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SECULARISM

AND

CHRISTIANITY.

A REPLY TO

THE REV. R. SHEPHERD, OF GRIMSBY,

BY

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Secretary of the National Secular Society.

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P R E F A C E .

It may be necessary perhaps to give a few words of explanation, in order that the reader may understand the cause of the present reply, and the delay in its publication. Some few months ago, the Rev. R. Shepherd, of Grimsby, delivered and published a lecture entitled, "What is a Secularist?" Finding that their principles had been misrepresented by the rev. gentleman, the Secularists of Grimsby invited me to visit Grimsby, and deliver a lecture in answer to Mr. Shepherd. Accordingly, in September last, I reviewed the pamphlet "What is a Secularist?" in the Odd-Fellows' Hall, Grimsby. At the conclusion of the lecture it was the unanimous desire of those present that as the Rev. R. Shepherd had been invited to attend, and had declined to do so, I should write the substance of what I then said and publish it. The delay in complying with the above request has arisen in consequence of my provincial engagements having prevented me from writing what I now present to the consideration of those who desire to know what a Secularist is. It may be well here to intimate that it is not intended in this pamphlet to notice every statement made by Mr. Shepherd. Sufficient, however, has been considered to show that the rev. gentleman was as incorrect in his assertions as he was fallacious in his reasoning.

C. W.

SECULARISM AND CHRISTIANITY.

MR. SHEPHERD commences his attack on Secularism by comparing it to the old Greek God Proteus, in consequence of its being subject to continual changes. The fallacy of depreciating Secularism by such a comparison must be clear to the most superficial reasoner. Surely progress is not a crime. Does not experience prove that principles that are stationary are not congenial with modern society? What is civilisation but the result of perpetual advancement? Whatever, therefore, clashes with any "onward movement" is antagonistic to the progressive spirit of the time. Even Christianity—which is claimed to be "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,"—is frequently assuming new phases to suit the "spirit of the age." It is quite true that Secularism is constantly progressing, profiting by the advance of time, and stimulating its adherents to gather the germs of truth as they are revealed by the light of science and experience. The rev. gentleman, however, urges as a charge against Secularists that we have adopted a new name and relinquished that by which we were formerly known. But the rev. gentleman should remember that the word "infidel" was not of our own choosing, and certainly when we discovered that it was a term used only as a reproach by our enemies, we had a right to disclaim it. Besides, "Infidelity" does not express our views so correctly as Secularism does. Christians should be the last to complain of our accepting a fresh name, inasmuch as many of the religious sects have frequently deemed it desirable to call themselves by other names than those by which they were once known, in consequence of the odium attached to their former appellation. For example, the Quakers, Methodists, Socinians, &c., have altered their names; and more recently the Independents have changed to Congregationalists. There can be nothing in the change of a name to justify our rev. opponent in protesting as if some great moral wrong had been done. Speaking of us, Mr. Shepherd says—"They are Infidels, and why do they call themselves by a name which is just as applicable to me and to every honest man who seeks to do his duty in the world, as it is to them?" Well, we have no objection to our friend calling himself a

Secularist if he chooses. But I think that I shall show hereafter that this term is not as applicable to Mr. Shepherd as it is to us. But if it were, the same may be said of the term "Infidel." Mr. Shepherd is as much an infidel to Mahomedism, Buddhism, and other religions, as we are to his. Christians overlook the fact that there are other systems of religion besides theirs, and other alleged sacred books than the Bible, all of which are as firmly believed in by some portion of the human race as Christianity is in this country. The man who believes in only one of these is as much an infidel to the rest as Secularists are to the whole. Indeed, Mahomedans would call Mr. Shepherd an Infidel notwithstanding his Christianity. To this our Christian friend would doubtless object, but his objection would be no better founded than is ours to be designated by the same term.

