

# CHARLES WATTS'S WORKS.

— o —

- THE TEACHINGS OF SECULARISM COMPARED WITH ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY. 1s, by post 1s. 2d.
- CHRISTIANITY : ITS ORIGIN, NATURE, AND INFLUENCE. 4d., by post 5d.
- SECULARISM : DESTRUCTIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE. 3d., by post 4d.
- THE GLORY OF UNBELIEF. 3d., by post 4d.
- AGNOSTICISM AND CHRISTIAN THEISM : Which is the More Reasonable? 3d., by post 4d.
- A REPLY TO FATHER LAMBERT'S "TACTICS OF INFIDELS." 6d., by post 7d.
- THEOLOGICAL PRESUMPTION : An Open Letter to the Rev. Dr. R. F. Burns, of Halifax, N.S. 2d., by post 2½d.
- THE NATURAL AND THE SUPERNATURAL; or, Belief and Knowledge. 3d., by post 4d.
- EVOLUTION AND SPECIAL CREATION. 3d., by post 3½d.  
*Contents* :—What is Evolution?—The Formation of Worlds—The Beginning of Life upon the Earth—Origin of Man—Diversity of Living Things—Psychical Powers—The Future of Man on Earth.
- HAPPINESS IN HELL AND MISERY IN HEAVEN, 3d., by post 3½d.
- SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE. 4d., by post 5d.
- BIBLE MORALITY : Its Teachings Shown to be Contradictory and Defective as an Ethical Code. 3d., by post 3½d.
- THE BIBLE UP TO DATE. 2d., by post 2½d.
- THE SUPERSTITION OF THE CHRISTIAN SUNDAY. 3d., by post 4d.
- EDUCATION : TRUE AND FALSE. (Dedicated to the London School Board.) 2d., by post 2½d.
- SECULARISM : ITS RELATION TO THE SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF THE DAY. 2d., by post 2½d.
- CHRISTIANITY : DEFECTIVE [AND UNNECESSARY. By MRS. CHARLES WATTS. 3d., by post 3½d.
- SECULARISM : IS IT FOUNDED ON REASON, AND IS IT SUFFICIENT to Meet the Needs of Mankind?  
Debate between the Editor of the "Evening Mail" (Halifax, N.S.) and Charles Watts. With Prefatory Letters by G. J. Holyoake and Colonel R. G. Ingersoll, and an Introduction by Helen H. Gardener. 1s., by post 1s. 2d.

## CHRISTIANITY

AND

## CIVILIZATION :

Why Christianity is Still Professed.

