

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

SECULARISM
AND
THEOSOPHY

A Rejoinder to Mrs. Besant's pamphlet

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SECULARISM AND THEOSOPHY.

A REJOINDER TO MRS. BESANT'S PAMPHLET.

MRS. BESANT has at length discovered that she owes a duty to the Secular party, and to all the persons she has for many years been helping to mislead. The obligation does not seem to have occurred to her until I pointedly urged it in my pamphlet on *Mrs. Besant's Theosophy*. But better late than never. Her recantation and her fresh programme, minus some discreet omissions, are placed before her old friends and followers, and I now submit them to a fuller examination.

I must first, however, clear away some personal matters. Mrs. Besant apparently pleads that her delay in addressing the Secular party was necessitated. "I had no paper," she says, "in which I could give my reasons for becoming a Theosophist." True, but not the whole truth. I cannot believe Mr. Bradlaugh would have denied her space in the *National Reformer*; I am certain I would not have denied her space in the *Freethinker*. Even if the Freethought papers were closed to her, there was still the alternative of a pamphlet, and that she has now adopted.

Mrs. Besant complains that she has been misrepresented. I do not admit it; but who was at fault if it be true? I took what she *had* written, and I could not know what she had *not* written. She has only herself to blame for any misunderstanding.

Curiously enough, she has only detected one "misrepresentation" in my pamphlet, and that is no misrepresentation at all, as I shall show presently. The other "misrepresentations" are discovered in the *Freethinker*. I am rebuked for quoting a portion of a

review of my pamphlet in the *Medium and Daybreak*. The fact is, I had not seen the paper itself, which was not forwarded, but only the extracts I used, which were copied and sent me by a friend. Mrs. Besant quotes "the context," but she only quotes as much as serves her purpose. She indulges in the withering but hackneyed remark that "comment is needless." I agree with her. The matter is of infinitesimal importance. It is a speck of dust in comparison with such a mistake, for instance, as the one about Krishna and Christ in her *Roots of Christianity*; a mistake which has been pointed out to her again and again, but which I am not aware that she has taken the slightest pains to correct, although it is a serious damage to the Freethought cause in controversy with the agents of the Christian Evidence Society.

Another point is not worth the space it occupies. It was stated in the *Freethinker*, on the authority of a Theosophist, that Mde. Blavatsky was going abroad for a holiday, and would confide the presidency of the Society to Mrs. Besant. Now Mde. Blavatsky is "the centre" of the movement in England, as Mrs. Besant wrote in the *Star*, but she is not the "president." Theosophically the distinction is immense. The *Freethinker* clearly circulated false news. I plead guilty. I put on sackcloth. I humble myself in the dust. I am oppressed by the enormity of my crime. But if every editor as guilty joined me, what a company we should be.

It is a pity Mrs. Besant is so lacking in humor. She seems to think her old colleagues are in a conspiracy to insult her. She complains of "rebuks," of "reproach," of "bigotry." She apostrophises Truth, and declares she will follow her "into the wilderness." She even writes an epitaph for her martyr's tomb. All this shows she is very much in earnest, but is it pertinent, is it sensible? Does criticism become persecution when Mrs. Besant is its object? Is no one to tell her that her new opinions are false? Is no one to point out their incompatibility with Secularism? Is she to be treated as the spoilt child of Freethought? Must we applaud her passionate appeals to Truth and

never let her hear a little? I protest that when anyone gets into this frame of mind a *douche* of plain speaking is the only proper remedy. Theosophy is not above criticism, neither is Mrs. Besant. She is free to change her views as often as she pleases. She may turn Roman Catholic if she likes. Freethinkers will respect her motives and admire her eloquence. But they will retain their right to criticise *her* religion as they would any other, and to define where and how it clashes with Secularism.

When Mrs. Besant says that I write "with exceeding bitterness," I can only reply that I am not conscious of doing so. I spoke of her as "a brave as well as a good woman." I said I "admired Mrs. Besant's eloquence and abilities, and still more her generous and enthusiastic character." Is this "exceeding bitterness"? My criticism is called the "recent attack on me." There is the secret. Mrs. Besant has been humored and flattered so long that criticism is an "attack."

Still more absurd is the complaint that I "warn her off the platform." "I will cherish a hope," I said, "that a lady so gifted, so eloquent, so devoted, and so brave, may some day see that Theosophy itself is *Maya*, or illusion, and return to the sound and bracing philosophy that once guided and inspired her." This is not warning her off the platform, but hoping she will return to the platform she has virtually left.

