the application of science. Secularism does not by any means recommend the regulation of life by "Hottentot morality," with which science has little or nothing to do. The Hottentot is a specimen of the influence of some other "Providence" than that of science.

So much for my opponent's criticism of Secular principles. Now, as to his comments upon our teachings in the same article.

1. The Secular "obligation to speak the truth" is obtained from experience, which teaches that lying and deceit tend to destroy that confidence between man and man which has been found to be necessary to maintain the stability of mutual social intercourse. It would indeed "surprise" me to find that the same reason makes it an "obligation to believe in the existence of God." Truth fortunately is not the monopoly of Theism.

2. If it could be shown that Secular teachings were "not new to Christian morality," it would not thereby invalidate their force from a Secular standpoint. It should be remembered that

Secularism is eclectic, and selects from many sources whatever is good or useful. The truth is, however, that Secular teachings numbered four, five, six, eight and ten are not only "new to Christianity," but they are the very opposite to what is taught by orthodox Christians.

3. Of course it may be "disputed that actions are of more consequence than beliefs;" but to dispute a fact does not necessarily destroy it. While "beliefs may be the ultimate source of actions," it is the actions, nevertheless, that affect society.

4. True, the proverb that "prevention is better than cure" is no "Secular novelty." Secularism adopts that which experience has proved to be useful rather than that which is novel.

5. If persecution "is not now upheld in this free country," it is because the Secular tendencies of the age will not permit it. Where the Church has the power, even now, it practises persecution, as my opponent would speedily discover were he a Secular propagandist. If he has any doubt upon this point, numerous instances can be given him where unbelievers in Christianity in this "free country" have had to encounter a variety of petty acts of persecution in consequence of their holding heretical opinions. Not long since in Halifax, where my opponent resides, efforts were made by the Christian party to prevent me having a hall to lecture in.

6. I admit that "thought is natural," but again I ask for evidence that the "thinker is supernatural." Why does my opponent remain silent upon this point, introduced by himself?

7. Exception is taken to my phrase, "law of mental science," but my opponent admits the very point for which I contend in this matter. He says experience teaches "that men think differently about the same thing." Exactly, and from the same monitor, assisted by the process of reasoning, we learn that uniformity of opinion is impossible, and why it is so, and this constitutes a part of "mental science." The philosophy of Secularism comes in here and says all honest and intelligent opinions should be welcomed as an advantage, and no penalty for unbelief should be inflicted either in this or in any other world.

8. It is misleading to assert, as my opponent does, that, accord-

ing to Methodist morality, "the end of life" is human improvement. Methodism goes farther than this and teaches that the true object of life is to secure the belief in and hope of a future life of blissful immortality. It also inculcates that mundane affairs are only to be regarded as being of secondary importance. For such teachings the Methodists have the sanction of the New Testament. [See Matt. 6 : 19-25, 31-34 ; 16 : 26 ; Col. 3 : 2 ; 1 John 2 : 15.]

9. In the application of the eclectic process to existing systems of morality, "Mr. Watts' dilemma" is not apparent. He does "accept in part a system of morality which all [many] accept." The validity of such selection is found in its usefulness, while the invalidity of the portions he rejects is discovered in their uselessness, and in some instances their positively injurious character for the practical purposes of life.

10. Mr. Watts does not "refuse to think" of the problems of the existence of God and a future state. He has thought of these subjects seriously and impartially for nearly forty years, and as a result he has come to the conclusion that the Secular position in reference to both questions is the logical one. Being unable to inform, Secularism *does* refuse to dogmatise upon matters in reference to which it can impart no information, and for the same reason as my opponent's "savage" would "refuse" to inform us of the moral principle, namely, that he knows nothing about it, although the said savage belongs to a race said to have been created "in the image of God." The position of the Secularist here is that of the Agnostic: he neither affirms nor denies, and in not denying the Secularist remains open to conviction, being ever ready to receive whatever evidence may be forthcoming. In the meantime, if there be a God of love and of justice, and a desirable immortality, Secularism prescribes such a course of action during life as should win the approval of the one and secure the advantages of the other.

We now come to the consideration of the last article by the editor of the *Evening Mail*, and without "being intentionally offensive," I "must confess" that, as a controversial document it is exceedingly defective, being very assertive and, in many in-

stances, irrelevant to the proposition under discussion. I was "very suspicious at the outset" that in his opposition to Secularism my opponent would not prove a "formidable adversary," and his "second article has only served to confirm the impression." It is rather difficult to decide which is the more conspicuous in his "reply," his sins of omission or those of commission.