BY

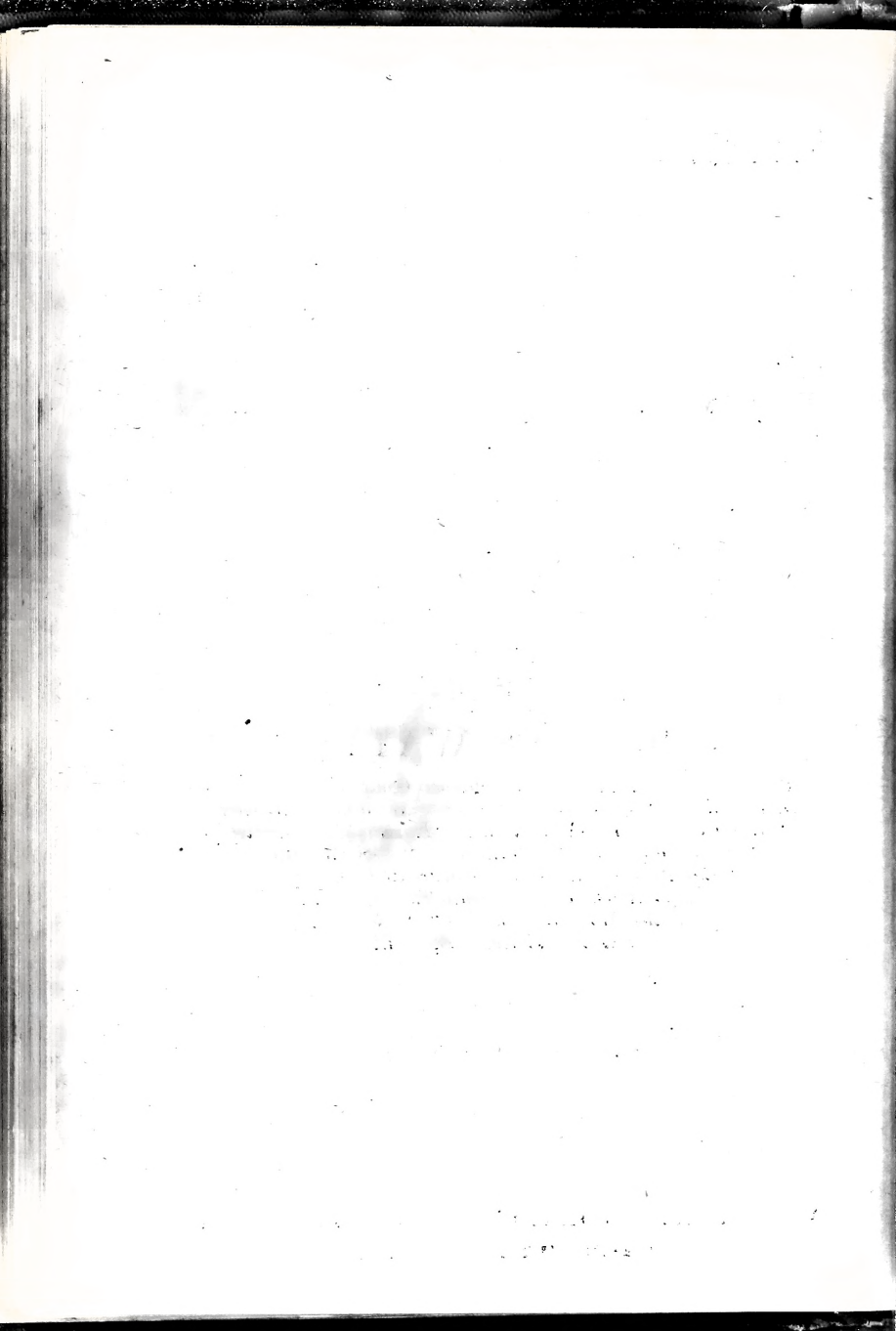
CHARLES WATTS

*Author of "The Teachings of Secularism Compared with Orthodox Christianity," "Secularism: Constructive and Destructive," "Evolution and Special Creation," "The Glory of Unbelief," "Saints and Sinners: Which?" "Bible Morality," "Christianity: Its Origin, Nature and Influence," "Agnosticism and Christian Theism: Which is the More Reasonable?" "Reply to Father Lambert," Etc., Etc.*

LONDON :

WATTS &amp; CO., 17 JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET ST., E.C.

**PRICE THREE PENCE.**



## CHRISTIANITY AND CIVILIZATION.

---

It would be difficult to select two other words which are used as extensively as "Christianity" and "civilization," about which there are such vague and conflicting notions as to their meaning. If we ask Christians for a definition of their faith, it will be found that the answers given are as varied as they are numerous. The reply of a Roman Catholic will differ widely from that of a Protestant, while the meaning given to Christianity by a member of the Church of England would not be the same as the one furnished by the adherents of the many dissenting sects. A decided lack of harmony would be perceptible between the definitions offered by Unitarians and Trinitarians, by Quakers and Salvationists, by Swedenborgians and Christadelphians. The expounders of what is termed the "higher criticism" present a conception of Christianity the very opposite to that taught by the school represented by Dr. Talmage and the late C. H. Spurgeon. The same diversity as to the nature of the Christian faith obtains among nations. In Spain it has proved a cruel oppression, in Rome a priestly domination, in America a commercial commodity, in Scotland a gloomy nightmare, and in England an emotional pastime. This dissimilitude as to the character of the "new religion" appeared immediately after the alleged death of Christ. According to the New Testament, Paul preached a system of a philosophical character compared with that of Jesus. The Christianity of Paul was widely different from that of his "divine Master." The character of Christ was submissive and servile, that of Paul defiant and pugnacious. We could no more conceive Christ fighting with wild beasts at Ephesus, than we could suppose Paul submitting without protest or resistance to those

insults and indignities which are alleged to have been heaped upon Christ. Neither could we for one moment imagine Paul advising his disciples when anyone smote them on one cheek to offer them the other. Paul introduced by his personal character a certain amount of boldness and energy into the Christian propaganda, and by the character of his mind he largely modified the Christian system. In fact, each successive age has left its mark and impress upon Christianity. No system was ever less rigid and more plastic. It has certainly come up to the injunction of St. Paul "to be all things to all men." Persons of the most contrary dispositions and of the most opposite natures have been its great illustrators, expounders, and living representatives. It has found room for all temperaments ; the ascetic and luxurious enjoyer of life ; the man of action and the man of contemplation ; the monk and the king ; the philanthropist and the destroyer of his race ; the iconoclastic hater of all ceremonies, and the superstitious devotee. All these opposites have found refuge within the pale of Christianity. But this heterogeneous family is by no means the result of any all-embracing comprehensiveness in the system of Christ, but rather the effects of a theology characterized alike by its indefinite, incomplete, and undecisive principles.