I certainly did complain of Mrs. Besant's having used the Freethought platform "in an unjustifiable manner" to propagate Socialism. I also remarked—but this is judiciously avoided—that "she advocated Socialism in Secular halls, but not Secularism in Socialist meeting-places." Hundreds of Freethinkers said the same thing, but it did not reach Mrs. Besant's ears. Well, it should, and it has. I fear she will never forgive me for telling her, but truth is higher than politeness, and I risk the consequences.

Mrs. Besant says that "in my younger and broader days" I lectured from the Freethought platform on various subjects. She is mistaken. Let us take the Hall of Science in London. Sunday evening lectures are delivered there by the leaders of our party. That

is the Freethought platform. I have always recognised it and acted accordingly. There are also Sunday morning lectures during a few of the winter months. That is *not* the Freethought platform. It is merely an adjunct. Besides, the character of those lectures was decided by Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant. All I had to do was to acquiesce. At any rate, the Secular party was not committed to any views expressed on those occasions; nor could it be, for one Sunday Mr. Bradlaugh was lecturing *against* Socialism, and the next Mrs. Besant was lecturing *for* it. But Mrs. Besant was not satisfied with that. She took to lecturing in the evening, and used the Freethought platform for a foreign purpose. I do not expect her to agree with me, but I say it was wrong. Her being a Socialist did not conflict with her being a Secularist, but there is a time and a place for everything, and a party organised for *one* object will split up if it deals with twenty. As a Freethinker, belonging to a party which teaches the supreme value of liberty, I might (I apprehend) speak from the platform against *compulsory* vaccination. But the separate question of the medical character of vaccination is an open one. Freethinkers may and do differ upon it, and what right have I, or what right has anyone, to use a platform maintained by all for the regular advocacy of sectional views? I might use my position and my popularity, such as they are, to carry my own way, as far as the party would stand it; but in doing so I should be a traitor to the cause, I should be setting myself above its welfare and its traditions.

Again and again I have declined, as a special lecturer of the National Secular Society, to speak against Socialism. Some of our members were Socialists, and I was bound to refrain from attacking their opinions on our common platform. I have tried to carry out the same policy in the *Freethinker*. It is a just and a wise policy, and Mrs. Besant was thinking more of Socialism than of Secularism when she violated it so flagrantly.

Mrs. Besant's position is untenable. She claims the right of "using the platform for lecturing on any sub-

ject that seems to me to be useful." What, on *any* subject? Crinolines, tall hats, and French pastry? Clearly *any* is too sweeping. Suppose Mrs. Besant turned a Roman Catholic, or a Lutheran, or a Wesleyan, or a Salvationist, would she still claim the right of airing her views on the Freethought platform? Again *any* is too sweeping. There are necessary limitations, and Mrs. Besant has not troubled to ascertain them. Let me tell her what I believe her right is on the Freethought platform. It is not a right to lecture on any subject *she* thinks useful, but a right to lecture on any subject *the party* thinks useful. To this complexion she must come at last.

Meanwhile Mrs. Besant forces upon me an unpleasant duty. She will have no compromise, and no accommodation, until the Secular party is stung into taking action on the matter. She is going round the country preaching Theosophy from our platform. Very well, I shall go round and oppose it. I will spare it no more than any other superstition. And she has no reason to complain. She will do her duty, and I will do mine. When the party decides, I will submit or retire. That it *must* decide I have no doubt. Foreign matter will sometimes enter an organism, but the organism tries to expel it, and if strong enough it succeeds. I am sure Freethought is strong enough, and I believe this controversy will help to accentuate its principles and define its policy.

Let me also tell Mrs. Besant why I said she might "lead Freethinkers astray." She protests that Freethinkers are "competent to form their own judgment, not mere sheep, to be led one way or the other." Borrowing her own expression, I call this clap-trap. Judgments are formed by hearing *both* sides. That is one reason for my interference. Then there are Freethinkers *and* Freethinkers. The best of us are human, and many excellent persons have followed a trusted leader into new paths, out of sheer love and admiration. When Mrs. Besant was so annoyed with Mr. Ball's pamphlet on her Socialism, when she denounced it in the *National Reformer* as insulting, declining to answer it on the ground of its scurrility, and refusing

her old contributor a word of explanation—I met with one Freethinker whom she *did* lead astray. He said he was sorry to hear that Mr. Ball had grossly insulted Mrs. Besant, and on being asked if he had read the pamphlet, replied “Certainly not, I shouldn’t think of doing so.” Here and there, then, a Freethinker *is* a sheep, in certain moods; and it is well to protect these weaker brethren against their own frailties.