The attentive readers of this debate are requested to note the persistent silence of my opponent in reference to most of the questions put to him in my last article. The questions there submitted involved "the vital issues at stake in this discussion," and yet he has avoided noticing nearly the whole of them. Has he discovered that silence is the better part of valour? In my previous article, paragraph four, proof was requested of the assertion that I had misrepresented Secularism, and that its teachings differed from its principles; a definition was also solicited of the term "mind;" in the sixth paragraph, nine important questions were submitted; and in paragraph seven, proof was given of the validity of Secular principles. To all these, with two exceptions, *be it observed*, my opponent has not even attempted a reply.

Instead of grappling with "the vital issues at stake," what has my opponent done? After a misapplication of the incident of "raising the Devil," and a few, probably unintentional, misrepresentations, he indulges in some well-known Theistic and Christian platitudes, which by his own request should have been excluded from this debate. As to the jest of "raising the Devil," if my opponent will again read my application of the story, he may see that the monarch of the lower regions was not induced to appear through my being called from my sanctum, but in consequence of the force of the definitions that were presented at the command of my antagonist. This slight correction, to use a humorous phrase, "plays the devil" with what no doubt was intended by my opponent to be a harmless joke. True, I am a "less formidable adversary" than his "Satanic Majesty," for "if the traditions brought down from the olden times may be relied upon as accurate," that gentleman would have soon settled the Editor of the *Mail*, by giving him a *warm* reception in apart-



ments where he would have had no opportunity for *cool* reflection upon the errors he had made and the shortcomings that he had manifested.

But, to be serious. Will my opponent name what "extraneous matter" has been introduced into this debate upon my part, and wherein I have "deemed it expedient to avoid as much as possible" the "issues at stake." Will he also state in what part of my last article I appeared apprehensive lest my free expression of opinion should subject me "to religious persecution," etc.? It must be repeated that proof, not mere groundless assertion, is required in debate. Perhaps, when my antagonist penned these allegations, he was not quite free from the influence of the "arch deceiver."

It is to be regretted that my opponent, in his last article, did not confine himself to Secularism, as he agreed to do. In his original challenge to debate with me he wrote: "Secularism, and not Christianity, is on trial before the bar of public opinion, and it is obviously out of place to introduce irrelevant discussions of the merits or demerits of Christianity," etc. [*Evening Mail*, July 16th, 1889.] It would be interesting to learn why this change of front has taken place. Let it be distinctly understood that I have not the slightest objection to discuss the irrelevant matter that has been introduced by my opponent, at the proper time. At present, my business is to show the reasonableness and sufficiency of Secularism. When this debate is finished I shall be ready to do my best to demonstrate that Christianity is thoroughly unreasonable and quite inadequate to meet the modern needs of mankind; also that Agnosticism is preferable to Christian Theism. If my opponent, or any of his representative colleagues, will accept an invitation to discuss these two questions, either orally or in writing, I am at their service. Nothing would be more easy, in such a debate, than for one to prove the complete fallacy of the supposed validity of the Christian's ethical code, that the obligation of man and his sense of duty find an explanation in the "direct commands of God," and the very reckless statement that "Christian teaching first stamped benevolence and self-sacrifice upon the moral consciousness of the

race." There is not a particle of truth in these wild assertions, and to me it is marvellous how any man of intelligence could entertain such palpable delusions.

My opponent says that Secularism teaches that, because society is constantly improving, "this is sufficient to incite men to live moral lives." Secularism enjoins more than this, namely, that during the process of improvement truth, justice, love, and ethical purity should adorn men's lives. Such nobility of character would enable us to make the best of this life, and at the same time to secure the felicity of a future life if there be one.

I perfectly agree with the point that Prof. Huxley enforces in the extract given by my opponent. What the Professor says is no argument against Secularism, but it rather tells against Theism. Furthermore, the Professor contends in his works,—his "Lay Sermons," for instance,—that during the progress of the human race theology and orthodox teachings have been a mighty obstacle to its onward career.

I have already given the Secularist's account of duty, and when my opponent asserts "that no satisfactory account ever has been found beyond the pale of Theism," he repeats an orthodox error which has been discarded long since by the leaders of modern thought. Duty involves morality, and it has been admitted again and again, even by eminent Christians, that the moral actions of a man do not necessarily depend on his belief in God. Atheists have been and are as good and useful members of society as Theists. Jeremy Taylor, Blair, Hooker, and Chalmers have all admitted that it is possible for a man to be moral independently of any religious belief; and the Bishop of Hereford, in his Bampton Lectures, says: "The principles of morality are founded in our nature independently of any religious belief, and are, in fact, obligatory even upon the Atheist."

As to the word "ought." The only explanation orthodox Christianity gives to this term is pure selfishness. It says you "ought" to do so and so for "Christ's sake," that through him you may avoid eternal perdition. On the other hand, Secularism finds the meaning of "ought" in the very nature of things, as involving duty, and implying that something is due to others.