These different and contradictory views which are entertained as to what Christianity really is, prove that its truths are not self-evident, but that they depend, for their interpretation and manifestation, upon the education and surroundings of their professors. This deprives the faith of any just claim to infallibility and to a "divine origin." For, if the reason of man has to decide its meaning, one uniform conception of what it teaches is impossible, and the criterion by which its claims are tested is a human one. The term "Secular Christianity" we regard as a misnomer, for the system has no consistent signification if the notion of what is called the supernatural is ignored. The inspiration that induced Christ to say and do what is ascribed to him in the four gospels, was considered to have

emanated from above. The power that moves and regulates the whole system of Christianity is designated by its believers as supernatural. Christ did not teach from purely secular motives, but through the belief that he was doing the will of his 'Father in heaven.' The leading features of the teachings of the New Testament are: reliance upon a supernatural power, faith in Christ, belief in the efficacy of prayer, and in the immortality of the soul; also that poverty is a virtue, that submission is a duty, and that love to man should be subordinate to love to God. These principles, however consoling they may be to some, must, from their nature, check the progress of civilization. The extent of their retarding influence depends upon the degree of veneration in which they are held by their professors. With some Theists and Unitarians these theological notions are less dangerous, because such Christians are less dogmatic and less orthodox. But with a Wesleyan, a Baptist, or a member of the Salvation Army, such notions frequently lead to conduct antagonistic to general improvement. With these latter Christians, Christ is "all in all," and they are ever ready to exclaim:

"No foot of land do I possess,  
A stranger in the wilderness,  
I all their goods despise.  
I trample on their whole delight,  
And seek a city out of sight,  
A city in the skies."

For:

"Nothing is worth a thought beneath,  
But how I may escape the death  
That never, never dies."

Such is the complex character of the Christian religion, which its enthusiastic devotees boast has been the cause of modern civilization. "See," they exclaim, "how it made men free, established liberty, abolished the corruptions of Rome, liberated the human mind from heathen darkness, gave peace to the world, and introduced a new and pure religion." To put the matter mildly, all this is pure assumption and nothing

more, and this we hope to show beyond all possible doubt. We shall endeavor to prove that Christianity does not contain the elements which have produced civilization, but that modern progress is the result of agencies the very antithesis to New Testament teachings. Before doing this, however, we ask, when and where did Christianity cause the changes above mentioned? What we call civilization means a condition of society where movements are in operation that will banish barbarism, and in its place establish culture and the right of personal freedom. Now, in what nation has Christianity accomplished this result? It is no credit to any faith to have destroyed Roman learning, and then to have plunged Europe into a state of mental darkness. Yet this is what the early Christians did, as the history of the Middle Ages amply testifies. The monuments of Christianity are huge buildings erected at the expense of the blood and muscle of unremunerated laborers. True, Christianity produced architecture, and so it did monkish lying chronicles. It incited Europe to a state of ferment, and also inspired the Crusaders to wage their unholy wars; it lighted the fires of Smithfield and Oxford, and it established the Holy Inquisition and the Star Chamber, wherein human beings were tortured and cruelly put to death. The adherents of this "new religion" have spread war, strife, and desolation among nations in their attempt to subdue races who were no more savages than were the Christians themselves. This was the work of the promoters of the "new and pure religion." Christianity was erected upon the ruins of Greek and Roman philosophy, but it failed to give birth to principles that could be practically carried out in daily life. All that tends to produce a state of civilization and to supply the needs and ensure the refinement of a people, does not date its inception from the introduction of Christianity, for that lacks not only any scheme of education, but much of its teaching encourages unthrift and favors despotism.

We are told that the Christian clergy were the scholars of the nation for a thousand years, although the Christian Mosheim

says, in his "Ecclesiastical History," that "The bishops in general were so illiterate, that few of that body were capable of composing the discourses which they delivered to the people." Even the clergy, who were comparatively learned, kept all their knowledge to themselves, while the general masses were steeped in ignorance and moral degradation. Christianity has established churches, but when did it give the artisan any ownership in them? For centuries the Christian Church has been the opponent of all literary, political, and social advancement. It did not found mechanics' institutes, free schools, or unsectarian universities. But it did close the avenues of learning against those who did not swear by its faith. Its Protestant supporters argued against giving Roman Catholics and Jews their civil rights. Henry (afterwards Lord) Brougham, once asked in the House of Commons how the bishops could condemn perjury, when they declared before God that they were moved by the Holy Ghost to accept many thousand pounds a year for preaching "Blessed be ye poor?" The fact is, money is at the root of religion, as established in England, and we see in every cathedral pile an emblem of a petrified faith.

Many able expounders of Christianity, failing to recognize the true causes of civilization, urge that it has produced what they term "a change of heart," and that this change has a more beneficial effect upon the general conditions of society than secular agencies have. Now, we fail to discover any proof of this allegation. Western civilization is the result of the cultivation of the intellect far more than it is of the fostering of the emotions. In transforming society from what it was to what it is, the teachings of science have proved more efficacious than the preaching of sermons, and the brain power of such master-minds as Galileo, Newton, Watt, and Stephenson has been a greater civilizing factor than all the emotional force manifested by the host of divines who have contributed to the history of the Christian faith. We hope to show that the improvements of modern life are not the outcome of putting into practice the injunctions of Christ, but rather the consequence



of following the truths born of such geniuses as those whose names we have mentioned. The discovery of coal and of electricity, the mechanical inventions of the last two hundred years, the control of the lightning, and the navigation of the seas, have been the potent agencies in bringing about modern civilization. But these agencies have been secured through the medium of cultivated intellects and are not the result of any Christian "change of heart."

