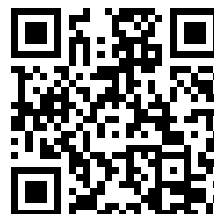


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# LIGHT FOR THE MILLION.

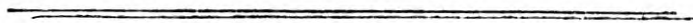


THE

## RELIGION OF GOD

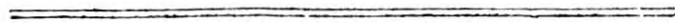
**NOT OF MEN.**

TRACT No. 1—To be followed by several others, for the continuation of the work nobly commenced by the authors of the *Essays and Reviews* and by Dr. Colenso, in his books on the *Pentateuch* and the *Book of Joshua*.



BY TH. BERIGNY, M.D., &c.

[STEREOTYPED EDITION.]



MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA :  
F. F. BALLIERE, 85 COLLINS STREET EAST.

1863.

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CLARSON, SHALARD & CO.  
PRINTERS,  
MELBOURNE AND SYDNEY.

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# INTRODUCTION.

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THE Author intends to bring forth before the British Nation a series of Lectures upon various subjects, and thereby present in their own language, of which he was ignorant when twenty-five years of age, how he has come to the conclusion that, civilization being upon wrong foundations, no reform will be fraught with permanent benefit, unless the primary cause of social evils be eradicated, *i. e.*, Superstition.

He is not of the class of philosophers who acknowledge that the people must have something false to believe when they cannot have the truth: he holds scepticism as the most fertile ground for the cultivation of knowledge, truth, and wisdom, and he believes that evidence has no authority where there is no honest doubt. Popular faith that indolently contemplates itself as Narcissus at the fountain, is the atrophy of men's higher faculties, the baneful virus inoculated into the blood of human childhood; it has been the Harbinger of a gospel of fatality, despair, and offensive exclusiveness, for the defence of which, men have wasted their valuable energies, and carried on destructive wars. Knowledge on the contrary, being the impressions received by substantial, real, and intellectual evidences, will alone restore religious harmony throughout the world.

It will be noticed, he apprehends, that his dictionary of the English idiom is rather limited, and the French phraseology disagreeably prevailing; his object, however, is not to exhibit literary attainments, but to avow fearlessly, his sentiments in a pertinent and significant language, to which he has been driven by public injustice, and the love of truth.

127 COLLINS STREET EAST, MELBOURNE.

*July, 1863.*



# FIRST LECTURE.

(DELIVERED BEFORE THE TRUTH-SEEKERS' FREE DEBATING SOCIETY,  
ON MAY 28, 1863, BY DR. BERIGNY.)

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## GOD;

CONSIDERED. SCIENTIFICALLY, MORALLY, & PHILOSOPHICALLY.

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All weak minds move with the atmosphere of public opinion. Whilst a force of attraction keeps them irresistably at a fixed distance, they will maintain, at all cost, that black is white, and right is wrong, et vice versa.....A good shaking to public opinion from the torpor of religious conservatism, and millions to exclaim, "I thought so."—(My meditations upon Dr. Colenso's refutations.)

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THANKS to the courageous authors of the celebrated essays and reviews, and more recently to an honest Bishop of the Church of England, Dr. Colenso, the subject of religious enquiry is creating great alarms among the votaries of popular "theology," and the ecclesiastical fabric is trembling upon its very foundation. As these noble deserters have met with some encouragement from a philosophical press, it is to be hoped that the credulous mass who supply the bricks and mortar of sectarian edifices will also enquire into the veracity, reability, and authority of the old Jewish records.

Modern Protestantism has in reality less vitality than Catholicism, because deprived of unity, the baleful advantage of that progenitor. Protestantism is as much a mock protestation against popish superstition as Catholicism, since the council of Nice is a mock teaching of Christianity. It is true that Protestantism has gloriously protested against individual infallibility; but since its partial triumph it has protested against the spirit of Christianity with no less hatred than its foe. Protestantism proscribes the very elements that brought it into existence, *i.e.*, enquiry and protest: its only endeavour is to supplant its old enemy, and to fasten another set of chains upon the new converts. In fact, the ipse dixit of a civilized man, called Pope, would give place to the

dead authority of human print, and the cupidity of a set of ambitious men called Cardinals would give place to theological tyranny were Protestantism to be the haughty queen of Christendom, instead of papal supremacy. It is now the mission of philosophy to consider Christianity as a moral reform, and to expose the present old, erroneous systems of "theology," that demoralizes humanity; and the object of this discourse is to commence a strong battle against prejudice and ignorance. I shall seize upon truth whenever found, on Christian or heathen ground. My efforts will be not only to clear the vapours of "theological" darkness, but to cultivate man's religious aspirations by a doctrine of affirmations. To pull down the idol of others is not my ultimate desire, for when the trick of happiness will be lost, the sectarian will do that part of destruction himself, like the unlucky gambler abuses the cards instrumental to his ruin. Religious reconstruction is my aim;—if not attainable, it is nevertheless searchable.

The object of religion is twofold: First,—Inquiry into the knowledge of God and his attributes; secondly,—The highest standard of worship owing to Him by the human family. The first question only will occupy me this evening. Is there a Deity? Who is He? If I were to say to my most pious friends that I do not *believe* in the existence of God, they would cry blasphemy! and stay my speaking, yet my sentiments would be candidly expressed, though, I apprehend, misunderstood; such as if I were to say that I do not believe in the existence of the sun, when its light is so intense that I cannot penetrate it. I say that the existence of God is no matter of belief, but of knowledge, as it is with the knowledge that one and one make two. No one *believes* in a mathematical problem so simple because he knows it. So it is with God: the existence of a universal Ruler, Sustainer, or Providence is answered by the presence of the smallest atom in the creation, as the existence of a manufactured article reveals the existence of the manufacturer; or as the existence of a force pre-supposes the existence of a superior force. I may now say, without giving offence, that I do not believe in the existence of God, since you understand that I know from the evidences of my senses that He is! But Who is He? This is a more difficult question.

God admits of no human definition: He only knows himself; and all speculation upon His divine character will prove to be an incoherent rambling, and terminates by the creation of an ideal being, the reflex and exact likeness of the over-stretched brain in painful labour. The character of God portrayed by Moses or Joshua, compared with the sublime conception of Jesus, differs as much as cruelty from love.