We are next informed by the rev. gentleman that the "Infidels found that they could not lay hold of the great mass of the people—that they could make no progress unless they put on new forms. . . . So you find them taxing all their ingenuity to clothe the old thing in a new garb, in which it may be more acceptable to the people." Such an accusation as this, Mr. Shepherd, is a two-edged sword, very dangerous to wield, and if employed without great skill, it is likely to inflict considerable injury on him who uses it. Suppose the question were asked, in what "garb" Christianity shall be clothed, where shall we obtain the answer? Shall we find it in the hundreds of different sects with their diversity of creeds, each professing to be the true followers of Jesus, and yet they are unable to agree as to what Christianity really is? Shall we peruse the history of the early Church, in which the most violent disputes and better persecutions were carried on by various members of that Church against each other, in consequence of the difference of opinion as to which "garb" Christianity should wear? If Mr. Shepherd's attention is drawn to the long catalogue of black crimes, which were practised in the name of religion during the middle ages, when the vilest deeds were considered justifiable, so long as they tended to advance the faith and uphold the Church; when murder was a virtue, and lying a creditable accomplishment, what will be our friend's answer? "Oh that was not Christianity." It was, however, unfortunately the Christianity of that day. Like Proteus, Christianity has changed since that time, and now wears "a new garb in which it may be more acceptable to the people." In

fact, no sooner do we catch hold of the Christian's garb to examine its texture than, *quick, presto*, it is transformed into something else. If we show the absurdity of supposing that a few drops of water sprinkled on a child's face can purify its heart, we are told by the Evangelists that this is no part of Christianity. Point out the ridiculous character of immersing an adult female in a bath as an initiation into the Church, and the Independents, Wesleyans, and Churchmen state that is not Christianity. Attack the horrible doctrines of eternal torments, and the Universalists exclaim, that is not Christianity. Demonstrate the irrational nature of the Trinity, and the Unitarians answer at once, that is not Christianity. Pourtray the horrors of war, the Quaker asserts that Christianity is peace, and that all war is anti-Christian. Avow that sometimes war has a high and noble mission, that of destroying despotism, breaking up long-standing tyrannies, and freeing down-trodden peoples, intimate that any religion which would stand in the way of a battle fought for truth and freedom cannot be good, and we shall instantly be told that Christianity does nothing of the kind, but that, on the contrary, it sends its disciples to fight, appoints chaplains to the army, and consecrates the weapons of destruction. Thus at whatever point we attack this so-called divine system it shifts its ground. With what grace, then, does Mr. Shepherd compare Secularism to Proteus? It is Christianity that is for ever assuming new forms and shapes, most of them hideous enough, but none of them permanent.

Christianity, we are told, "is a grand old city, built of the pure, white marble of truth. It has existed through the storms of two thousand years, and is as strong to-day as when first it rose to view." If this statement were true, it would certainly say but little for the inherent power and invigorating influence of Christianity. A constitution that is sound and healthy should possess greater strength in its manhood than it had in its infancy. But what is the fact with the teachings of the New Testament? After nearly eighteen hundred years of Propagandism supported by the wealth of the nation, with prayers to assist it, grace to support it, and a God to protect it, yet with all these assumed advantages we are told that it is as strong as it was when it was first promulgated. But the fact is Christianity is not so strong as it was in its "palmy days." The older it gets the weaker it becomes. If Christianity is as strong as ever, what means so much timidity on the part of the clergy about the spread of infidelity, and the diffusion of

Freethought literature? Do not the various congresses which have recently taken place among Christians, indicate that they think danger is in their camp? Why are we constantly told that Roman Catholicism (which I presume is not Mr. Shepherd's pure white marble of truth) is spreading so rapidly that it threatens once more to swallow up the whole of the Protestant sects? It requires no prophetic power to enable the close observer of the times to perceive that society is fast approaching a period when the religious world will be divided into two great parties, the Roman Catholics and the Rationalists, neither of which Mr. Shepherd would probably call Christians. At the present time we find from Christian pulpits Freethought sermons preached that attack the very foundation of the faith as it is in Jesus. When we have such men as Professor Jowitt, Dr. Temple, the Rev. Charles Voysey, Mr. Kirkus, of Hackney, giving up many of the leading doctrines of "Primitive Christianity;" when bishops of the Established Church write books disproving the authenticity of the Bible; when learned societies issue works atheistical in their tendency, and public papers from their association upsetting the whole theory of the supernatural; when our scientific men advise, as Professor Huxley did recently at Birmingham, students to throw overboard the Hebrew mythology, with its notions about Adam and Noah, and the Ark—I submit when these things are taking place around us, it is hardly the time to boast of the strength of Christianity. Any statement therefore about religion having withstood opposition for two thousand years, must be looked upon rather as an attempt at rhetorical display than a plain statement of facts.