Experience amply testifies that if we keep our bodies in a healthy condition and properly drain our land, the probability is that if epidemics come upon us they will soon depart, and these duties are neglected, it is likely that diseases may not only visit us, but that they will linger in our midst despite any "change of heart" that might have taken place. If, however, by this phrase is meant, that men should cease to do evil and learn to do good, then we do not deny the advantages of such a change, but we contend that intelligence and secular agencies are necessary to render such advantages serviceable for all civilizing purposes. We further assert that before a person's character is changed for the better, the conditions which surround him must be improved; for, as Spencer has shown, a moral character cannot emanate from immoral surroundings. Thus the very "change of heart" spoken of depends upon the superior environment caused by external influences. Moreover, we find that this "change of heart" has not induced Christians to seek to remove slavery, religious inequalities, political wrongs and social injustice; neither has it inspired them with a desire to encourage education or to favor the discovery and the application of the sciences. In the face of these facts, it cannot be consistently said that the Christian's "change of heart" has brought about the civilization of the nineteenth century.

Persons with unbiased minds, and who are capable of generalizing facts, will doubtless recognize that civilization is not the result of any one thing, or of the efforts of any one man, and least of all of those of a person who possibly might have lived

in Palestine two thousand years ago. The progress of a nation is to be attributed to efforts of many men of different generations; and also to a combination of circumstances that have been in operation during all ages, preparing the way for the advancement of a higher condition of things. For instance, if it had not been for the scientific discoveries of a Watt, a Dalton, and a Black of the last century, the application of the sciences with which their names are associated would not have been capable of being so easily applied to the ends of general utility in this present age. It is equally true that for the freedom from theological intolerance which we possess to-day, we are indebted to the persistent and fearless advocacy of the Free-thought pioneers of past ages, as well as to the efforts of Freethinkers of more recent times.

We are aware that many of the most able thinkers entertain different views from ours as to the cause of human progress, but the question is, Whose views are supported by historical facts and by general experience? If the sources of civilization are contained in the New Testament, how is it that at the time when its teachings were observed, more than at any other period, civilization was comparatively unknown? It is only within the present century, when scepticism and reliance on mundane resources have been and still are so prevalent, that real progress to any great extent has been accomplished. Moreover, we know too well that two of the principal civilizing agencies—science and general knowledge—have been bitterly opposed and continually retarded by those very persons who professed to be the exemplars of Christ's teachings. When the facts of modern science were first proclaimed, they were denounced as untrue by Christians who for centuries constantly condemned them as being antagonistic to the welfare of the people. New truths that were demonstrated by early scientists were regarded by believers in Christianity as instances of the insanity of the discoverers, and every fossil wonder disclosed was referred by Christians to the limited explanation of the Noachian deluge. Finding threats and intimidation failed to

check the advance of truth, persecution and imprisonment were the weapons used by Christian hands towards those who investigated the laws of nature, and who sought to make such laws known to their fellow creatures. Dr. Ferguson, in his work, "The Penalties of Greatness," acknowledges that the Roman Catholic Church was the first to extinguish the light of reason. But truth existed in spite of the deadly agencies which surrounded it. Not only did this Christian Church employ means to prevent the least difference of opinion on religious subjects, by the invention of the most finished instruments of torture, but science itself became the object of burning jealousy and persecution, and men were made to deny the very laws of nature.

Dr. Dick, in his work, the "Philosophy of Religion," shows that the Protestant Church exhibited a similar spirit of persecution. The same may be said of Christians in their more recent treatment of such men as Lyell, Darwin, Huxley, and Tyndall. Dr. White's "Warfare of Science" contains innumerable facts showing how scientific men have been denounced by Protestants and charged with promulgating theories that were said to be injurious to the welfare of mankind. And yet the very knowledge that these men endeavored to impart is now admitted to be among the most potent factors in sustaining and improving our civilization. For as Buckle observes, "Real knowledge, the knowledge on which all civilization is based, solely consists in an acquaintance with the relations which things and ideas bear to each other and to themselves; in other words in an acquaintance with physical and mental laws."

No one can seriously question the fact that general education has played a most important part in producing and in increasing civilization, yet it has taken the Christian world nearly eighteen hundred years to arrive at the conclusion that it is necessary that the people should have adequate means of instruction at their command. Every step taken towards obtaining a national system of education has been determinedly opposed

by men who were the leading expounders of the Christian faith. And the most resolute opponents of our present public schools are to be found in the Christian ranks. Buckle states that where Christian governments "have not openly forbidden the free dissemination of knowledge, they have done all they could to check it. On all the implements of knowledge and on all the means by which it is diffused, such as papers, books, political journals and the like, they have imposed duties so heavy that they could hardly have done worse, if they had been the sworn advocates of popular ignorance. Indeed, looking at what they have actually accomplished, it may be emphatically said that they have taxed the human mind."

