

and more comprehensive reform. And such a reform is not wanted. The clergy seems to be afraid of it. If the error is conceded, it means the denial of the infallibility of the Confession. The dogmas of the church cease to be absolute verities; and truth is recognized above the creed of the church, as the highest court of appeal—truth, ascertainable by philosophical enquiry and scientific research.

This would be equivalent to the abolition of all dogmas and would mean the enthronement of a principle to fill their place. This principle, if we look at it closely, is nothing new; it is an old acquaintance of ours; it is the same principle on which science stands. And the recognition of this principle would be the conciliation between science and religion once for all.

Brethren, do not shut your eyes in broad daylight, but look freely about and follow the example of the great founder of Christianity. Worship God not in vain repetitions, not in pagan adoration, as if God were a man like ourselves. Worship God in spirit and in truth. Acknowledge the superiority of truth above your creed, and be not ashamed of widening the pale of your churches.

If you acknowledge the supremacy of truth and make your changes in the Confession because truth compels you to make them, your progress will be that of a man who walketh upright and straight. But if you do not acknowledge the superiority of truth above your creed, if you identify truth with your creed, your progress will be the advance of a soldier loitering in the rear of his army, who is afraid of being left behind. You will unwillingly have to yield to the necessity of a change; and you will have to do it again and again, and always without dignity.

Is it dignified to alter a religious creed because it appears as a relic of barbarism, because it has become odious to the people, and because it no longer suits their tastes? Your Confession should be allegiance to truth. Will you degrade it to be the unstable expression of the average opinion of your members?

There is but one way to free yourselves from all these difficulties. Recognize no dogma as absolute and reverence no confession as infallible; but let truth, ascertainable truth, be the supreme judge of all doctrines and of all traditions.

Your bible, your hymn-book, your catechism, the history of your church, and the reminiscences of your venerable leaders shall remain respected among yourself and children, but let them not be overrated in their authority. Truth reigns above them all, and the holiness of truth is the foundation of all true religion.—[Homilies of Science.

Prejudice and Principle.

BY JOHN PRESCOTT GUILD.

To the Oregon State Secular Union.
(by mail.)

THADDEUS B. WAKEMAN,
Pres. O. S. S. U.

Though the mail's delay disconcerted the arrangement for me to be present at the convention of the Oregon State Secular Union in the Classic Grove of Silverton, yet I met with you all there in spirit and in truth and send my thought for the hour by Uncle Sam's post, so that it may be printed in the proceedings as the speech for which I am programmed. The subject which I wish to submit, for the consideration of the members of the convention, is

PREJUDICE AND PRINCIPLE.

Prejudice is judgement before examination. It is made up partly of the tendencies which we inherit, the heirship of the feelings, fancies and facts possessed by ancestors; partly composed of the teachings of parents and associates, and largely is the result of that laziness of intellect, that boorishness of brain, which will not think and cannot learn by experience. That prejudice or jumping at conclusions from uncertain premises, is often necessary in our limited sphere of vision. Nobody denies, for guesswork forms the principal part of our necessary endeavor. But the word prejudice is seldom used in the sense of judgment forced by the requirements of the time, but it is usually employed to signify that blindfolded groping, that trusting to tradition, that assumption of sufficiency, which is satisfied with outside appearance and self-declared authority, which prevents investigation and prohibits contradiction.

That regard for anything good, that tension toward truth which has nothing but prejudice for its motive, may lead one aright. A leap in the dark may land you on deck, but is more likely to drop you in the dock. A prejudice, even though for the right, is a very poor pilot, for another prejudice may at any time happen along with quite as much pretense and propel one in an opposite track. The great trouble with prejudice is its setting itself up as superior to proven facts and demonstrated principles, and, in the pride of its ignorance, condemning the logic of experience and persecuting the evangel of good nature.

It is as much the duty of the intelligent to teach the ignorant as it is of the fed to feed the famishing. It is the salvation of the free to unfetter the slave, lest he become bound by the same master. It is not enough to glorify in our gospel of Liberalism, we have not learned the first letter of it until we have endeavored to place the spelling-

book of Freethought in the hands of the prisoners of dogmatism.