In reference to Secular principles Mr. Shepherd proceeds "I will notice the very first principle these people put forth In the words of Holyoake that principle is, that 'precedence should be given to the duties of this life, over which pertain to another world.' What in the world does a statement like this mean? Every Secularist subscribes to it; and yet there is not one of them who can show that there is the slightest difference between the duties which pertain to this world and the duties which pertain to another. The duties which pertain to this world are the very duties which Christianity enjoins; and it does more—it gives the moral power and disposition to fulfil them." It is to be regretted that Mr. Shepherd did not tell us where to find the Christianity of which he speaks. Evidently it is not to be found in the

Bible. The distinguishing characteristic of New Testament Christianity is that the "sole concern" of mortals here below is to prepare for another world. The present state of existence is regarded by Christians only as temporary, in a few years at most, according to their faith, it will end, though life after death is, we are told, to be eternal. How then can the one be balanced against the other? "What shall it profit a man," said Christ, "if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" The things of this life are secondary, mere trifles of the smallest moment, while those of the future are of all-absorbing interest. Secularism—or what pious people call worldliness—therefore, must be altogether opposed to religion, or what has been very appropriately termed by a modern author, other worldiness. But the duties, says Mr. Shepherd, are the same. Are they? Is it not sad to know how a preconceived theory shuts out a calm and impartial observation of facts? First in the category of Christian duties stands worship. This takes precedence of everything else, just as love to God stands before love to man. Without this there is no salvation. Now, surely worship is not a Secular duty to be practised alike by the Christian and Freethinker. It can have nothing to do with the things of this life, and therefore has no place in the principles of Secularism. To praise some unknown Being whose dwelling place is supposed to be somewhere in the skies, or to pray for supernatural assistance to combat natural forces, is the first duty and common practice of a Christian, but such conduct is considered by the Secularists as wild and visionary. How then can the duties be the same? But, says Mr. Shepherd, "prayer if it were never answered, would have a very powerful effect in the culture of our moral nature." Does it not occur to the rev. gentleman that the [avowed] object of prayer is here entirely ignored? When men pray they ask for something definite to be done; to talk therefore, of the effect it has on the mind of the devotee is simply quibbling. If there is great drought, prayers are offered up in churches for rain; if the cholera rages, men pray to have it removed. To say that if these ends are not accomplished, still the moral nature of the worshipper is cultivated is to descend from reasoning to trifling. As Secularists, we doubt the beneficial effect of prayer on the moral nature, having seen the very opposite produced. To us it looks childish in the extreme and appears to be calculated to destroy energy and self-dependence, and to create a false trust upon that which never befriends.

Moreover, Christianity not only places the duties that are said to pertain to another life before those which concern this world, but positively inculcates disregard of the latter. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth" is an injunction about which there can be no mistake. Let this be carried out and society could not exist. Christians know this; hence they are constantly doing their best to violate their master's commands. "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself," are commands as plain as their adoption would be disastrous. Let our business men consistently act them out, and we shall soon see how far the Secular duties will be attended to. Every savings' bank and insurance office is a standing protest against Christianity. And had Christians the courage to carry out their principles they would never avail themselves of one or the other. No two classes of duties can be more opposed to each other than those sanctioned by Secularism and those taught by Christianity. The latter magnifies poverty as a virtue, and denounces riches as a curse; the former teaches that poverty is a misfortune, and that riches are frequently advantageous. The man who is poor is unable to play his part in life either creditably to himself, or beneficially to those around him. Poverty frequently comes upon a man as an iceberg, chilling the noblest aspirations of his nature; it is an avalanche which rushes down on the aspiring youth as he is ascending the hill of prosperity, and often hurries him into the ruins of despair. Christianity teaches that the "wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." Secularism says the wiser a man is the better he is. The former inculcates improvidence and recklessness of the future, the latter prudence and provision for a rainy day; the former puts trust in God and prayer, the latter in human foresight, energy, and wisdom.