Civilization is not an invention, but a growth; a process from low animal conditions to higher physical, moral, and intellectual attainments. The real value of civilization consists in its being the means whereby the community can enjoy personal comfort and general happiness. Now the elements that have contributed to such a societarian condition, are those that Christianity has not concerned itself with, either as originator or as promoter. The lesson of all history teaches the fact that the progress of a people depends upon their knowledge of, and their obedience to organic and inorganic laws. This great truth has not been sufficiently recognized by the expounders of Christianity. On the contrary, following in this particular the example of their Master, they have urged that man's principal attention should be directed to the alleged supernatural, and to the considerations of a life beyond the grave. The secular affairs of existence have been deemed, by the consistent professors of Christianity, as being of only secondary importance. This disregard of mundane duties is, no doubt, the logical sequence of believing such teachings of the New Testament, as: "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it until life eternal" (John 12: 25). Also, "Everyone that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hun-

dred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life" (Matt. 19 : 29). This is actually offering a premium for neglecting the requirements of this world, and for ignoring the natural promptings of humanity.

In any accurate history of the advancement of the human race, the influence of external forces must be duly considered. The emotions of our nature have doubtless played an active part in civilizing processes, but external conditions have also proved potent factors in all progressive movements. For instance, the geographical position and climate of nations have always had a marvellous effect upon the temperaments and the beliefs of individuals, thus either marring or improving the development of civilization. An observant traveller can readily discern the difference between the temperament of the inhabitants of the Swiss and of the Italian sides of the Alps, or between those who reside on the English and on the French side of the Channel. The Swiss are as solemn as their snow-capped mountains, and the Italians are as lively as the English larks whose songs accompany the dawn of the summer morn. The mental calibre of the French, as a rule, differs in many respects from that of the English ; and a faith that may satisfy an Oriental mind, would probably be found inadequate to meet the requirements of the Western intellect. This is a feature in the process of civilization that Christianity has not taken into account ; for it prescribes the same faith for all nations and for all people, despite the varied climates and the different localities in which they are born and trained. Buckle has shown that man's progress is the result of his physical environment ; for it has been found to be impossible to establish a high civilization in certain countries, and under certain climatic influences. Take, for instance, the people of Asia, and of Africa ; also the Abyssinians. In spite of all the efforts of Christian missionaries civilization in those countries is at its lowest ebb. As a writer aptly remarks: " If it were the Church that created civilization, then we should see similar results in different latitudes, and among different races. But the facts

are opposed to this claim. Wherever there is a high civilization, there is a good soil and a temperate climate." This fact proves that it is not to Christianity that we owe civilization, but rather that it depends for its manifestations upon the healthy conditions of society and its surroundings.

Briefly summarized, it appears to us that the principal causes of modern civilization are : The development of the intellect, this rules the world to-day ; the expansion of mechanical genius, this provides for the increased needs of the people ; the extension of national commerce, this causes an inter-change of ideas ; the invention of printing, this provides for the circulation of newly-discovered facts ; the beneficial influence of climate, this affects the condition both of body and mind ; the knowledge and the application of science, these reveal the value and the power of natural resources ; the spread of scepticism, this provides for the vindication of the right of mental freedom ; the practical recognition of political justice, this forms the basis of all just governments ; and finally, the establishment of the social equality of women with men, this secures the emancipation of women from that state of domestic servitude and general inferiority in which theology had for centuries kept them. The question here to be considered is, are the causes of civilization just named, even indicated in the New Testament? We submit they are not, for if the following injunctions were implicitly obeyed, there would be a complete stagnation of all civilization. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world," "For what is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness and all these things [food, clothes, etc.] shall be added unto you. Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple," "Take no thought for your life," "Resist not evil," "Blessed be ye poor," "Labor not for the meat which perisheth," "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called," "Submit yourself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake," "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers, for there is no

power but of God. . . . Whosoever therefore resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." "Wives submit yourselves to your own husbands," "As the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their husbands in everything," "What therefore God hath joined together let no man put asunder," "Servants be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward," "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth," "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away," "Lend hoping for nothing again," "He that taketh away thy goods ask them not again," "Forgive your brother who who sins "until seventy times seven," "Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that city, shake off the dust of your feet," "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed," "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to the wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . he is proud, knowing nothing. . . . from such withdraw thyself," "Of whom is Hymenæus and Alexander, whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme."

Here are a few passages from the Scriptures, the highest Christian authority, which enjoin conduct that cannot possibly promote civilization, but must necessarily retard it. The teachings herein set forth are, neglect of the world, personal indifference to human needs, non-resistance of wrongs, to regard poverty as a blessing, abject submission to "the powers that be," the subjection of woman, the giving up all for Christ, reckless lending without any conditions for the return of the loan, and the encouragement of a bitter spirit of prosecution. Well may the late John S. Mill exclaim, in his work on Liberty, "That not one Christian in a thousand guides or tests his individual conduct by reference to those [New Testament] laws." The reason why those laws cannot be obeyed in the nineteenth century is because, as Mill further states, the

morality of Christ is, "in many important points incomplete and one-sided, and unless ideas and feelings not sanctioned by it had contributed to the formation of European life and character, human affairs would have been in a worse condition than they now are. Other ethics than any which can be evolved from exclusively Christian sources must exist side by side with Christian ethics to produce the moral regeneration of mankind."