Now for the single “misrepresentation” in my pamphlet. I spoke of Mrs. Besant’s belief in the “transmigration of souls.” Upon this she remarks: “I can but suppose that he is moved rather by a desire to discredit me than by a desire for truth”—and this from a lady who is herself so sensitive to criticism! Was there no alternative but a dishonorable motive on my part? Mrs. Besant had not fully explained herself; I took what she offered, and paid her the compliment of supposing she was logical. She believed in reincarnation, and I thought she accepted its consequences, like the Brahmins and Buddhists, like the ancient Egyptians, and indeed like every other people among whom the doctrine has prevailed. If there is ascent, there is also descent; if those who purify themselves are reincarnated in higher forms, those who degrade themselves are reincarnated in lower forms. Such is the philosophy of reincarnation in ancient and modern faiths. But Mrs. Besant does not “believe in the transmigration of souls, or that the human Ego can enter a lower animal.” I accept the correction. I was ignorant of what Mrs. Besant had not informed me. I had not—and I said I had not—made a minute study of the expensive publications of the Theosophical Society. I now learn that this mushroom school, this plagiarist of the great oriental faiths, sacrifices logic to agreeableness, and puts a Western brand on its stolen property from the East.

Mrs. Besant goes a great deal too far, however, in speaking of “an absurd statement” in the *Freethinker* “about the souls of ill-behaving Hindu wives passing into various animals,” as she is guilty of gross misrepresentation in calling it “a caricature of Theosophy.”

Theosophy was not so much as mentioned. Here is the whole paragraph.

“Mrs. Besant goes in for the transmigration of souls. But this doctrine is as useful to priests as the doctrine of heaven and hell. Bombay girls have been taught in the Government school that in the next life a wife who is cross with her husband will become a village dog; the woman who eats sweetmeats without sharing them with her husband’s relatives will become a musk-rat living in filth. On the whole we think hell is slightly preferable.”*

Calling this “absurd” does not dispose of it. It is a fact. Surely Mrs. Besant is not ignorant that this kind of thing is taught in the Hindu scriptures. I will give her chapter and verse if she disputes it.

We will now take Mrs. Besant’s reasons for leaving Atheism and Materialism; then we will hear what she says about Theosophy; and finally we will see if her new teaching is compatible with Secularism.

Mrs. Besant says she was satisfied with Atheism on the negative side, but not on the positive side, for it did not explain Life and Mind. But is Atheism called upon to do so? The origin of life is a question for biologists. Should it never be cleared up our ignorance will not prove there is a God. Nor is an Atheist compelled to be a material Monist. The late Professor Clifford inclined to believe in matter-stuff and mind-stuff (not *spirit* stuff, which was *all* stuff), and he was a thorough-going Atheist. But, waiving this, I will ask Mrs. Besant a question. Why did she keep her dissatisfaction with Atheism, on the positive side, so carefully to herself? I have looked through some of her pamphlets without finding a hint in that direction. I have spoken to friends who have frequently heard her lecture (a pleasure necessarily denied to me), and not one of them suspected the dissatisfaction she now proclaims. To say the least, it is very unfortunate.

Atheism is now left for Pantheism, which I need not attempt to argue against, no defence of it being made. Mrs. Besant plainly says that her new “theory of the Universe” is taken “on the authority of certain

* *Freethinker*, July 28, 1889, p. 298.

individuals," the said individuals being the Wise Men of the East, or rather their intermediaries like Mde. Blavatsky. "God is all and all is God." This is the new shibboleth. But Mrs. Besant is anxious to break it gently to Atheists, so she tells them she has "no personal God." This is cheating us with phrases. If our Ego is spirit, and comes from the universal spirit-fount, what makes our personality must also make the infinite personality. I know the subtle answers to this, but they make no impression on me. The broad fact remains that non-miraculous men and women cannot talk of God without a conception of personality. The pronoun is always *he* or *she*, and never *it*. There are expressions to satisfy any Theist in Mde. Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled*. She speaks of "the Universal Soul," of "the one living God," and of "the FATHER SPIRIT." So true it is that God must necessarily be a magnified man.

