

Religious Sentimentalism and Agnostic Doubt.

BY T. B. WAKEMAN.

Mr. Beall gives us a healthy lesson, on our first page, by his sharp reminder that the passions are just so much steam or fire unless they are looked after and controlled by the prevision and prudence of the intellect, reason, humanity and beneficent morality. Or, as Jefferson said it: "Do not bite at the bait of pleasure till you know there is no hook beneath it." Jeffersonian Cyclo. p. 697.

But in regard to religion we have a class of passions or emotions which are supposed by many to be supernaturally inspired, and so the warrant of religious truth. Wonder, awe, the sense of the miraculous, the desire of future happiness, and the fear of hell would not exist, we are told, unless they might be in some way realized. The excitement of "conversion" is a deliberate working up of those feelings to a climax, and then a break by a nervous revulsion and the fall back upon a Savior in prostration and prayer, as acts of faith and "belief"!

These religious emotions are scientifically found to be akin to auto-suggestion and the hypnotic processes which all healthy and sensible people learn to avoid and deplore. They are without reason "as a pilot," and so end only in illusion at the expense of the nervous system. They are simply a form of nervous disease. But as a form of 'evidence', this sentimentalism is most dangerous; for by thousands it is taken to be the substance of "religion," and the personal and highest evidence of it. Such people say: "Religion is at the bottom feeling; I know my religion is true because I FEEL it." Thus they are impervious to all facts and reason about anything they call "religion." They simply go it blind. They are like the opponents of Gallileo who refused to look through his telescope for fear they might be convinced. Thus Moody, the revivalist, would not argue nor allow any appeal to facts or reason about his "faith." That was always to be proved and approved by excitement of the feelings, which would make facts, science and reason of no account whatever.

"Spiritual facts are spiritually discerned," and what the facts actually are, is of little or no account in comparison: Such is now the "Revelational" conviction and practice of thousands. How can we convince those who refuse to see?

But what is still stranger is that this hypnotic sentimentalism ignores the facts they do see, just as if they did not exist at all. They cannot draw the plainest inference. There can be nothing plainer than that

the modern helio-centric Astronomy, with its true motions of the earth and sun, makes an end of the old heaven, hell, immortality, and salvation religion, at once. The bottom law of Science; that all changes of the world are correlative and equivalent, needs but a slight meditation to make utterly impossible those old conceptions,— gods, spirits, miracles and prayers. Yet thousands of people go on praying just as if nothing had happened or been learned since A. D. 1600!

But the most amusing specimen of this religious sentimentalism is our modern Liberal "Agnostic." He sees the facts of Astronomy, and the bottom laws of Science, but is simply unable to draw the only conclusion. He stands as if dazed; draws his hands before his eyes, and mutters: "I don't know: there may be heaven and hell, god and devil, material soul and immortality after all?" What a singular state of mind is that! When Science, clear and bright, brings the day, let us enjoy it, and not flit in intellectual twilight. Why replace "God" by Doubt, instead of the ALL? Is not Doubt the most useless and stupid of gods? A state of mind every lover of Truth lives in order to end!

Jefferson's Arrival at the Liberal University.

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own words the gist of all that Jefferson has left—and he has left something on nearly every imaginable topic. Indeed few human beings ever spent 83 years of a more varied or useful life, nor given a clearer insight into the age of the Revolutions, of which he was in fact a great part. What this mighty "Spirit" of the past has to say—how easy now to learn! With this book lying before you, the pages respond to your touch like the keys of a piano, and the mental phonograph gives you the deepest feelings, the ripest thoughts the most practical TELESIS, the purest and highest aspirations of one of the best born, most free and fortunate, most successful and experienced, most beneficent and humane, most aspiring and blessed of all those who ever drew the breath of life.

Many are the the passages it is hard to forbear quoting—especially those which give decided support to our Liberal University and its course and mode of study. But take this motto and the conclusion from it. "No man has power to let another prescribe his faith."

"If thinking men would have the courage to think for themselves, and to speak what they think, it would be found they do not differ in religious opinions, as much as is supposed.

Reply to Prof. Wakeman.

Editor Torch of Reason:—

I would meet Prof. Wakeman's and Mr. D. C. Tenney's rejection of the nebular theory, and their views that this planet has existed forever, with these two propositions:

First, that if their latter assumption were correct, i. e. if this planet had been in existence throughout the eternal past, the "Paradise on Earth" so fondly and confidently anticipated by Prof. Wakeman, would have been attained by the inhabitants of our planet an eternity ago. [periods, geological and otherwise, being in that case, obliterated.] and,

Second, that to SCIENCE and MATERIALISM, NOTHING is eternal excepting the constituents of matter.

HERMAN WETSTEIN,
Fitzgerald, Ga.

Comment.

Friend Wettstein's reply, so small and brilliant, is a jewel!

BUT, I never said that this Earth as a planet has existed through "the eternal past." That is only one, of several hypothesis, which Mr. Tenney favors, not I. As to its formation, the aggregation or meteoric PLUS nebulous dust and radiation hypotheses of Lockyer and Proctor seems to me the more probable. Study up and see! Mean while take Astronomers Ball's advice; to wait a few thousand of years, if need be, so as to get the data to really know. Why discount the end of Mother Earth which may never come? Mr. Tenney's answer is in his "Earth not created." which H. L. Green, Chicago, Ill., sends for 15 cents.
T. W. B.

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