It may be asked by professors of the Christian faith, "If Christianity is so unprogressive in its nature, and so much opposed to a high condition of civilization, as you allege that it is, how is it that the profession of Christianity is so extensive to-day?"

In estimating the position that a system occupies in a community, it is necessary to distinguish between its profession and its practice. It must be evident to the impartial observer, that while the name Christianity is still retained in our midst, its essential principles have become impotent as a factor in daily life. As James Cotter Morison observes in his "Service of Man": "There seems to be no exception to the rule, that the older religions grow, the more infirm do they become, the less hold do they keep on the minds of well-informed and thoughtful men. Their truths, once accepted without question, are gradually doubted, and in the end denied by increasing numbers. . . . All the chief dogmas of the Christian. . . . Creeds have been for several centuries before the world. They were once not only believed, but adored. Now the numbers who doubt or dispute them are increasing every day. Time has not been their friend, but their enemy. . . . Religious truth begins with undoubting acceptance, and after a shorter or longer period of supremacy, with the growth of knowledge and more severe canons of criticism, passes gradually into the category of questioned and disputed theories, ending at last in the class of rejected and exploded errors." The proceedings at recent Congresses and Conferences amply justify the truth of the above statements. At the present time the Churches



are rent by intestine divisions, and assailed on all sides from without by all that is vigorous, intelligent, liberal, free, and progressive in our modern civilization. Christianity stands now as the mythologies of Greece and Rome stood at the period when it arose. The gods were more numerous than ever before, the temples more magnificent, the sacrifices and festivals more splendid, the priesthood more arrogant ; but living faith had deserted them, the intellect of the age despised them, and its loftiest morality condemned them ; therefore, despite their wealth, pomp, and power, they were irrevocably doomed to destruction.

History repeats itself, hence a similar state of the decay that marked the career of the religions of Greece and Rome, has characterized the history of Christianity. The truth of this allegation will be obvious to those who study the variety of stages through which the faith has passed. True the name has been retained, but not the faith the name was once supposed to represent. People in different nations and different ages have accepted the term Christianity, and applied it to a theological and ceremonial system arranged in accordance with their education and their habits. The Christianity introduced into this country by Augustine in the sixth century, was not the Christianity taught in the East. The faith of the Middle Ages was not the faith that is professed in the nineteenth century.

Dean Milman, in his "History of Civilization," observes : "Its (Christianity's) specific character will almost entirely depend upon the character of the people who are its votaries . . . It will darken with the darkness and brighten with the light of each succeeding century." Lord Macaulay says with no less truth than brilliancy : "Christianity conquered Paganism, but Paganism infected Christianity. The rites of the Pantheon passed into her worship, and the subtleties of the Academy into her creed." Francis William Newman, in his "Phases of Faith," also remarks : "I at length saw how untenable is the argument drawn from the inward history of

Christianity in favor of its superhuman origin. In fact, this religion cannot pretend to *self-sustaining power*. Hardly was it started on its course when it began to be polluted by the heathenism and false philosophy around it. With the decline of national genius and civil culture it became more and more debased. So far from being able to uphold the existing morality of the best Pagan teachers, it became barbarized itself, and sank into deep superstition and manifold moral corruption. From ferocious men it learned ferocity. When civil society began to coalesce into order, Christianity also turned for the better, and presently learned to use the wisdom first of Romans, then of Greeks ; such studies opened men's eyes to new apprehensions of the scripture and of its doctrine. By gradual and human means, Europe, like ancient Greece, grew up towards better political institutions and Christianity improved with them."

Thus, according to these authorities, it will be seen that the adherence to Christian theology which was observable in its primitive history is no longer perceptible. The aim and desire of modern reformers are to base morals, politics, and commerce on the principles of utility. Human instincts are found to be too strong, the necessities of life too potent, the exigencies of existence too imperative to allow the standard of two thousand years ago to regulate the actions of to-day. The political world is now conducted on secular principles ; scientific research is unfettered by theology, and is therefore secular ; and the practical ethics of modern society are utilitarianism and are therefore secular. Our civilization is indissolubly connected with these three important facts.

So extensively is the change—produced by the sceptical tendency of the age—progressing that we are continually hearing of some avowal either upon the part of a prelate, a clergyman, or a learned professor, of a new view of the Christian faith, or of a modification of the once popular theology. The nature of the new departure depends, of course, upon the intellectual status and the social position of those, who either

give up altogether the profession of their old beliefs, or who so modify those beliefs that they may be considered more in harmony with the requirements of the age. But a general agreement appears to exist amongst the superior intelligent expounders of Christianity that the ideas that were for centuries entertained as to the character of their faith, and of its sanctions, can no longer be supported in the face of modern criticism. It cannot be doubted that many of the new views that are being promulgated as to what Christianity really is, strike at the very root of the system as it was taught in former times. Still, despite this fact, there is such a manifest desire to retain the name of Christian upon the part of a large section of society, that it may be useful to inquire what the magic influences are that impel so many persons to tenaciously cling to a name that represents no practical principle in the actions that govern the well-being of the community.