With respect to Materialism, Mrs. Besant did more than conceal her dissatisfaction. Only last year she spoke of her individuality as a combination, and said "if the combination is destroyed I am destroyed." She ridiculed the notion that "the forces of the soul, love, memory, thought, could not perish with the bodily dissolution, but must continue to exist somewhere." She laughed at Canon Liddon for talking of "a disembodied spirit."* If this is the language of doubt, or even of suspense, I am very much deceived. It seems to me the language of absolute conviction.

I have already, in my previous pamphlet, given my opinion that the "causal link" Mrs. Besant was privately in search of is a mental figment. I deny that Cause and Effect are external realities; I assert that they are subjective conceptions. There is no solution of continuity in nature. We isolate phenomena in thought for convenience, just as in the definition of a line we isolate the idea of length. And as Cause and Effect are subjective, the "nexus" is also subjective, which is precisely what I have affirmed.

Whoever asks for the *Why* of nature is simply asking

* *National Reformer*, April 8, 1888.

for an anthropomorphic explanation. The question "Why should it be so?" is answered by the question "Why should it *not* be so?" The solid fact remains that *it is so*. We can learn the *How* of nature, and the statement that there is anything else to learn is a sheer assumption.

Oxygen and hydrogen exist together as free gases in mechanical mixture. They are precipitated by electricity into water. The two gases are now in chemical combination, and we have a visible and palpable fluid. A great change has taken place, but the process is explained. Science is satisfied. But Mrs. Besant is not. Besides the oxygen, hydrogen, and electricity, she wants a fourth thing that made the other three coöperate. That is, she is in the same position as the metaphysicians who were satirised by Swift in his "meat-roasting power of the meat-jack."

Passing along the line of evolution we come to combinations of increasing complexity, but all built up from the same matter. No new substance is introduced. The inorganic gradually becomes organic, differentiation follows differentiation, the law of continuity is never broken, and finally we come to man. If we study man separately he is unintelligible. He must be studied in connexion with other living forms. His nature is involved in his history, and his destiny in his origin.

Man did not spring into existence as Minerva leapt full-armed from the brain of Jove. He is the last of a long line of ascending forms. All his faculties are incipient, and some of them well developed, in lower animals. Whatever difficulty there may be in explaining *why* he thinks, must also be found in explaining why animals think.

Mrs. Besant follows nerve vibrations till she comes to a thought, and says "Here is something fresh." She means, I presume, that there is a psychical and a physical aspect of the complete process. What is objectively a nerve vibration is subjectively a sensation or a thought. That the two aspects are correlated is indisputable.

Now it is asserted that besides the body there is a spirit. Mrs. Besant says that "Body and Mind, how-

ever closely intermingled, are twain, not one." But she does not explain the absolute co-operation of two dissimilar entities. If the body cannot think how can the mind act? Why is it that mental and moral phenomena *appear* so dependent on nervous activity? Leibniz was driven to the colossal joke of pre-established harmony. God arranged the bodily and spiritual phenomena at the outset, so that they should always go together without any real relation, like two different clocks keeping exactly the same time!

Observe the extremities to which spiritualists are reduced. Every theory must show a true cause: that is, a cause which is not invented for the occasion, but is capable of being demonstrated independently. Now the spiritualist is asked to establish his cause. He says it works through the body, and he is desired to show that it exists and operates elsewhere. The usual answer is, "Wait till you are dead." But a number of level-headed people reply, "Well, if I must die before I can learn, I won't trouble myself about it till I am dead." Then another answer is made. The spiritists say, "The spirit does manifest itself apart from the body in this world." Thus we have "materialised spirit forms" in Spiritism, and "astral appearances" in Theosophy. Mrs. Besant is driven by an inevitable logic to declare that body and spirit "are not only separable at death, but may be temporarily separated during life, the intellectual part of man leaving the body and its attached principles, and appearing apart from them." This belief was once almost universal, but it dies away in the progress of civilisation. Up to a certain point it is consistent with legal sanity; beyond that point it leads straight to the asylum.

Mrs. Besant presses hypnotism into her service, but I confess I see nothing in it to support her theory. Double consciousness and other abnormal processes are being carefully studied, and sensible persons will wait for the scientific explanation. It is simply idle to base far-fetched theories on our temporary ignorance.