As Mr. J. M. Savage aptly puts it: "Man ought—what?—ought to fulfil the highest possibility of his being; ought to be a man; ought to be all and the highest that being a man implies. Why? That is his nature. He ought to fulfil the highest possibilities of his being; ought not simply to be an animal. Why? Because there is something in him more than an animal. He ought not simply to be a brain, a thinking machine, although he ought to be that. Why? Because that does not exhaust the possibilities of his nature: he is capable of being something more, something higher than a brain. We say he ought to be a moral being. Why? Because it is living out his nature to be a moral being. He ought to live as high, grand, and complete a life as it is possible for him to live, and he ought to stand in such relation to his fellow-men that he shall aid them in doing the same. Why? Just the same as in all these other cases: because this and this only is developing the full and complete stature of a man, and he is not a man in the highest, truest, deepest sense of the word until he is that and does that; he is only a fragment of a man so long as he is less and lower."

Of course Secularists accept the "one great act of faith," because experience teaches the necessity of such. There is, however, this great difference between Secular and theologic faith, the one is based upon experience and the other on conjecture, the one upon what we know and the other upon what we surmise. Secularism accepts the first for the reason that it has an experimental basis for its "authority" and utilitarian "evidence" as to its results.

From a Secularistic standpoint sensuality could not be substituted for science "with equal authority" that Secularism could be put in the place of theologic religion. Sensuality encourages the lowest of human passions which are injurious to society, while Secularism fosters the noblest aspirations of our nature, which are beneficial to the general good of all.

My opponent's objections to Secularism have now been answered, and an invitation has been tendered him to discuss his system based on Christianity and Theism. It remains for him

to accept or to refuse the opportunity now offered him to defend his faith, as I have endeavoured to defend mine.

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THE EDITOR OF THE "EVENING MAIL'S" THIRD AND LAST  
REPLY TO CHARLES WATTS.

Although the *Evening Mail* had considered this debate at an end in view of Mr. Watts' delay in replying to our last article (Sept. 6th) it is nevertheless with pleasure that we publish his reply at this late date, more especially as we are personally assured that the delay on his part was owing to unavoidable circumstances.

In the limited space at our disposal it would not be possible and probably not profitable, to follow out every side issue that may perchance have been raised during this discussion, though we will endeavor to pay due attention to those of Mr. Watts' arguments which are not altogether irrelevant to the vital question: Is Secularism sufficient to satisfy the needs of mankind? Mr. G. J. Holyoake is quoted by Mr. Watts in his second article as saying:

"It is asked will Secularism meet all the wants of human nature. To this we reply, every system meets the wants of those who believe in it, else it would never exist. . . . We have no wants and wish to have none which truth will not satisfy."

But this is merely reasoning in a circle in the first instance and begging the question in the second. When Secularism is boldly offered to the Christian world as a substitute for prevalent religious beliefs, with the express declaration that "Secularism is sufficient to meet the needs of mankind," it is an obvious avoidance of the issue to meet the doubting enquirer with an illogical argument such as this:

Every system meets the wants of those who believe in it, else it would not exist.

Secularism is an existing system.

Therefore Secularism is sufficient to meet the needs of mankind



This is obviously a *non sequitur*. It would be quite as conclusive to assert that :

Buddhism is an existing system.

Therefore Buddhism is sufficient to meet the needs of mankind.

Or to syllogise thus :

Every system meets the wants of those who believe in it.

Die Schopenhauerische Philosophie is a system.

Therefore Schopenhauer's pessimism is sufficient to meet the needs of mankind.

In the second instance, the reasoning of my Secularist friend is equally inconclusive, involving as it does a glaring *petitio principii* such as this :

Truth will satisfy all the wants (needs?) which we have in the present or wish to have in the future.

Secularism is Truth.

Therefore Secularism will satisfy all our needs.

Yet it is obvious at a glance that right here Messrs. Holyoake and Watts make the unwarranted assumption that Secularism is Truth—the very point at issue. For what we demand to know at the outset is, by what criterion can the Secularist discriminate between the true and the false, in order that we, by this same standard, may measure the truth or the falsity of Secularist principles and teachings?

Again, when pressed on this point, Mr. Watts replies in his second article :

"I am requested to establish the validity of Secular principles and teachings. Does not my opponent see that such validity consists in the necessity and adaptability of Secularism to human needs? In the second paragraph of my opening article I mentioned one fact to prove the necessity of Secular philosophy, namely, inasmuch as moral conduct is indispensable to the well-being of society, Secularism has been found necessary to enable those persons who could not accept orthodox Christianity as a guide in mundane affairs to find elsewhere principles to direct and sustain them in the correct performance of their respective duties. Upon this point my opponent has hitherto remained silent."