It has been frequently urged by orthodox believers, that if all the facts of Christianity could be disposed of, Christian experience would still remain, and that it is this which gives the consolation that no criticism can destroy. Probably this will explain why a large number of persons continue to adhere to the profession of Christianity. It, however, reduces the basis of their faith to the level of fanaticism, for the same reason could be given with equal force in justification of the manifestation of the wildest enthusiasm associated with the worst forms of superstition. It is the old idea that a thing is true because one feels it to be so. This is an assumption that assuredly should find no support from thinking persons, inasmuch as it could be cited to prove the truth of the greatest errors that have ever degraded the human mind. The savage, who worships his idol of wood and stone, derives consolation from his abject prostration. Why should Christian missionaries seek to rob him of his source of supreme comfort? The answer is, because the poor savage is thought to be mistaken in his useless and humiliating devotion. For a similar reason we remind the orthodox professor that the consolation exper-

enced from a faith destitute of any practical value, and which consigns the majority of the human race to everlasting torture is unworthy of man, and would be a disgrace to any God. Besides, the probability that such consolation is based on fiction is not very complimentary to the power of truth. The lesson of experience is, that it is more serviceable to the world to revere what is true than to sacrifice the general results of reality for the selfish satisfaction of personal consolation.

It is, however, impossible to argue profitably with people who do not use their mental faculties, and hence the greatest delusions that take possession of the human mind often remain unchecked and irremovable. On the other hand, when the intellect is brought into play, the result is the growth of new ideas. The attempts made by any of the clergy to explain away the objectionable features of certain doctrines are prompted, possibly, by their desire to retain their position in the Church, which is their only means of obtaining the necessaries of life. Those who have qualified themselves only for the theological profession know the difficulties that beset them when doubts enter their minds as to the truth of the creeds they profess. They may preach "Blessed be ye poor," but personally they dread poverty, and they do their best to avoid sharing its "blessings." They may advise their congregations, in the words of Jesus, to "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink ; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Behold the fowls of the air : for they sow not neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them." So far, however, as the clergy themselves are concerned, they find it necessary to be at times exceedingly anxious for the morrow, and, rather than having faith that their "heavenly Father" will feed and clothe them, their concern is how to get cash to purchase food, drink, and clothes. It is not surprising, therefore, that clergymen and ministers with more than "a living wage" hesitate to give up the name by which they live. A change would perhaps mean ruin, and self-preservation is the first law of nature even among

clericals, where personal and family interests are concerned. Besides, every man has not the courage to sever his connections with old institutions, old friends, and the comforts of life. Thus a second reason is discovered why many persons remain professors of Christianity. They see no chance of providing for their daily bread outside of the Christian body, and consequently they prefer to bear the ills they have—in clinging to an empty name—than fly to others they know not of.

In some cases men remain Christians in name because they persuade themselves that they can harmonize their new departure with modern discoveries. It has been so with astronomy and geology. At first these sciences were denounced as being heretical, now they are accepted as agreeing with Christian teachings. It was the same with that terribly destructive agent Evolution, which to theology meant revolution. The only way a man could remain in the Christian ranks, and agree with Darwin's theory, was to contend that it agreed with the Bible, and, as a sort of final indication of friendship for the distinguished sceptic, they buried him in Westminster Abbey. It is remarkable how easy some people find it to rest under false convictions, particularly when such convictions are backed by pecuniary gain and found to be in accordance with fashionable opinions. Then people become like Goldsmith's vicar in his "Deserted Village,"

" Remote from towns he ran his godly race,  
Nor e'er had changed, nor wished to change his place "

The tendency at the present time within the Churches is to raise new theological ghosts as fast as the old ones are laid. We are now face to face with a fresh enemy to the long cherished notions of the Christian profession. It is a movement that commenced years ago outside the pulpit, and it bears the high and dignified name of "The Higher Criticism." Looking at the results already achieved by this destructive criticism, the question again arises, Why do men remain professors of Christianity? The answers that we have already given explain why some of the clergy continue in the fold, but what are the

reasons that so many of the laity linger therein? The reply is in the first place because they are too intellectually indolent, and they find it more convenient to accept things as they are than to examine and study the value or otherwise of what they are asked to believe. If we look at the attendance at an ordinary church or chapel, who do we discover occupying the pews? Mostly women and children, who do not concern themselves about criticism, either higher or lower. In fact the indifferent section of believers constitute the large majority of professors of Christianity. Such persons never doubt and never inquire. Changes of opinion are the result of causes that seldom affect the intellectually lazy. With them it is not a question of mental honesty, but a case of inactivity of mind, which results in a deep slumber, that only ignorance induces. To excite the general mass of mankind to any perceptible degree of serious thought, a volcanic eruption in the intellectual world would be required. So long as persons are contented to "shut their eyes and open their mouths," or while they are too idle to use their faculties in thinking for themselves, they will probably remain Christians in name. Orthodox folks are too prone to rely upon others as to what they shall believe; it saves a degree of mental exercise for which the many have but little taste or inclination. This seems to account for the persistence of belief in all ages and in all countries, whether Christian or not. Hence millions of our fellow-mortals remain in the faith and follow the customs of their fathers, having no desire for, or conception of change. In all the great religious communities of the world we find that men adopt a faith; it is not really a belief at all, for the road to intelligent belief is through the portals of doubt and investigation, in the absence of which true belief is not formed.