I pass lightly over the calculating boy. He does not upset *my* philosophy. As for the ignorant servant

girl who "talks Hebrew in her sleep," I suspect she is the person I read of in Coleridge, who picked up Hebrew sounds unconsciously in the service of a learned parson. Shakespeare understood this well enough, and made Ophelia sing a questionable song in her madness, which she might have heard from the lips of a loose-minded nurse.

Let me remind Mrs. Besant that Theosophy is not Pantheism or Idealism. What she has to defend is its *speciality*—the doctrines that differentiate it from other systems. On these points, however, she condescends to say very little.

She gives us the sevenfold division of man—Atma, Buddhi, Manas, Kamarupa, Prana, Linga Sharira, and Rupa. I was not conscious of all that cargo. I suspect I should laugh if it were not for the imposing terminology. At any rate it is hardly worth discussing. Nor, indeed, *can* it be discussed. No evidence is offered; the category is accepted from the Wise Men of the East.

Only one proof is offered of re-incarnation. We are told that Hofmann, the infant prodigy of music, acquired his faculties and knowledge in a previous existence. But why Hofmann? Mozart was a far greater prodigy. Both of them were the offspring of professional musicians, and the law of heredity is a sufficient explanation. It would be more to the purpose if Hofmann had been born among the Hottentots.

Mrs. Besant forgets her own principles, or she would see that the Hofmann's case is not explained by re-incarnation. Waiving the fact that faculty is not acquired individually, I inquire of the Theosophists how long a period of Devachan intervenes between successive incarnations. Mr. Sinnett says it may be "thousands of years,"* while 1,500 years is the very lowest estimate.† Mde. Blavatsky says "many centuries." Now if Hofmann's previous incarnation was only "many centuries" ago, how did he acquire a musical knowledge which was then impossible? Harmonic music is little more than three centuries old.

* Theosophical Tracts, No. 4, p. 5. † *Esoteric Buddhism*, p. 120.

Reincarnation is supported by no evidence, and is therefore a superstition. Karma, being based upon it, shares the same fate. Mrs. Besant asks me if I believe in ethical causation. Of course I do—in this life. Secularism has always taught that doctrine, and has nothing to learn from Theosophy.

It appears to me that Mrs. Besant has dropped Secularism out of her mind altogether; otherwise she would scarcely ask us to concede that Theosophy is not a "superstition" because it has been granted a Charter of Incorporation at St. Louis, in America. Christianity has a very big Charter of Incorporation in England in the form of a State Church. On the other hand, Secularism is outlawed, being incapable of holding property or receiving bequests. Surely the Secularist will look grimly at this Theosophical passport of respectability. I fancy, too, he will look no less grimly at "the broad platform" offered him, which is to hold "Atheist and Theist, Christian and Hindu, Mohammedan and Secularist." What a happy family! The only broad platform on which all men may stand is the platform of *humanity*.

With respect to the Mahatmas, or Masters, or Wise Men of the East, Mrs. Besant informs us that she knows nothing of them personally. She "believes in the existence of these teachers on second-hand evidence." These Great Souls do not appear to utter any surprising wisdom. The specimens I have seen are seldom worth the paper they are printed on. Their "abnormal powers" are displayed in performances that are common among Spiritualists and conjurers. For my part, I am prejudiced against a Gospel which is heralded by travelling cigarettes, broken-mended saucers, and letters dropping from the ceiling. I protest that in comparison with the stories told of the Adepts the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is a respectable superstition.

This leads me to Mde. Blavatsky and her credentials. Mrs. Besant accuses me of circulating "malignant libels" on this wonderful woman, and I am asked what I should think if Mrs. Besant "soiled her pages with a repetition of the stories told against me by the

lecturers of the Christian Evidence Society." But I fail to see the analogy. If I were a thief, it would not prove that Jonah was swallowed by a whale; if I were an adulterer, it would not prove the Incarnation; if I were a murderer, it would not prove the Resurrection. But if Mde. Blavatsky's authority is offered for incredible occurrences, what is one to do but see if the lady's *bonâ fides* will bear investigation? I discovered that Mde. Blavatsky had been openly accused of deception; I looked into the evidence; and I satisfied myself that a very black *prima facie* case was made out against her. The charges were printed by responsible persons after careful and minute investigation. Besides the terrible exposure of the Coulomb letters, the letters of Koot Hoomi, a great Mahatma in Thibet, are declared by experts to be in Mde. Blavatsky's handwriting, and it is shown that Koot Hoomi made the same mistakes in spelling as Mde. Blavatsky, fell into her foreign idioms in writing English, and reproduced her very tricks of style. To call this a "malignant libel" is no answer. I say it is preposterous to accept extravagant statements on the bare authority of a lady who lies under such grave suspicion of imposture.