Vindictiveness,\* cruelty,† and wrath§ are the excellencies attributed to Jehovah by war-disposed reformers, as universal love is the attribute of the Deity taught by the peaceful Jesus. It is evident that the two characters of God differ as much as the two personal teachers differ from each other; and so it is with every one of us who has to use the telescope of his own mental organization to catch a faint glimpse at the Deity.

To represent the Deity for our adoration as a jealous,‡ despotie patriarch, is a form of idolatry more pernicious than the veneration of an inert image as a symbol of his personation. Christendom seems to ignore that the idolatry of the Hindoo is not the direct adoration of a wooden idol: their idol is a visible symbol of the universal God. If you accept, instead of this material representation of the Deity, the invisible individuality of God—which Moses proclaimed in the age of force,—whilst worshipping this individuality associated with cruelty, robbery,|| massacre,¶ prostitution,\*\* &c., you manufacture to yourself an invisible idol more mischievous than the dumb symbolic idol. Ram, of the Hindoo, never was alleged to say, through a lifeless representation, “I am a jealous God; I wax hot in my wrath!” §§ The Deity thus misunderstood and represented, has never been believed to commend wholesale murder, nor to suggest slavery.†† The relation of cause to effect explains the present war in America, as the British subjugation of India is the natural consequence of a national religious torpor. At the present time the American war has already cost nearly half a million of lives to the contending parties: go to the remotest cause of this human calamity, and you will find that the invisible individuality of a god of Slavery is associated with it. What was the authority of the primitive English slaveholders who created this shocking institution?—The Bible. What was the argument of divines in favor of the chattel of human beings?—“The sanction of the Bible.” The benevolent and intelligent mind believes that national calamities are traceable to erroneous religious institutions breeding superstitions, as diseases and sufferings are entailed upon the violation of organic laws. When the causes of our evils and vices are discovered, it will be found that

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\* Genesis, ix.; Leviticus, xxxvi.; Numbers, xxi.; Isaiah, xxxiv.; &c.

† Exodus, xix.; xxiv.; &c.

§ Exodus, xxii.

‡ Exodus, xx., xxxiv.

|| Genesis, xxxiv.; Exodus, xxii.

¶ Numbers, iii., xvi., xxv.

\*\* Genesis, xii., xix., xx.

§§ Exodus, xxii.

†† Genesis, xvii., xxxi.; Leviticus, xix., xxii., xxv.



popular "theology," vicious systems of education, and tyrannical institutions are answerable for all the iniquity of society, and not the human heart. This platform is accessible to all benevolent minds who can throw what they believe light upon the causes and cure of evils: whether friends or foes, they will be welcome.

If it is beyond the human power to give a definition of God, it is, I hope, within the capabilities of the human mind to express a conception of God, which, though limited and inadequate, is nevertheless consistent with nature and reason.—Humanity, in spite of sectarian organizations, is advancing in that direction as in every human science; the salaried divines—alone mortgaged to religious conservatism, are left far behind their thinking laity; and religious emancipation comes from out the doors of the Church, as political liberty proceeded once from the ranks of the people, in spite of privileged aristocracy. The man that dares to think for himself will not adhere to all such conceptions of God that emanate from more ignorant men than himself.

The Bible is a faithful revelation, and a living monument that Moses and Joshua were more ignorant of the knowledge of God than the emancipated intellect in the nineteenth century: yet there is perhaps no modern thinker who shines so brilliantly in this luminous age as those great patriarchs did in the dark ages of humanity. They are not to be judged as they appear to us on a more advanced plan, but for the relative merits they possessed, and good reforms they worked. In spite of great imperfections they have probably deserved much from humanity, and were the highest intellect of their time;—they claim their due and no more.

My conception of the great Deity is either scientific, moral, or philosophical, but not "theological"; scientific researches and discoveries reveal a God of stern and unchanging laws, forces, attractions, repulsions, associations, affinities, &c. God is the centre and originator of all forces and changes—the least ripple that disturbs the still waters is originated in the force of forces. To call God nature is not incorrect, but it is a conception of his material aspect only. Essential Atheism cannot exist, for its definition is a conception of universal effects without cause. It is a philosophical reaction against the personation of God, with form and human imperfections. No man has ever denied the existence of a Supreme Force, or Power, though he rejected another definition of God. Atheism would never have been known if ideal idolatry had not usurped our moral and religious government.

Morally considered, God is the embodiment of eternal princi-

ples and wise designs; the attributes of love and universal fatherhood taught by Jesus is the most sublime conception ever arrived at.

Contemplating God as the great fountain of love, we cannot entertain the least doubt that his designs do not tend to the ultimate happiness of all His children. The doctrine of predestination and total depravity can only find credence in those diseased minds which are haunted by gloomy thoughts that lead to the lunatic asylum.

Philosophically considered, God is the infinite intelligence, the focus of infinite wisdom and knowledge,—a most complicated combination of perfections inconceivable to the human animalcula that crawl upon this planet. Philosophically considered, God governs our mind by fixed, stern principles, as he governs the Universe by immutable, eternal laws. The human mind has its wheels and pulleys, as our system has its internal laboratories of digestion, secretion, excretion, &c.

Therefore, to my individual conception, God is not a personal potentate—a King of kings—a judge holding sitting, and attended by aide-de-camps, or angels. Shall I be called an atheist because this conception, essentially material, is as obnoxious to my mind as gross animal substances are refused assimilation by my digestive apparatus? Scientifically considered, I contemplate God as the great mathematician, geometrician and architect of the universes; the great chemist, artist, musician, that inspired genius. Morally considered, I contemplate God as the universal Father whose love is secured to all his families for ever and ever. So impartial I believe him to be that I would not say he loves more the godly man than the criminal on his way to the gallows. Philosophically considered, I contemplate the Deity as the Divine influence—penetrating all the universe, and reaching the centre of the smallest atom.