As a further illustration that indifference is a prominent cause of the name of Christianity being perpetuated, we may mention the case of shopkeepers and commercial men, whose indifference is intensified by self-interest. They attend church either to please their customers or to gain some relief from

the anxieties pertaining to their weekly labors. They listen to the sermons, but they pay little or no heed to what they hear. It is the fashion to attend "a place of worship," and they consider that their business success depends upon their going with the multitude, at least outwardly. The clergyman or minister is too shrewd to talk to such persons about the grave discussions going on in popular reviews, or new books of heretical tendency. And if the preacher does allude to the subject, it is for the purpose of showing that if his hearers have heard that anything has gone wrong with the faith or the Church, they need not be alarmed, it is only the spite of "infidelity," and he will see to the matter and put all things right. Supposing the educated, reading young men of his congregation express any doubts, the minister may deliver a course of sermons, not allowing any discussion, in which he boldly asserts that the Bible and the Church still rest on an impregnable rock, against which many sceptics have been dashed to pieces in trying to blast it with "infidel" powder. He concludes by urging that the faith of Jesus has its hold upon the human heart, satisfying all its desires and longings, and that to yield up this faith would be followed by consequences appalling to contemplate. These appeals to ignorance and uncontrolled emotion succeed, for a time, in suppressing doubt, stopping inquiry, and securing a profession of a faith in the acceptance of which reason and investigation have had no part.

In addition to those who remain professing Christians from interested motives, from aversion to change, or through inheriting the belief of their parents, there are others who have what they term "intelligent convictions" of the truth of the faith they avow. They believe in Jesus as an historical character, whose life is truly recorded in the gospels. Conflicting texts may be found in the scriptures, doubts may be expressed by Bible critics as to the genuineness of the gospels, it may be found difficult to explain many events described in the New Testament. Nevertheless, the professors of Christianity from

"conviction" accept the declaration that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Believers of this class are easily made professors of Christianity, and are as easily kept so, for they feel sure that their belief secures for them safety in "the world to come." The doctrine of rewards and punishments has always been a powerful factor in the promulgation of the orthodox faith. The Devil has been the clergyman's best friend, and now that it is acknowledged that the belief in the existence of such a being was a delusion, and that hell was a fiction, Christianity is losing its former influence over the human mind—the faith has to be reconstructed to suit requirements of this sceptical age. Of course those who believe "in Christ and him crucified," have only an ideal founded upon an imaginary Christ. They ignore the elementary facts of nature, for in the constitution of man and of nature in general there is going on a perpetual struggle for existence, which does not harmonize with the alleged love of God for the world. It may be said that the existence of so much suffering and misery in the world is a mystery, but if this is so, it does not dispose of the fact that such drawbacks to man's happiness are here, and no God of love is apparently disposed to remove them. Besides, it is difficult to believe that "God so loved the world," that he sent his son to be tortured on the cross to achieve a purpose which God, if he were all-powerful, could have accomplished without this exhibition of cruelty and injustice. Those persons who remain Christians because of their desire to believe that Christ was really their crucified Savior, can never fully recognize the horrible nature of "the agony and bloody sweat," the sufferings endured by the man of sorrow and grief, and the sadness experienced by him when abandoned by his God at the hour of death. They also ignore, in the person of Christ, the scientific fact that death is the termination of life, for he is supposed to have performed more wonderful things after his death than he did before.



Briefly stated, it may be said that the thoughtless multitude adhere to the profession of Christianity because they are either too indifferent to oppose it, or they cling to the belief through fear of punishment hereafter ; or still further, they adhere to the old faith in consequence of their inability to understand what is to replace the orthodox belief. Among persons of intellectual ability there are two considerations that principally induce them to favour the continuation of the profession of the Christian name. They suppose that it is to their interest to be thought in accord with the fashionable belief of the day, and they are impressed with the idea that the masses are kept in check by believing that the doctrine of hell-fire is a true one. Thus the profession of Christianity is perpetuated through mental laziness, lack of intellectual capacity, consideration of self-interest, or through the notion that fear, even if based on fiction, is necessary to keep the uninformed in order and subjection. While the triumphs of political and scientific inquiry, in dismissing from men's minds despotic and erroneous views, have been numerous, theology is still making desperate struggles to cling to its old positions. It will require, probably, more than one generation of educated persons to eliminate from the human mind the ideas that cause men and women to remain professors of Christianity. Although we may believe, with Shelley, that the evil faith will not last for ever, it dies hard nevertheless. In the persistent warfare with this evil, supported as it has been by so many varying interests, many brave reformers have exhausted their energies, while other toilers have had to give up the battle. The magnitude of the undertaking to reform the religious world reminds us of Butler's lines :—

Reforming schemes are none of mine,  
To mend the world's vast design ;  
Like little men in a little boat,  
Trying to pull to them the ship afloat.