This reasoning is far from conclusive. The argument employed by Mr. Watts resolves itself into a syllogism such as the following :

Moral conduct is indispensable to the well-being of society.

Orthodox Christianity cannot be accepted by a society of Secularists, so-called, as a moral guide to direct and sustain them in the correct discharge of their duties—i. e. in moral conduct.

Therefore the teachings and principles of Secularism are sufficient to satisfy all human needs.

Or : Therefore orthodox Christianity should forswear its beliefs and accept Secularism as a guide to moral conduct.

The Secularist argument might also be stated thus :

A body, called Secularists, have accepted certain principles and teachings as their guide to all moral conduct.

Moral conduct is indispensable to the well-being of society.

Therefore, all members of society should embrace the Secularist guide.

So, we repeat, with equal authority and no less presumption, might a South African native contend that Hottentot modes of life and Hottentot morality are sufficient to satisfy the needs of this nineteenth century civilisation.

Now, we desire it to be clearly understood that we do not seek to disparage the motives of any body of men who, finding that they can no longer accept Christianity and its doctrinal teachings, and yet conscious that "moral conduct is indispensable to the well-being of society," resolve, after due consideration, to place before themselves certain "principles to direct and sustain in the correct performance of their respective duties." In one of his early discourses with Charles Bradlaugh, Mr. Holyoake, to whom Secularism owes its name, admits that he was not uninfluenced by such considerations of expediency in formulating the Secularist principles and teachings. He said :

" They were principles which we had acquired by the slow accretion of controversy, by contesting for them from platform to platform all over the country ; and, when they were drawn up, I submitted them

in the aggregate form, many years after they had been separately formulated, to Mr. J. S. Mill, and asked him whether or not, in his judgment, we had made such a statement of Secular principles as were worthy to stand as self-defensive principles of the working class, as an independent mode of opinion which would no longer involve them in the necessity of taking on their shoulders the responsibilities of an Atheistic or Infidel propagandism, except when it suited the purpose of a member to do it."

This desire to protect the working classes against the dire consequences that too often issue from a rash espousal of Agnostic or Atheistic views, which led Mr. Holyoake to formulate a body of arbitrarily selected principles for their guidance in the correct performance of certain duties, was without doubt a commendable one. And so long as the Secularists confine their energies to constructive efforts of this nature, we heartily wish them "God speed!" Though their methods may be less efficacious than those employed by Christian philanthropists, their efforts in this direction will, though their sphere is circumscribed, no doubt conserve the interests of morality. But when with a presumption that is not born of knowledge and discretion, Secularism impudently declares that its trite teachings—which were arbitrarily selected and arranged at a particular crisis, to administer, even though inadequately, to the needs of a limited class who had been seduced from their early faith—are sufficient to meet the intellectual, moral, religious and aesthetic needs of the whole human race, we may be pardoned if we find ourselves unable to treat so preposterous a proposition with becoming seriousness.

However, upon examination of the ten teachings of Secularism which Mr. Watts has kindly outlined for us in his first article we were forced to conclude that they were, of themselves, of slight importance to this controversy, inasmuch as they contain very little that is new to Christian morality, and were chiefly more or less crudely expressed tenets of an ethical system which is recognised by the majority of the Christian world, and to which Secularism can make no special claim. To invalidate

this argument, and, ostensibly, to show that Secularism is a more excellent system, Mr. Watts retorts that the following five Secularist teachings are not only new to Christianity but the very opposite of what is taught by orthodox Christians:

"4. That the best means of securing this improvement (i. e. rendering depraved conditions impossible) are self-reliance, moral culture, physical development, intellectual discipline, AND WHATEVER ELSE IS FOUND NECESSARY TO SECURE THIS OBJECT provided our actions do not unjustly and unnecessarily infringe upon the rights of others."

(NOTE.—The capitals are ours.)

"5. That the disbelief in Christianity, or in other systems of theology, may be as much a matter of honest conviction as the belief in it or them."

"6. That persecution for disbelieving any or all the doctrines of theology is a crime against social and an insult to mental freedom."

"8. That a well spent life, GUIDED AND CONTROLLED BY THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE MORALITY, is the best preparation for a safe and happy death."

(NOTE.—The capitals are ours.)

"10. That from a domestic standpoint there should be no attempt at superiority between husband and wife; that equality should be the emblem of every home; and that the fireside should be hallowed by mutual fidelity, affection, happiness and the setting of an example worthy of children's emulation."