I never importune God with prayers couched in the form of a demand, solicitation, or favor, &c., as I am fully aware that he knows my requirements better than myself. Where sectarians find the work of their imaginary devil, I discover the voice of God giving me a Divine warning. All mental sorrows are mental transitory disturbances leading to improvements, as volcanic eruptions improve the surface and fertility of the earth. All our social misfortunes and calamities are the lessons of His Holy Gospels; thus rectifying our artificially perverted functions, they constitute the infallible method of His teachings.

There is no such conflict upon the conception of God, viewed very differently by great philosophers, moralists, mathematicians, naturalists, physiologists, chemists, artists, &c., as there is between theologians of various sects. All sciences are engaged in

the search of the laws and principles of God, and whenever there is one discovered, its enunciation constitutes a truth which will harmonize with all previous discoveries. "Theology" will never blend with philosophy, because repulsive to reason, the eyes of the developed understanding, and to nature—the only revelation of God authoritative to men.

Now that we have casually examined the most apparent attributes of God, it remains to determine His most appropriate name in the English language. I object to the word Creator, as being associated with a misconception of the Infinite Being. No mind can comprehend the possibility of creation, either of the primary elements of matter, time, or God himself. Alpha and Omega, and the First Cause, create another riddle that confuses the mind. The Alla of the Mahometan (the Only), is preferable, and also the Hebrew name (meaning The Eternal, or the one before now, and after). But the word God may remain, though so much misused since its origin.

What is God, considered theologically? If it takes a great artist to comprehend another great artist—a Socrates to comprehend a Socrates—a Newton to comprehend a Newton, &c., it will also require **Another God as Omnipresent, as Omniscient, and infinite as the Deity** to comprehend him **Theo-logically**. How can that be? we comprehend the Deity as a Unity incomparable to any other unity. God only can consider himself **Theo-logically** or **God-logically**. Priests have considered him ecclesiastically,—through the opaque mirror that reflected the requirements of selfishness and ambition,—but theologically, never. Their "Theology" is a piece of greater sacrilege than the infallibility of the Pope, or the assumption of absolving sins.—Their "Theology" has represented the world to be under the divided government of Four Deities, viz.:—First, there is the God of Moses, who sanctions war, slavery, human massacre in cool blood, female degradation, incest, polygamy, and all other cruelties and monstrosities which Moses thought indispensable to carry on to succeed in ruling over a barbarous horde. The same Deity is in our day invoked by the richly salaried divine, to protect military ferocious thirst for blood, when a "Christian" nation prepares herself for great human slaughter. Secondly—There is the wicked, gay, joyous, alternately clever and foolish, but hideous and mischievous deity, called The Devil; always setting traps for poor, weak, frail humanity, and frightening grown up children as the hobgoblins do the younger ones. Thirdly—There is a good, divine, merciful Lord, who is his own son and father, in spite of all mathematicians so obstinate as to maintain that two entities can never make one entity. That gracious god is so

good that, in order to reconcile the human family with himself, his own father, he came to be barbarously put to death. Here is an example of reconciliation for fathers (that have sons,) who wish to make peace with an enemy! And fourthly—There is the god Ghost, who never does or did any thing at all. Is it so? Divines, make that a subject for “Theological” subtilities, for which you are salaried.

That assumed “Theology” has been and still is the worst enemy of mankind. Its crimes are beyond computation, and its atrocities pass all human madness;—it is a miserable myth, that will follow the obsequies of its parent, the Devil. As an exemplification of its mental aberrations, I will here give some extracts of its inspirations. The “Theologian” Emmons, an English sermon writer, gives vent to his religious acumen in the following:—“The happiness of the elect in Heaven will consist in witnessing the torments of the damned in hell; and among these it may be their own children, parents, husbands, wives, and friends on earth. One part of the business of the blessed is to celebrate the doctrine of reprobation. While the decree of reprobation is eternally executing on the vessels of wrath, the smoke of their torment will be eternally ascending in view of the vessels of mercy, who, instead of taking the parts of those miserable objects, will say, ‘Amen! Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!’” Who would like to be saved in such blessed company? Certainly not I!

Then follow some orthodox psalms, by a Rev. Dr. Watts:—

There is a never ending Hell,  
And never dying pains,  
Where children must with demons dwell,  
In darkness, fire, and chains.

\* \* \*

Have faith the same with endless shame,  
To all the human race;  
For Hell is crammed with infants damned,  
Without a day of grace!

Such are the “Teachers” of Christ’s doctrine, who once said “Let the little children come to me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven!” That “Theology” has depraved humanity, and called man totally depraved from birth. It has been the hidden, malignant author of all contention and hatred, and asserted that man is surrounded by invisible enemies trying to lead him to perdition. It has ruined man’s highest faculty, reason, and represents him as lost “by the fall.” It has persecuted with cruelty and vengeance the pioneers of human progress, and kept humanity fascinated under the spell of “Divine” wrath. It has looked upon humanity as a rich reef, to be crushed to dust for its own sanctimonious benefit. Thanks

to the martyrs of that Juggernaut, they have only penetrated through the stratum of popular credulity, and our riches will go to its legitimate owners. In all its contentions that "Theology" has exhibited the insensibility of maniacs, and claims holy communion with the great fountain of love. It has———but I must stop, for I do not know what it has not done, except good.

Ah! they say, "Theology is not Christianity." What is Christianity? "**He that believes will be saved; he that disbelieves will be damned.**" Believe what?—the "Truth." Saved from what?—eternal damnation. What is that truth?—my bible, *i.e.*, Theology. Saved from what?—eternal damnation, *i.e.*, Theology. Now that we have gone round the vicious circle, we must present the question in another form: What light do the divine Revelations of Nature bring upon the words ascribed to the messenger of good news? Reason, in doing justice to the Great Teacher, sincerely admits that all his teachings were throughout harmonious with nature's revelations. When he is alleged to say, "**He that believes will be saved,**" &c., His true meaning, evidently falsified by translators, was "**He that believes what is true is saved** from troubles; **he that disbelieves is condemned** to penalties proportionate to the violation." Again he says, "**He that sinneth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven.**" The Holy Ghost is another name for the Heavenly Father, and it will be my endeavour to show that this noble saying is in harmony with nature's revelation of the will of God. No violation against the laws of nature, and the moral laws of our conscience can *possibly* be forgiven, and no one has power to forgive an injury committed against him, however forbearing, lenient, and charitable he may be. What is called forgiveness is the promise not to degrade oneself by retaliation: every transgressor will meet with the adequate punishment that will set the transgressor right, and lead him to reform—which is the reconciliation with nature. But suppose that we disagree upon what is to be believed in order to be saved, is there any quotation to settle the riddle? I say yes; and then it is still consistent with nature's laws, but requiring some scientific explanation out of place at present. Jesus Christ said:—**And these signs shall follow them that believe, &c.....They shall take serpents, and they will not hurt them.....They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.**" Where is the divine or the man who calls me an "infidel," willing to submit his sterling belief to these tests with me? I shall be the first to take up any snake, or to lay on the hands over the sick: the result will speak for itself.

