

**What is Our Aim and Duty as Liberals?**

BY C. ELTON BLANCHARD.

The past of Freethought has tended to very little of organization. The liberal, loving his own freedom from superstition and jurisdiction, has laughed "in his sleeve" at the foolishness of other people. He has gone about his task of getting a living, saying nothing. In most cases he has gone to church, because it was a popular place to go, and though he smiled at the preacher's antics, he caused no trouble to himself by expressing his opinions. Here and there we have found men who, in a quiet way, often have said what they thought. This quiet influence has been like so much leaven in the meal, and its work has been felt wonderfully.

We have had for some years a national organization, but as a rule the work of this organization has fallen upon a few shoulders. Its yearly meetings have not always been well attended. The business interests of a large per cent. of Liberals has more often hindered organization than indifference. A few men have carried on the destructive work of Voltaire very successfully in the United States. Some have made it a business or profession as they have a perfect right to do, and gained therefrom a living and some beside. But as a rule the Liberal lecturer has a lean purse. But in spite of all discouragements great ability has been and is now devoted to this work. We have seen the wit and sarcasm of Voltaire. Others have the priestly style of Renan, but in some shape or another the destruction of orthodoxy has gone on. The foundations have all been undermined. The keystones of the arches have been knocked out and now, if left alone, the old affair would fall to pieces of its own accord. But a class of priest-workmen are drawing good salaries all the time to patch it up, rebuilding some portions, remodelling others, but using the same old bricks.

These earnest people stop now and then to protest against our shots, saying that a certain ignorant class will be lost without the hope and fear of orthodoxy. The scientific infidel replies: "No, if you will but let the old faith go, these ignorant classes of which you speak will readily learn to obey the Law that is. They will more gladly obey civil law, since no escape is held out to them to free themselves from punishment for sin. They will welcome the hospitality of a Liberal Church which will show them the way to better living, greater happiness and self-respect.

The time has now come when the free-thinker must candidly ask

himself: What is the end and aim of Freethought? Is it merely to continue a kind of half-hearted disapproval of orthodoxy, hoping that some day the supernatural creeds will be so revised that we can honestly affiliate with the present church as a social organization? Is this the only end of Freethought?

The purpose of this paper is to say NO to this question. Any man of good morals, of culture and refinement can see great good in the social side of the present church. To secure this good for themselves and families many who are really freethinkers are keeping quiet about freethought. Let us build a church home for this great class and they will desert the orthodox church. Now it is "Hopkin's choice" orthodox church or none.

rel among themselves than are Baptists, Methodists, etc; that we can work together for a common good without the fear of hell staring us in the face; that we can be enthused, aggressive and charitable without being blessed by the Holy Spirit; that we have a religion for this life alone. To do good, is that religion, and we call it the Religion of Humanity. This, in my opinion, is the real end and aim of Liberalism, but we shall probably continue hitting orthodoxy some hard knocks, and when the church is funny, we shall doubtless laugh at it. Orthodoxy is so funny sometimes it is really pathetic.

The Liberals of the United States have formulated nine demands, all of which are important and valuable, but unless we make new efforts along the lines of construc-

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A Liberal Church would easily draw to it all this worthy class, who much rather act the full honesty than to be all the time acting untruthfully by associating where they cannot accept the advocated faith.

The time is ripe for such a movement on the part of Liberals, especially might such efforts be made in all the larger towns. We have a duty in the matter. That duty says: Do not let the nineteenth century close without laying the foundation of a church whose religion is wholly for Humanity and the present life. The time has come for Liberals, the possibility of success being great, to remove the charge that we have nothing to which we can point that is good, as a social organization; that we have nothing to offer in the place of Christianity. The time has come to show the world that Liberals are no more inclined to quar-

rel among themselves than are Baptists, Methodists, etc; that we can work together for a common good without the fear of hell staring us in the face; that we can be enthused, aggressive and charitable without being blessed by the Holy Spirit; that we have a religion for this life alone. To do good, is that religion, and we call it the Religion of Humanity. This, in my opinion, is the real end and aim of Liberalism, but we shall probably continue hitting orthodoxy some hard knocks, and when the church is funny, we shall doubtless laugh at it. Orthodoxy is so funny sometimes it is really pathetic.

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