"The truth is," says Mr. Watts, "that Secular teachings numbered four, five, six, eight and ten are not only new to Christianity, but that they are the very opposite to what is taught by orthodox Christians." Mr. Watts' statement is worthy of a denial as emphatic as can courteously be conveyed in the language of debate. With regard to the 10th teaching of Secularism it is only necessary to refer to 1 Cor. 7: 3-4; Eph. 5: 22-33; Col. 3: 18-19; Titus 2: 4-5; 1 Peter 3. And if there is found to be any discrepancy between the teachings of Mr. Watts and those of Paul, we are disposed to accept the apostle's, even on the ground of utility solely. With regard to the 8th teaching, we need only to say that Christ taught the highest



morality. With regard to the 6th, that Christ never countenanced persecution, except to turn the other cheek when first smitten on the right! With regard to the 4th, that these virtues are not only taught, but repentance and forgiveness for past sins, and pureness of heart and holiness of life are inculcated by the Christian, and accredited by personal experience, as the only efficacious means of "rendering depraved conditions impossible." The 5th is more difficult of discussion in the limited space at our disposal. Christ taught no "system of theology." But it is clear that positive disbelief in the cardinal doctrine of the existence of God, for instance, can never be a matter of honest conviction. Even though unbelief may, in exceptional cases, be justified, yet there can be no grounds for positive disbelief. That there is no God is a negative that is incapable of proof. The verdict may be that the existence of a God is not proven; it can never be that it is disproven. Even Mr. Holyoake, of whom Mr. Watts is proud to be known as a disciple, has admitted (Reasoner xi., 15,232) that "denying implies infinite knowledge as to the ground of disproof." The human mind may be reduced to the dreary condition of saying "there is no knowing whether there be a God or not," "it doth not yet appear." Yet we repeat that positive, active disbelief in this cardinal doctrine can never be a matter of honest conviction. And furthermore it is clear that no sooner does the unbeliever undertake to undermine the positive Atheistic belief of another mind than he takes upon himself the terrible responsibility of presuming to say in his heart that "there is no God!"

We have thus far examined the five teachings which are alleged to be "new to Christianity," and which are, in fact, alleged to be "the very opposite to what is taught by orthodox Christians." From the analysis which we have made it will appear, we think, to every reader of ordinary intelligence—that the Secularist claim that its principles are new to Christianity and opposed to Christian teaching is utterly untenable, if we except its affirmation that disbelief may be an honest conviction—an affirmation on the part of Secularism which is a self-evident absurdity. This

then is the proposition that Secularism makes to Christianity. "It is our peculiar glory that we admit to our fold all who deny the existence of God. Do ye then forswear Christianity, forswear your positive belief in God, and become partakers with Atheists of this glory of unbelief!" And to make his meaning clear, beyond all possibility of doubt, Mr. Watts has closed his third article with the bald, bold affirmation that Christianly is quite inadequate to meet the needs of mankind, and that Agnosticism is preferable to Christianity; though the sole claim as to the superiority of Secularist teachings, is made on the ground that it recognises positive disbelief. The basis of this strange and unnatural fellowship between the Theist and the Atheist, the believer and the infidel, is thus set forth in Mr. Watts' first article:

"Secularism, therefore, does not exact Atheistic profession as the basis of co-operation. Atheists may be Secularists; but it is not considered that a man should accept Atheism to enable him to become a Secularist. The Secularist platform is sufficiently broad to admit the fellowship of Atheists or non-orthodox Theists."

If Secularists who believe in God, actually associate themselves with Atheists—pardon us if we decline to accept an affirmation to that effect!—they must be prepared to subject themselves to the restraints which society in self-preservation is compelled to place upon the active propagandists of Atheism. For "what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" For if Mr. Watts in his definition of the "basis of Secularism," and in his declaration in his second article—that there should be no persecution, or social ostracism for unbelief—means to assert that society has no right to protect itself from the hopeless national ruin that the triumph of Atheism would bring in its train, then we must most emphatically dissent from his views so expressed. Yet the penal or social prohibition of an active propagation of Atheistic views, which is necessary for the protection of society, should be carefully distinguished from religious or any other form of persecution. Such a distinction is recognised by the common law of

England, as Mr. Bradlaugh has had the temerity to discover, and is certainly justifiable on grounds which are recognised even in Secularist morality—the preservation of the social organism.

This then is our reply to Mr. Watts: All the positive truth of your Secularism, all the science, all the social duty is mine no less than yours, though I utterly reject all that is peculiar to your Secularism, and maintain that man has no higher duties than those which I owe to God, and to the Moral Idea which commands my unconditional obedience; and that it is sheer folly for a man to live as if death were the end of all.