What shall I say is Christianity? Christianity does not exist, and never will, for the glory of Jesus' immortal memory: it is a

fiction to serve ecclesiastical cupidity. God made men to become pure, not artificially altered. From the tenor of Christ's fragmentary language it can be proved that he never intended to preach a particular doctrine upon which to engraft the creeds that smother religion; and this is his great merit. Human doctrines or systems are all founded upon hypotheses the counterfeit of truth; whereas, science is the discovery of immortal laws. Moral cultivation is the research of those principles that develop spiritual aspirations—the department in which Jesus excels, and has found no parallel: **"My doctrine is not mine,"** said He, **"but His that sent me. His doctrine is no mystery: there is nothing covered that shall not be known."** Isaac Newton would as well have said, "The law of attraction is not mine, but of the great manifest God, who has many others for discovery." It would be as absurd to call astronomy after the name of Copernicus, as it is to term from Christ's name the sacred immortal religion which was promulgated by his teaching and example, but not invented. Due veneration for his sublime character ought to make every honest thinker bold enough to face that idolatry that elevates him to the identity of the Almighty, in violation of his own humble remonstrance:—"Why callest thou me good? God is greater than I. There is none good but God!" It is a mystery, will they say? To me their mystery is a palpable revelation of their gross ignorance. We shall try to be his **"Brother,"** by **"Doing the will of his Father,"** as commanded by him, and stand or fall for it.

**"He that believes will be saved."**—This is the boasted salvation anchor of professed christians,—the key to everlasting happiness; and disbelief the way to "perdition." The authority that Jesus said so is that of the apostles, who disagree, as all other honest men might do, in relating mere matters of fact.\*

Can any intelligent man admit that Jesus was so ignorant of the nature of belief as he is alleged to be. Belief is the reflex of an involuntary impression of the mind,—as a bruise is the unavoidable effect of a blow—as sight is subsequent to light. The great teacher might as well be made to say that he that is not blind can see the light of the sun, &c. That anchor of saving belief will avail them as well as the heavy iron apparatus would when a shipwreck is imminent, and the poor infatuated victims rush and cling to it for keeping afloat, instead of depending upon their self efforts of swimming.

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\* John xx., 1; Matthew xxviii., 1; Mark xvi., 1; Luke xxiv., 10.  
 Mark xv., 32; Luke xxiii., 39, 40.  
 Mark xvi., 2; John xx., 1.  
 Luke xxiv., 4; Matthew xxviii., 2, 3,  
 Matthew xxvii., 5; Acts i., 18; &c., &c.

In conclusion, let me now appear with my own conception of God before a jury of twelve thus impanelled :—a rabbi, an English bishop, a catholic cardinal, a Greek priest, a Swedenborgian minister, a mahometan dervish, a mandarin, a brahmin priest, a mormon, a shaker, and a wèsleyan, presided over by the pope. In order to be acquitted of idolatry the verdict must be unanimous. Can there be one of the jury who would deny one of my affirmations? But what would it be if I were to change places with one of my judges, and the latter to be succeeded by another to undergo the same ordeal, and so on to the last? The verdict would unanimously be that I only am not guilty of idolatry.

In all that we do, in all what we say, in all what we profess, let us strive to prove that we are not wrong. Men will say that we are not right; but it is only the privilege of the Great Deity to say who is right or not, for He alone possesses the standard of right.

## SECOND LECTURE.

(DELIVERED BEFORE THE TRUTH-SEEKERS' FREE DEBATING SOCIETY,  
ON JUNE 7, BY DR. BERIGNY.)

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### SEVEN COMMANDMENTS OF GOD.

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Sectarian aversion elevates the soul of its victims, and degrades its authors. "Religious" persecution is the handmaid that mocks the lash of ridicule whilst clearing the path to aspiration; it is the winter that bites the fertile prairies of the soul, gives vigour to the mind, and promises a more luxuriant spring.—(My reflections when living among idolators.)

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In my last Lecture I advanced the following double proposition, viz.,—that Religion is the Knowledge of the manifest attributes of God, and the standard of worship owing to Him by the human family.

In answer to the first question, I proved how I came to the conclusion that God exists, but I repudiated as mental idolatry all personations of God. I observed that when His individuality is associated with human imperfections and cruelties, He is made an invisible idol, more mischievous than the dumb wooden one which the Hindoos venerate as the symbol of Ram, the same Deity whom Christians call God, and the Jews Jehovah. Although impossible to define, I considered God scientifically, morally, and philosophically, to the best of my present mental capabilities, through which I could obtain a faint glimpse at an imperfect conception. At the close of my Lecture, in order to engage a discussion, I made a clean breast of the idea of God considered "theologically," as being the grand organization of the worst form of despotism—mental slavery,—which has entangled



and fettered humanity for ages. As I found no antagonism, I hope that some champion of theology, in reading the mighty questions involved, will make it a subject of oral argument, attack, and defence.