Mrs. Besant is discreetly silent about the grotesque science of Mde. Blavatsky in her *Secret Doctrine*, and her extravagant credulity in *Isis Unveiled*. It would not do to press these absurdities on the attention of Freethinkers. Nor does Mrs. Besant notice the curious mistakes of Koot Hoomi, some of which, with their attempted explanations, are enough to wrinkle the face of an omnibus horse with laughter.

I now come to the question of celibacy. Mrs. Besant seeks to minimise the effect of this doctrine. This is a policy I shall at once expose. Unfortunately for Mrs. Besant, her Theosophical mistress has spoken too plainly about "the path." It appears that a *Lanoo* (disciple) must take care to "separate his outer body from all external influence," and "must avoid bodily contact with human as with animal being." He must not "touch even the hand of the nearest and dearest." "Even the love for wife and family," we are told, "the purest as the most unselfish of human affections,

is a barrier to *real* occultism." Mde. Blavatsky insists that "no one can serve his body and the higher Soul, and do his family duty and his universal duty, without depriving either the one or the other of its rights." She adds that "it would be a ceaseless, a maddening struggle for almost any married man, who would pursue *true* practical Occultism." *

Does not this corroborate what I said in my pamphlet? Does it not show that Theosophy, like every sincere form of spiritualism, inevitably leads to a war between the honest claims of "the flesh" and the autocratic claims of "the spirit"?

How far has Mrs. Besant departed from her old teaching on this subject! "Asceticism," she said in her tract on *Secular Morality*, "asceticism, in any shape, is immoral; it decreases the amount of temporal happiness; and whether it please God or no, whether it give a seat in heaven or no, whether it bring happiness in a future life or no, it is equally immoral, it is equally wrong." It requires very little sagacity to see that Theosophy, on this side, is quite incompatible with Secularism.

The only answer Mrs. Besant makes is that everyone need not become celibate. But she cannot deny that celibacy is necessary to the "higher life." It is idle to instance music, and to urge that people who have no vocation for it need not "practise eight hours a day." If music were the essential path to our highest spiritual culture we should be bound to give it our fullest devotion. Besides, there are degrees in music, but none in celibacy. You cannot be *partially* celibate.

Mrs. Besant confesses that "celibacy is one of the smallest of the sacrifices" which the higher Theosophy demands. I am thankful for the admission. It will put Secularists on their guard. Forewarned is forearmed. It is well to know that "the path" leads to endless macerations of "the flesh."

Let me appeal to Freethought mothers to see what Theosophy would mean to them. The doctrine of re-incarnation, for instance, would play havoc at once in

* Theosophical Tracts, No. 7, pp. 5, 6, 14, 15.

the domestic circle. When the mother is crooning to her babe, and watching the reflexion of her smiles on its face, she is under a delusion. The baby is an old stager. It is not her child. It is no relation to her. Their connexion is nothing but a fleshly accident. Once admit this monstrous idea, and celibacy and all the rest of it may be accepted without a shudder.

I will conclude with another passage from the tract on *Secular Morality*. "Our morality," Mrs. Besant said, "is tested only—be it noted—by utility in this life, and in this world; with any other life, with any other world, we have nothing whatever to do." All this is now unsaid, and I am obliged to hold that Mrs. Besant has ceased to be a Secularist. For what is the Secular position with regard to Theism and Immortality? Our position is Agnostic. We neither deny nor affirm. We say there is no knowledge. We take our stand on that. We confine our practical philosophy to *this* life, and admit no motives, sanctions or consolations that relate to another. Mrs. Besant is no longer in this position. I am convinced of it, and I honestly say so. It is not for me to say more—at present. Secularists are not fond of ostracism, and it is unfair to throw unnecessary responsibilities upon us. Mrs. Besant has become a Theosophist, and it is for *her* to determine whether her new ideas are consistent with her old convictions; it is for *her* to decide whether they are in harmony with the accepted principles and traditional policy of our party.