But what is the criterion by which Mr. Watts would discriminate between right and wrong, the moral and the immoral? Let us examine the point more closely? Mr. Watts says in his second article that: "Reason is the standard whereby we can discriminate between and judge right from wrong." And, although he has thus made Reason the standard whereby we discriminate, he has also said in his first article that Reason is "the power which discriminates," "the ability \* \* \* \* to distinguish truth from error." Yet, herein, Mr. Watts claims for human reason those absolute functions which Theists assert of the Divine Reason. Human reason, he would have us believe, discriminates between right and wrong by the sole aid of its own supreme light. Yet herein there is affirmed of the human mind an attribute which is declared to be inconceivable when predicted of the Divine Mind! Nay more! Mr. Watts in opening the debate endorsed Hooker's saying that "Reason gives us knowledge," and that "it is by reason alone that we distinguish truth from falsehood." Absolute reason, it is clear, cannot be predicted of the human mind; since human knowledge is admittedly very imperfect. But whence this idea of absolute reason, of perfect knowledge, of truth unmixed with error, which Mr. Watts, wittingly or not, assumes to exist?

Again in his last article, Mr. Watts refers to "truth, justice, love and ethical purity" and "nobility of character," absolute and infinite, to the realisation of which we are impelled. The reference does credit to his heart, but not to his intelligence!

For what are these but attributes which are predicated by the Theist of the Divine Ideal, the Deity, towards whom Mr. Watts, as a Secularist, affects to assume an attitude of utter indifference, neither affirming or denying his existence ?

Again, Mr. Watts quotes with approbation a passage from Mr. Savage, which we too most heartily endorse ; but which finds no place in the tenets of consistent Secularism. Read that passage ! Man ought to fulfil "THE HIGHEST POSSIBILITIES OF HIS BEING !" What are these but the capacities which are gradually realised by us in time, by means of a progress of personal character to personal character—which capacities are eternally realized for and in the Eternal Mind ? What are these possibilities toward which we are impelled, but the realisation of the Moral Idea of our own moral perfection ? But why ought man to fulfill these possibilities ? Let Mr. Watts' own quotation answer ! "BECAUSE THERE IS SOMETHING IN HIM MORE THAN ANIMAL ? Because "he is capable of something more, SOMETHING HIGHER THAN BRAIN !" What is this occult and mysterious SOMETHING, "more than animal" and "higher than brain ?" What can it be but the human soul within us, with its infinity of moral and spiritual possibilities, and its deep yearnings after God and an immortality ? Who, that has experienced the agony of soul that permeated the very centres of our being in the more memorable crises of this human life, can sincerely say with the Secularist that the needs of his intellectual, moral and spiritual nature are satisfied by assuming an attitude of indifference toward God and immortality ? Who can disregard that soul's divine relationship, order his conduct, as the Secularist prescribes, by "considerations which pertain to this life alone," and yet develop his manhood "in the highest, truest, deepest sense of the word ?"

We might proceed with the reflections which Mr. Savage's words inevitably suggest ; or we might discuss at length the minor issues that Mr. Watts has raised. But for the present let this suffice.

Is Secularism, then, sufficient to satisfy the needs of mankind ? We reply that it offers nothing to satisfy the needs of that



SOMETHING in our nature, which is "more than animal," and "higher than brain," the human soul. Secularism in Mr. Watts' category of needs, recognises "religious aspirations and emotional gratification;" but it fails utterly to satisfy what, as human experience in all ages will conclusively attest, is one of the supreme needs of the soul of man,—divine consolation. Secularism, gives no satisfaction to our faith, our hope, our reverence, our love, and completely severs itself from all that will develop the higher emotional principles of human nature. Secularism not only fails to satisfy our reason, but it is, as we have shown, inconsistent with itself and a gross violation of the conditions of rational belief. Moreover, it affects, toward God and immortality, an indifference which mankind must, by reason of the very nature of man, find it impossible to maintain. Secularism thus ignores not only our religious, moral and intellectual needs; but as it fails to energise the moral and spiritual nature of man, so in like manner it affords no inspiration to art and literature of an elevating and purifying character. "All epochs," wrote Goethe, "in which faith, under whatever form, has prevailed, have been brilliant, heart elevating, and fruitful, both to contemporaries and to posterity. All epochs, on the contrary, in which unbelief, under whatever form, has maintained a sad supremacy, even if for the moment they glitter it with a false splendour, vanish from the memory of posterity, because none care to torment themselves with that which has been barren."

Mr. Watts in closing challenges the editor of the *Evening Mail* to a second discussion of the relative merits of Christianity and Agnosticism; but while this proposition may be entertained at some future day, when Mr. Watts is visiting this province, its acceptance at the present time is not practicable. In fact, unless Mr. Watts can assure us that, having received new light on the subject, he is prepared to advance more reasonable arguments on behalf of Agnosticism than he has thus far presented on behalf of Secularism, a second debate would appear quite unnecessary and unprofitable.