Since I repudiated the authority of written testimony as the standard of worship, we may be asked—What criterion of adoration have you instead? Answer: We also have the Commandments of God, “Not written with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in the tables of stone (or paper) but in fleshy tablets of the heart.” The so-called infidels can use the language of Paul to the Corinthians, as their religious relation to sectarians is just the same. The Commandments of God, which constitute the mighty authority of our adoration, are the propelling forces that stimulate man to go onwards and upwards to purity, through incessant purifications. The law of motion, latent in every man’s brain, by agitating his thoughts, will in time enable him to read these indestructible commandments. No sect, no chosen people, no favorite nation, no elected individuals monopolize the blessings of these Divine Commandments; no arrogant parson dispenses its proclamation on Sabbath day; and no system of theology will ever thrive upon them, and keep an army of parasites.

The great teacher that reveals the Commandments of God “written upon the fleshy heart,” is NATURE! and man will never be taught real lessons but through that truthful interpreter of the will and design of a Heavenly Father. All external, verbal, and conventional teachings will be one day consigned to the museum of superstitious relics, and give place to the immortal authority of principles, discovered by the ever-living facts of Nature’s Divine revelations. The knowledge of the Divine will is not driven in man’s brain from the pulpit, but comes out of man through his own development. As the rose borrows not its fragrance from artificial perfumes, so the fragrance of man is his own individual conviction of right and wrong. Human conscience is the organ of moral functions, and truth remains without authority unless it is felt there. My friends! invoke the authority of that Divine Gospel, Nature, and you will soon be purified of your artificial dross.

The Divine love is so manifest in His commandments that our strict obedience to these injunctions are at the same time our steps towards happiness. The first Commandment of God revealed through nature is not the egotistical Mosaic “Thou shalt love thy God first of all,” but **“Thou shalt love thyself.”**

Self love is the first motive power of man: it is the instinct that prompts the infant to gratify his appetite—to attach himself

to those that love him, whether parents or strangers ; and, when a man, this first commandment dictates to him moral dignity, temperance, cleanliness, activity, desire for knowledge, and will protect his self esteem against the injury of slanders. If this commandment be left ungratified, it will be indulged in the violation of higher commandments not yet learned. Refuse a child his daily food, and he will steal it. If the natural requirements of this commandment are unprovided, the young mind takes a tendency to get out of its natural track ; and as an ungoverned engine, it will be productive of social evils when unobstructed, for it is a moral law as well as a physiological one, that every faculty or organ must be exercised naturally to fulfil the designs of God—*i.e.*, to be useful to humanity. The perversion of faculties or organs by vicious functions is the mystery of all our social evils and maladies. Human passions are precious energies uncontrolled by the commandments of God, and often a great highwayman has the stuff of a hero. All our faculties are divine gifts, and if naturally cultivated, we should all render service to humanity. It is no fault of their divine origin if society is injured by criminals, but the fault of society herself. Therefore man is compelled, by the first propelling law of God, to go on, although he may go wrong ; and you see an instance of it in children, who become mischievous if too long unoccupied. When young men arrive at the thinking period of life, if their minds be unprovided with useful knowledge, it will readily accept the theology that clips their higher aspirations, and their condition is a transitory torpor of the intellect, of which sectarians actually present the image. But the time of rectification will surely come : all vicious directions are to be obstructed by divine provisions, and the great saviour, Reform, will triumphantly redeem us.

The second Commandment of God is, "**Man, thou shalt love a wife ; woman, thou shalt love a husband.**" Conjugal love is the fountain of life—the germ of future endless generations—the most imperative obligation of nature, which is always the faithful interpreter of God's Commandments. The great conquest of protestantism over catholicism—for which the reformation is to be blessed,—is the reconciliation of priesthood with nature. Marriage of the clergy is the pride of the reformation, as the proclamation of a Supreme Being the glory of the Hebrew. Matrimonial association dictates to husband and wife the duties of mutual help, fidelity, respect, devotedness, &c. If the requirements of that commandment are unfulfilled, honest men and chaste women will become profligate, sensuous, if not worse. A lonely disposition leads bachelors and maids to melancholy, and an untimely end.

The third Commandment of God is **Thou shalt love thy Children.** The love of offspring begets the most sublime feelings; it is the source of a felicity impossible to express with the vehicle of human language; but if the duties imposed upon fathers or mothers by this commandment be not wisely discharged, its responsibilities will prepare heavy penalties for their advanced age; for children, when parentally misdirected, will become a scourge to society, in spite of good natural dispositions. If an uncongenial marriage prevents the requirements of that commandment, or the ignorance of parents be immolating their children on the altar of medical ignorance, their old age will be deprived of its highest enjoyments, and they will leave this world with a sense of regret, as one who did not fully fulfil the divine use of nature.

The fourth Commandment of God is **Thou shalt sustain thy Parents in their declining age, and supply all their wants,** and its obligations are extended to all old destitute teachers and benefactors who have once given help to our social advancement. If these obligations are disregarded towards parents, teachers and benefactors, such lack of veneration for talent and matured age will paralyse our spiritual aspirations. Many an old man is on the eve of being a beautiful angel of light, who may serve us by his inspirations, if the soul be an immortal individuality, and retain earthly memory;—a question for further lecture.

The fifth Commandment is **Thou shalt love every man as thy Brother,** and be a true friend to thy associates. The principle of fraternal love is the great motive power that propelled the energies and promoted perseverance in all reformers, whom society has in all times persecuted. Our social and religious reorganization is their future mission, and their daily occupation is the discovery of the source of social evils, and their exposition; their actual duty is to give vent fearlessly to their indignation, and brave all social consequences. Combined with knowledge and wisdom, fraternal love elevates humanity upon a higher plan of religious systems, but if associated with an impetuous temperament—an earnest heart—a mind transcending the influence of inferior loves,—as martyrdom has always restrained the efforts of great reformers, popular scorn will likewise stifle its energies. In our age of hidden sectarian rancour, the wisest man cannot always be the best friend of society. The bold and honest sentiment of self-moral and mental development is attended with social peril and religious aversion,—a demon that threatens us with the cold hand of poverty, and harasses the mind with painful apprehensions. The charge of “infidelity” is a heavy cross, and “religious” prejudices (better called irreligious), as the reed

that smote Jesus on the head, will flagellate your character in the dark if you attempt to improve the condition of the misguided infatuated brother. How to do good wisely and safely, to an intemperate, vicious, superstitious society, that turns and rends its benefactors, is a serious question we shall examine.