Truth makes free, and that is not the Truth which refuses to turn the key and throw back the bolt in the black bastiles of bigotry. It is the most hateful kind of illiberalism which has not the kindness to cut the cords that bind a festering body of death upon one who hugs the poison as precious sweetmeats.

I do not know to what prejudice was due the break, which existed for a short time, between the O. S. S. U. and the L. U. O., and it matters not, now that these two institutions, and mother daughter, are again found in family harmony, intoning the principles of mental liberty and human happiness on earth, presenting to a superstition-dazed and sovereign domineered world, the greatest moral spectacle of time—a church without a priest, a religion without a God.

Yours is a gospel of goodness which discords bloody atonements, and a philosophy of science which requires no miracle in attestation of its doctrines. Not "faith," but "facts," is its watch-word and its bloodless battle-cry is LUO!—I set free.

We have heard and read much before about prejudice and principle, and about principle, and profession; but in all the godly religions, speculative philosophies and dictatorial politics which have all along perplexed, plundered and persecuted the people, there has been any amount of prejudice and profession, with principle and practice of little or no account. Prejudice is judging—is pre-judging, judging before knowing the causes and circumstances. All that is prejudice which guesses in the dark and determines without demonstration.

Nearly all the ideas of the ignorant are prejudices; and except with those too stupid to care, or too lazy to think, it is usual that prejudices are fastened to with a persistence in inverse ratio to the facts and their logical sequences. The degree of mystery magnitude of the incomprehensible is proportioned in the ignorant mind to its insisting on acceptance.

For this reason about all the religious riots in the world are promulgated with the proclamation, "believe or be damned," and they are enforced by the proclamation, profess or be killed!—or at least, be taxed and taunted. So the founder of the "true faith," whatever it was, may well have said: "All were liars before I came, I am the truth, I came not to send peace, but a sword." The conflicts of the world are the consequences of selfishness, and ignorance is the author of selfishness, or rather of that sort of selfishness which makes one rob another of property and rights. Wisdom understands

that economy is equity, that reciprocity is preservation, therefore intelligence is liberation and not faiths but facts, are the foundation of ethics, and not authorities but reasons, are the principles of any religion that can make one ride unto salvation, because it is good unto himself and all mankind.

Reasoning is reckoning, not recklessness and wrecking; Liberalism is not libertinism and liquorism. Freethinking is not free-drinking, and Secularism is not selfishness.

Secularism is Liberal Sociality according to natural demands as determined by experience and reason, in contradistinction to sacerdotalism, which is bondage under the dictum of priesthood which pretends to have superhuman authority and knowledge, and thereby bosses those with too little knowledge to see through their mask of piety.

The demands of Liberalism, or Secularism are all of them the demands of reason and justice, of justice as determined by reason; the demands of religion and principle, of principle as it is involved in the religion of humanity, that is, salvation according to common sense. The only damnation which it teaches is the destruction which comes in consequence of ignoring the forces of nature as instanced in the recent disaster at Galveston.

Freethought can stand alone because it stands on the principles of the eternal fitness of things; because it stands for the truth of things instead of the dogmas of deities and beliefs in books—and "spooks." Honesty is holiness, and the greatest reason for honesty is, honesty is the greatest thing in reason. Without honest thought there is no reasonable thinking, and without rational thinking every thing is mean in mind. (This was not inspired in any spice-incensed "holy of holies" but inferred while chopping a pine tree top).

Ecclesiasticism asks for the aid of the state and implores the police force for its protection, because it is unable to furnish any proof why it should exist. The religion of all the churches of God show their weakness by calling on men for support, and the men would never support them in this age of some reason, if the women did not rope them in. But the women are getting wiser and so the Christian churches are changing their tactics and finding their salvation in sociables. They are dropping their dogmas and downing delicacies. Without acquiring much more of principle, they adopt a lot more of pleasure, and prejudice is giving way as both the people and priests indulge in more play than pray. But, according to the hymn, they "don't forget to prey," but it must be spelled with an "a." Hence the