## MR. WATTS' CONCLUDING ARTICLE.

AFTER a delay of over six weeks since my last article in this debate appeared, my respected opponent has penned his final reply in the present discussion. I have good reasons for believing that the delay which has arisen was caused by circumstances beyond his control.

The reader is particularly requested to again read carefully the whole of the debate and note in how few instances my opponent has grappled with the main issues between us. I regret that while I have answered every important question put to me by the Editor of the *Mail*, he has treated most of my requests with either silence or evasion; and instead of combatting my arguments he has indulged in good-natured generalisations of a very indefinite character. He has made no attempt whatever to verify his assertion that I did not understand Secularism, neither has he given any other definition of that system than the one I furnished. He has also omitted to show that Secular teachings "differ more or less" from Secular principles, and in what sense he used the term "mind." In my second article nine most important questions were submitted to him, but with the exception of one he has not taken the slightest notice of them. A demand was made that I should deal with the word "ought" and the question of duty from a Secular standpoint. I did so, and showed that with Secularists these terms have a higher and nobler meaning than is attached to them by orthodox Christianity. Furthermore, I indicated our "one great act of faith" and upon what it was based; also why sensuality could not be substituted for science "with equal authority." To all these points my opponent has given no attention, neither has he adduced any *proof* that Secular morality, with its basis and incentives, is defective, or that the Secular conception of human needs is wrong. How far such an evasive mode of procedure will make good the negative side of the proposition that we should have discussed, the reader is left to decide for himself.

The Editor's "last reply" is a peculiar specimen of contro-

versial ingenuity, which may do "credit to his heart, not to his intelligence." His syllogistic comments present a sad confusion of logical precision and a lack of philosophical reasoning. The limited space at my disposal prevents me showing the want of harmony between the premises and the conclusions drawn. But perhaps such a course would be unnecessary, inasmuch as, be the nature of the conclusions what it may, it would in no way affect either my quotation from Mr. G. J. Holyoake or my statement as to moral conduct. Mr. Holyoake says that "every system meets the wants of those who believe in it." It should be remembered, however, that the adherent of the system in question is supposed to decide for himself what his wants are. Such wants may differ from those deemed necessary by the believers in other systems. Undoubtedly Buddhism is thought by the Buddhist to be sufficient to meet his wants, just as Secularism is regarded as being the truth by the Secularists. It is not correct to assert that "with equal authority and no less presumption [as that of the Secularist] might a South African native contend that Hottentot modes of life and Hottentot morality are sufficient to satisfy the needs of this nineteenth century civilisation." No sane person within the pale of civilisation would contend that the mode of living and the morality of the Hottentot are sufficient for the requirements of the civilisation of the present time. While certain human needs are universal, some "wants," being the result of habit, are limited. That which may supply the "wants" of one race or class of persons would probably be found inadequate in other cases. In my second article six needs were cited which pertain to human nature in general, and to these my opponent says that he is "not disposed to take special exception." It was further shown in the same article wherein Secularism was deemed sufficient to meet these needs. Instead of meeting what was advanced upon this point, my opponent substitutes for general needs particular "wants" acquired through special training and introduces his poor Hottentot as an illustration. Clever evasion, but most fallacious reasoning!

It is pleasing to know that the Editor of the *Mail* regards our

“constructive efforts” as being “commendable,” and in my opinion it would be well if no other mode of advocacy were necessary. Unfortunately, however, theological exclusiveness and bigotry compel us sometimes to do destructive work, in seeking to remove from our midst all fancies, creeds and dogmas that obstruct the carrying out of our constructive work. While shams are regarded as realities, and falsehood is worshipped as truth, this phase of our advocacy will be necessary. Old systems that have lost all vitality, except for evil, need to be broken up; and theologies, which have hitherto usurped judgment and reason, require to be refuted. The theologians claim to have “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth,” and unless we walk in their paths, unless we accept their authority, unless we believe implicitly in all their teachings, we are at once condemned as a rebel against their God, as an outcast from society, and as an enemy of our fellow-men. While this cruel injustice exists, destructive work will be necessary.