If this fifth commandment is set at naught, every transgressor, by promoting his individual aggrandisement at the detriment of others, is also promoting poverty, selfishness, hatred, avarice, war, &c. We stand in great need of obedience to this commandment,—“**EVERY SHOULDER AT THE UNIVERSAL PUBLIC WHEEL.**” We want less ostentatious discourses upon our salvation, but more examples of philanthropy. **THE HARVEST TRULY IS PLENTY, BUT THE LABOURERS ARE FEW.**—So said Christ 1830 years ago ; so shall we have to repeat it until the philosophy of this excellent man is understood, his teachings comprehended to harmonize with nature, and redeemed from the long profanating association of “theology.”

What are the needs of the human family? To aid the ever-inspiring religion of manhood—the soul of humanity—from spurious counterfeits, viz., doctrines, creeds, dogmas, rituals, coined by “theology,” and taking the place of laws, principles and truths. But what to do with the array of costly bishops, priests, parsons, &c. ? Since they speak so much of new birth, let them undergo the process themselves. Let them turn to nature ; let them bring us inspirations from their own bosoms instead of the dried, worn, time-honored verbiage of ignorant ages ; let them become more the preachers of intelligible nature, and less “theologians,” splintering the meaning of text books. Let them quote the book of life, not the book of the dead ;—let them be awoke from the lethargy of biblical fetters, and study the laws of mind, and appeal to psychological facts for authority. We shall know that they are born again when they cease to preach mystery, and rely upon logical demonstration.

The sixth Commandment is “**Man, thou shalt treat with love every being in nature that may require thy assistance for its useful maintenance.**” No animal is so vile as to be absolutely inimical to man’s existence. The most deadly poison of snakes has divine uses, though unknown, which may be precious to humanity when discovered. It is the province of universal love to prevent cruelty to animals, and their unnecessary destruction. The disobedience to this commandment, by rendering men brutal and cruel, will prevent the refinement of their feelings.

I apprehend some of you are astonished that I should not allude to the commandment which enjoins the love of God. In answer to this good inquiry, I must say that I fail to discover in

nature that God has commanded man to love him. God loves humanity, but does not claim back what he so generously lavishes. You do not find that the earth radiates her rays of darkness in return for the vivifying heat and light of the sun. You do not find in nature that infants love and sustain their parents. If you wish to love God because He is the great originator of all blessings, permit me to tell you that you do not comprehend the meaning of love. Love means a sentiment—a force which forcibly prompts to act. If action be unnecessary, uncalled for, how can the principle be implanted by the Deity? What is termed love to God is really nothing else but gratitude, which should be shown by adoration—the object of RELIGION.

There is another commandment, my friends, which the mighty voice of the Divine Parent proclaims every day, not from the rocky Mount Sinai, but from the stupendous height of divine WISDOM, and echoed from the unfathomed depth of LOVE. The sound of this Holy Voice was not only heard by a deputed patriarch,—not only confines its benefit to the peculiar people of a peculiar god, but is revealed to every human understanding according to his degree of receptibility and growth. That seventh commandment is now disturbing ecclesiastical privileges, as that of Jesus—“A new commandment I give unto you: Love each other!”—did with the Jewish priesthood then contending for the old system of fat heifer sacrifices to furnish dainty festivals. For my rebellion against orthodoxy in enunciating this commandment, I dread no other expression of pious horror than the futile cry of “Infidelity.” That commandment is **Man, think for thyself**, for thou art ordained to be thy own saviour; nay, thou art already thy own saviour from the penalties inflicted on more ignorant men than thyself.

Strict obedience to this law, and you will have no other master but the Deity; you will never be evangelized; no borrowed garment will ever suit you, for you will be, yourself, useful in a congenial avocation, and equalled by no one for a particular object; in fact you will be a man, a noble character, not the counterfeit of others.

Take this commandment, my friends; try it,—use, and rely upon it. If you try it you will have less credulity, but more belief; if you use it you will have less belief but more knowledge; if you rely upon it you will have less popularity but more wisdom and happiness; you will develop your own individuality—the divine design of God.

This commandment, enjoined by Jesus, but never adverted to by theologians, “*Why do you not judge yourself what is right?*” was also foreshadowed by Confucius five hundred and fifty years before our era, when he said “*What to do with the man who*

*never asked the principles and reason of things.*" If you disregard this commandment by keeping a lawyer to exercise your sense of justice and equity for you ; relying entirely upon your doctor to regulate your system with filthy drugs detrimental to health, but highly recommended by the faculty ; by employing a religious broker to manage your spiritual welfare, depend upon it you will have to pay their bills when they are forthcoming. Whilst these popular favorites bandage your eyes with technical jargon, you fall a prey to conventionalism, and miss the end of life—peace, health, happiness. The violation of these commandments must irrevocably be visited by adequate proportionate penalties, which are increasing the more they are long suspended : for instance, a good stomach will at once resist the invasion of poison by immediate vomiting, whilst the debilitated gastric organ will be long to feel any ill effect from its invasion, but when it does, the penalty (disease), is worse, and may not possibly be overcome. So it is with mind : the first lie or robbery creates immediate remorse—the second creates less remorse, as the first was violently overcome, and ultimately man ceases to feel the least remorse when he has become a consummate liar ; so it is again with all vicious, criminal habits, but there is a *line* where accumulated transgressions must meet with a divine obstacle, and through a serious crisis—illness, misfortune, calamity, &c.,—the " heart of man is changed " to reform. Law, law, law everywhere, and for all, for ever and ever. Search and you shall find, for there is no vain fact in nature.

Our social adversities are the visitations of God in disguise ; the lessons of humility, the best tools of a Divine Lapidary. Our most advanced condition is proved by the ordeal of suffering passed through, investigation made and inquiries answered. If you reckon upon the tragical death of Jesus Christ for your individual salvation, the pangs of disappointment are inevitable.