My opponent says that my statement that Secular teachings numbered four, five, six, eight and ten are not only new to Christianity, but that they are the very opposite to what is taught by orthodox Christians, “is worthy of a denial as emphatic as can courteously be conveyed in the language of debate.” Let us test the value of this bold denial. The fourth teaching enjoins self-reliance, which is the very opposite to what is taught by Christianity. (See 2 Cor. 3 : 5 ; John 6 : 44.) It makes belief in Christ an absolute necessity and threatens damnation for non-belief. (See Acts 4 : 12 ; 16 : 31 ; Mark 16 : 16.) The fifth teaching proclaims the right and honesty of disbelief. Christianity denies this (1 Tim. 6 : 3-5 ; 2 Cor. 6 : 14, 15 ; 2 Thess. 1 : 8), and my opponent endorses the denial, as far as the existence of God is concerned. The sixth teaching condemns all persecution in consequence of the rejection of any theological doctrines ; Christianity, on the contrary, enforces such persecution. (See Matt. 10 : 14, 15 ; John 15 : 6 ; 2 John 1 : 10 ; Gal. 1 : 9.) The tenth teaching alleges that between husband and wife equality should exist in the domestic circle. This could



not be if the injunctions found in Eph. 5 : 24 ; 1 Cor. 14 : 34, 35 ; 1 Tim. 2 : 11, 14 ; Col. 3 : 18, were obeyed. Herein the husband is made the master and the wife is required to obey and submit "in everything," which is not equality but abject serfdom.

It is to be regretted that my opponent condemns the "unnatural fellowship" of the co-operation of Secularists, Atheists and Theists, and he actually justifies "the restraints which society in self-preservation is compelled to place upon the active propagandists of Atheism." Here is the old spirit of theological persecution, which the Editor of the *Mail* defends by quoting scripture, and yet he denies that Christianity teaches persecution. Oh! consistency, where is thy blush? As to the relative danger of Atheism and Theism, if that were the subject for debate, I would shew that under the influence of Theism, not Atheism, the worst crimes have been committed, the bitterest hatred engendered, the greatest injustice perpetrated, and utter ruin produced; and, further, that such wrongs, cruelties and crimes were done and committed upon the authority of the Bible.

Yes, I do say that cultivated reason aided by experience is the standard by which we test right from wrong. If there be a higher one, why has it not been produced? To talk of "divine reason" is to speak of that of which we have no knowledge. Besides, if such reason did exist, how would it be judged if not by human reason? In case two guides for human conduct are presented, what but human reason decides which is the better?

It is not true that as a Christian my opponent has all the truth and advantages of Secularism. Our system teaches that man is not by nature necessarily depraved; that his salvation does not depend upon Christ, that man is not bound to believe in one particular person under penalty of eternal perdition, and that he should have no fellowship with the unbeliever. According to Secularism, reliance upon science is of more importance than having faith in the alleged supernatural; that supreme attention should be given to the duties of this life, rather than to the speculations in reference to any other existence, and that

morality is of more consequence than belief in any of the theological systems of the world. These are truths that no orthodox Christian can, to be consistent, accept.

I am not surprised that the Editor of the *Evening Mail* refuses to accept my invitation to discuss Christianity and Agnosticism. Possibly in this debate he has learned a lesson that will induce him in future to be more cautious both in his offensive and defensive policy. When, however, he intimates that he would require "more reasonable arguments" to deal with he reflects upon his own lack of ability. If my arguments in this debate have been inferior, and remaining as they do unanswered, what chance would my opponent have with better arguments?

In conclusion, I wish to say that as Secularists we do not treat the existence of God and immortality "with indifference." We endeavour to get all possible light upon the subject, and in the meantime we try so to live that if God exist our conduct shall meet with his approval, and if there be a future life, we do our best to deserve what advantages it may possess. While many Secularists believe both in God and immortality, others are unable to do so, and with them moral conduct is deemed of paramount importance, because the welfare of society demands it, and experience proves that mankind is the better for adopting it. If they have no "God to fear," they have man to love, and regard for his welfare is sufficient to inspire them to seek to perform useful deeds. Christianity—which mainly urges each one to look after the Salvation of his own soul, since it will not profit him if he gains the whole world and loses this—is far inferior to Secularism in this respect; the more so as it often engenders hatred and cruelty for difference of belief, while Secularism has no stark creeds into which it would make all alike compress themselves. It simply says in a purely practical tone, Come and let us work together for the good and happiness of us all, whatever our speculations may be. Secularism does not require the motive Christianity thinks necessary. It finds what to its adherents appears a stronger and better motive in the love of our fellow creatures, whom we know, than in the

fear of God, whom we do not know. This is the essential question, Shall I work in love of myself and my fellows for their good and my own, or shall I work in fear of a Supernatural Being unknown to me? I answer, I love those whom I see and know, and will work with and for them; I cannot love one whom I neither see nor know; and if he is, as my opponent believes, almighty, he can want neither me nor any one else to work with or for him; and his purposes, moreover, must be quite beyond our guessing. We might work dead against him, thinking we were working for him, as Christian persecutors have done when they thought, in punishing and putting to death heretics, that they were doing God service.