To recapitulate self-love, conjugal love, parental love, filial love, fraternal love, universal love, and truth-seeking are the divine commandments revealed to man by nature's divine revelations. No one can deny them ; no one can suspend them ; no one can avoid them ; and no one will ever take such liberties with them as to discuss their merits and demerits, as the British nation is now occupied with the Pentateuch. A new edition of these divine gospels is published at the birth of every child, and the problem of his life is to listen to the gradual proclamation of every one of these divine dispensations. When they have been all revealed, the kingdom of Heaven will be realized by keeping wisely in equilibrium a general obedience to every injunction the problem of man's existence. Physical and mental sanity are the proclivities of general obedience to these

commandments; and strength and power are acquired by the natural exercise of all faculties entrusted by God. The prolonged concentration of all our energies upon a particular organ will derange the mental functions, and atrophy the other organs; hence originate natural desires for change of occupation and studies, provided by nature, but smothered by gloomy sectarian teachings. For instance, the doctrines of predestination and eternal punishment have upset the minds of many innocent harmless creatures, of which Scotland principally presents the sad spectacle. Sir Bulwer Lytton, a philosopher in advance of the age, records that a zealous student of divinity once committed murder to get means to purchase theological books. Is there among us such a human being who is thoroughly sane, physically, morally, and intellectually? I doubt it; and firmly believe that the earth is a religious lunatic asylum in the universe. The less insane of us will be deemed the most alienated by the rest that surround him, for divine wisdom is the standard of folly to the untutored mind.

If your spirit of inquiry and fraternal sympathies transcend all inferior love commandments, you may not fall a slain martyr to ecclesiastical resistance, as Socrates and Jesus did, but you shall certainly be stigmatized as "infidel"; and the head winds of popular prejudices will stay your social course for sailing with such brilliant colours.\*

Let us pause here a moment to inquire what our unkind, sectarian friends really mean by this social brand of public scorn? By infidelity, the world (that is, the credulous world,) mean dangerous. The question now arises, dangerous to what?—To orthodoxy. What is orthodoxy?—The standard of truth, righteousness, purity and holiness, chartered by public opinion, forsooth! God alone is *this standard* of truth, righteousness, purity and holiness; gross sacrilege, paralleled by the Pope's infallibility. What is public opinion—the favorite and dupe of

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\* A fact! I suppose I am known for having been the principal promoter and public defender of medical reform for many years in the colony. About twelve months ago a sectarian gentleman, practitioner of the same system of medicine, Dr. R——, arrived in this colony to try his fortune. At his arrival I called upon him to welcome him. As my visit was never returned, I made some inquiries—some months after—about this lack of etiquette. I was informed by him that the cause was that "*as he had heard I rejected the great truths of Christianity, that he would not associate with me.*" If he then abstained from calling me, in my presence, by the right name, "Infidel," he now indulges pretty fairly in doing so with the misdirected, weak-minded persons, whose patronage he succeeds in disposessing me of. This is the religious freedom so much boasted by Protestantism. Many patients have deprived me of their confidence, which I need to support a large family; and their parsons never remind them of that noble precept of Christ—"He that is faithful in little is faithful in much!"

this outrageous assumption? The flittering, changing, evanescent colors of human creeds; the epidemical and contagious effluvia of mental carelessness and social abjection. The fact that yesterday a half-civilized Zulu savage, by questioning the veracity of the bible with a bishop, prompts the latter to fresh inquiries which ultimate in shaking the whole "theological" fabric, and is now modifying the more enlightened public, is enough to explain the value of public opinion, termed "*Vox Dei*" in that age when the "holy" inquisition flourished, under popular patronage.\*

Public opinion—the logic of gunpowder; the awful brute force that terms wholesale murder patriotism and glory—slavery an institution—the massacre of the Huguenots the victory of God over the devil! Public opinion,—that has twisted the rope to hang men! public opinion,—that has patronized Judas, who betrayed Jesus; the mob that cried "Crucify him! crucify him!" and now call "infidels" his true apostles engaged to battle against idolatry;—this is the monster to whom we are accused of being dangerous! Thanks to Heaven, my friends, that we are called infidels by its benighted patrons. "Infidelity," the last weapon of an old decrepid church in harlequin rags, the wounds she inflicts are the best credentials for Heaven. "*Blessed are ye,*" said Jesus, "*when men shall hate you, and separate you from your company.—Beware of men, for they will scourge you in the synagogue,*" &c. Say church instead of synagogue, and you have Christ's language adapted to modern time. "*Woe unto you, scribes, pharisees, and hypocrites, for ye shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against men,*" &c. Say theologians, parsons, and priests, and you have Christ's repudiation of the inventors of hell, and manufacturers of predestination.

Another question: What is the definition of infidelity philosophically considered? Infidelity implies the negation of fidelity or faithfulness. Where is the religious system to which we have sworn fidelity, and forsaken our pledge? Are we unfaithful to our wife or to our creditor because we cannot assimilate into our mind popular superstitions, which we have examined? Are we wilfully unfaithful to the dictates of righteousness, because we do not keep a pew in a sectarian church? I ask again, who is most faithful to the integrity of his conscience, either the free-thinker, which "truth makes free," in the language of Jesus, or the sectarian, who professes to believe what is incredible? The

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\* Since we trace such great change in public opinion to an African Zulu, I must also credit him for the origin of these pages, which would never have been written had not public attention been awakened on the subject treated;—and my work is not done, I hope!



affirmation in the belief of a mathematical impossibility—as the trinity in unity—is nothing short but a lie, or infidelity to the most sacred recess of the soul—conscience. In vain do they take refuge in the dark cavern of mystery, the rays of Jesus's moral reformation will reach there; for "*There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known.*"

By a law of nature, where there is progression there is negation, *i.e.*, resistance. The force of disintegration explains the conflict between reason and "theology"; and the cry of "infidelity" is the foetid breath of disturbed public opinion, the last drop of a filthy, gory sponge, squeezed too hard, and compelled to purification by undergoing a good dipping in the clear water of fresh inquiry.

What religion shall we observe? That religion that has no other name; the eternal, true, never changing but always better understood religion of God, not of men; for it is obvious that what men call religions are human institutions bearing the same relation to the soul as the chattel of man does to the individual sovereignty of the enslaved. Popes, bishops, priests and parsons are soul slaveholders, like the planters of Cuba are physical slaveholders. In framing the bye-laws of these institutions, they might as well have met in convention to determine a set of laws which nature should adopt for our physical and organic government, and forbid diseases to be entailed upon the violation of any other law not enacted by the said conventions, as to invent systems of spiritual salvation when they are more ignorant of the soul principles than of physiological laws. When they condemned all investigation about the existence and probable destiny of the soul, they passed a bill of indictment against science, truth, and principles. Men might have wasted their time less detrimentally to the public welfare by discussing the supposed form of government carried on in the planet Jupiter, as to speculate upon immortality in imposing bounds to belief and aspirations, and preserving ignorance for their patronage. Religion admits of no plural, no distinct qualification; her domain is the infinite scope of the endless future and the unfathomable unknown. Our positive sciences and psychological discoveries are but infant steps into the unlimited exploration of religion: know more and obey, is the royal road to religious progress. The drill-master is a religious teacher; the professor of physiology a higher one; but the "theologian" is the irreligious teacher, obstructing God's designs.

What religion shall we observe? That religion that has no form, no creed, no ritual, no burlesque, no mockeries, no eternal damnation, no devils—common to all vir-

tuous and philanthropic minds in all sects, all nations, all times,—that religion, that has no “ism” and no universities to sell the license of spreading its good tidings, but recruits for its teachers those lofty minds that come from the daily school of life, graduate with the mark of public injustice and persecution ; that religion, that has for trinity, laws, principles, and facts ; that religion, that sees no total depravity in man, but seeks for the concealed mark of his divine origin ; that religion, that has no vindictive punishment to inflict upon the misdirected brother, but reformatory precaution to paralyse evil tendencies and encourage the good ; that religion, that inspires men with the mightiest power to conquer evil and hatred—LOVE ! The wheels of that *Religion* require no state aid to keep it going—no ecclesiastical fortification against the invasion of the devil,—for the *Great Incomprehensible Almighty* reigneth everywhere, governs everyone, and has left no room for the fiend of his designs where to lay his satanic head.

Sigh, priests ; cry aloud ; hang your pulpits with black ;  
 Let sorrow bow down every head ;  
 Your good friend, who bore all your sins on his back,  
 Your best friend—the Devil—is dead.

The holy bible of that religion is not the book of the dead, but the book of life. Our religion looks upon sacred manuscripts as piles of cinders before the hurricane of *Time*, and faces haughty public opinion as the sun does the mighty iceberg insolently sailing towards the tropics.

The name of that religion, which is better understood by the illiterate producer of society than by its learned parasites, is *obedience to all the laws of God revealed through nature's revelations*. The Sabbath day we have to keep holy commences with the first breath of life and terminates with the last. The propitiator of our sins, errors, and mistakes, is *Reform* ; our baptism, a *firm resolution to preserve moral integrity* ; our new birth, *death* ;—its pass-word, *everyone for all, and God for everyone*.

Where is our church ? Our church is in the wilderness, under the canopy of heaven. It has no bell to gather its children, but the love of truth throbbing in every human heart will in due time assemble them gradually under its stupendous cupola. The subjects of our sermons are the beauties that abound in all nature. We have no monasteries, no nunneries where the transgressors of conjugal love may gratify their lust to satiety ; we have no tract-mission society to present the forged dialogues of two fools to a greater one ; but we seek for the occasion of rendering a practical service to the needy, so as to appeal to his attention for instruction.

We have no divine privileges—no special providence to help us,—but we are organizing universal brotherhood and sisterhood by the quiet, incessant substitution of improvements and reforms. Our church is the gymnasium of all physical, moral, intellectual and spiritual faculties; but one must be divested of the clumsy garment of opinion ere he can climb its trapezium. The members of that church are not holier than their misdirected friends, but they stand in the relation of grown understanding to deformed, crippled, undeveloped minds, and forbearance is their characteristic feature. Their Lord's Prayer is a constant desire seconded by incessant efforts, to succeed in the active work of reformation, for we believe that every natural desire will be gratified by the wise Providence that implanted them in our organization; nay, we can prophecy the gratification of the highest aspirations, if they be only natural. Our religion depends as much upon the authority of books for its diffusion, as the growth of children depends upon a book on physiology, or the fertility of the earth upon a learned treatise on agriculture. You may light your pipe with these pages; but this religion will continue to be unfolded to the human family.

The death of Socrates—the crucifixion of Jesus,—we venerate with the highest gratitude and veneration, are the great lessons that teach this religion; and better lessons are they than all the sermons ever preached by salaried parsons; for no clap-trap “theology” can present to the mind the beauties of the kingdom of heaven realised by obedience to the commandments of God revealed through nature. We have no second-hand, time-chartered inspiration, but every day we feel the fresh and new divine influx that prompts us to move, to advance, to learn, to help, to assist, to meditate, to aspire. Eternal salvation is not the insisted theme of our conduct; we do not discharge duties to the Heavenly Father for wages; we thank him for the past—are content with the present—and “*take no thought for the morrow.*”

That religion will commence to flourish when there is no army to keep, no arsenal required, no gunpowder manufactured, no hangman to be found, and stone churches will remain the standing monuments of dark, self-styled civilized ages. Victoria will have long repealed the national taxation on unchristian chinamen, and remember with shame the state aid to superstitions that retarded her progress. The license for the hygienic alleviation of diseases will not be prohibited, as it is in our days, to the advocates of nature's own resources, to the men who have boldly exposed the folly of making the human stomach a depot of incompatible drugs, and practically proved by their success that small doses of medicine in assistance to nature are more efficacious than large doses in opposition to her efforts; this license

to do good will not be only granted to those who sacrifice the future health of their patient for momentary palliation, and deceive the ignorant multitude with the prestige of titles that qualify them to comprehend the laws of physiology, as royal birth to become the greatest genius of humanity. But when will that be? When!—echo answers “When—when?”

Where does that religion lead to? We know not; but surely towards the *great centre of love and wisdom*,—towards *God!* who, however incomprehensible, is understood enough to know what he is not; who, however distant, is near every human heart, and before whom we are ready to stand or fall, for that religion. Obedience to Nature.

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