Mr. Shepherd next proceeds to argue in favour of a future life from the fact that development has been always taking place in the organic kingdom. First came animals low in the scale, then higher and higher, and so on up to man. Why then, reasons the rev. gentleman, may not man pass at death into a still higher condition? Now Mr. Shepherd ought to know, what doubtless the merest tyro in logic can recognise, that there is no analogy whatever in the two cases. The higher animals are not the lower in another stage, but an improvement upon them, a new individuality.

The only argument that could logically be drawn from the development theory on this point is, that after man, beings of a still higher order might make their appearance but then they would no more be individual men of a previous age, than we are the Iguanodons of the "age of reptiles." Besides, all the changes that we know of in the organic kingdom have taken place in existence upon the earth, whereas the future conditions which Mr. Shepherd contends for is to be in some far-off land of shadows occupied by what is termed "disembodied spirits." To illustrate his position, Mr. Shepherd takes the case of the caterpillar. "He lives a short life, and then he appears to die. But wait a little—he seems quite dead—he begins to decay—he appears now only a semi-transparent fluid. See now—from that fluid has come the beautiful butterfly; and instead of being a caterpillar, with difficulty crawling over the ground, it is a beautiful creature flying from flower to flower, and sucking the honey from each, and basking in the summer sun. You see nature has changed its mode of existence from a lower to a higher, and you dare not tell me that nature does not intend to change the mode of my existence also, from its present to a higher state." Now what possible analogy is there between the two cases! The caterpillar becomes transformed into the butterfly before our eyes, we can see it in both conditions, and can observe the process of change going on. The butterfly is an improvement upon the caterpillar in point of organisation, but in every other respect they are both similar. Both are material, and each is liable to destruction and decay. The spirit, however, that is supposed by Christians to be evolved from the human form at death, on the contrary is said to be immaterial and immortal, and therefore totally unlike that material organisation from which it has escaped. The change is not observed. The body dies and the elements of which it was composed pass into other forms—this is all that we see and all that we know. Beyond this everything is mere conjecture and vague speculation. Where then is the force of the gentleman's comparison and illustration? It must be understood that the Secularist does not object to a life after this, providing that it be an improvement upon the present. He maintains, however, that the duties of this world are paramount whilst he is here, and that should there be another state after death, it will be time enough to attend to its concerns when we enter upon its existence.

The argument based upon the desire felt in most minds

to live for ever is of a different character, and is thus put by Mr. Shepherd :—“ With your wise science, you tell us that nature never does anything in vain. [Who said so? Not I.] She never contradicts herself—she has not put anything into man or animal, except for a wise purpose. Working by *unerring laws*, she never puts anything into a living being *unsuited* [This is Theism and the recognitions of the design argument, not Secularism] to its nature. She has put in the boy the desire to be a man, because she intends the boy to be a man. [Not always, many die in youth.] She has not put into the dog the desire to be a man [How know you that, Mr. Shepherd?] because she does not intend the dog to be a man; such a desire would be unsuited to its nature. She never promises what she does not intend to give. Well, if your God nature is so true to her word [That is your theory, not ours], if she never excites false hopes, how is it she has put into our minds the desire to live for ever? Clearly because she intends us to do so.” Now it is not correct to assert that the desire to live for ever is universal. Pouchet, in his “Plurality of Races,” gives several instances of peoples where this “longing for immortality” is absent. Dr. Livingstone and Moffat, the celebrated missionary, also allude to the Bechuanas, an intelligent tribe in South Africa who have not the slightest idea of immortality. And, according to Dr. Büchner, author of “Force and Matter,” the same may be said of the original followers of Buddha. But it is beyond doubt that many persons are to be found in this country who have a decided objection to live for ever in the “future life” offered by Christianity. The fact is where this desire does exist, it is to a great extent either the result of education and impressions produced in early life, or the wish for a continuance of our present state of existence improved by the fostering and cultivation of the best conditions of that existence. But then does it not occur to Mr. Shepherd that to wish for a thing is no proof that we shall obtain it? Most men desire wealth and fame; how few possess either. All wish for health; thousands nevertheless lack it. In every-day life each of us aspires to some position which in all probability we shall never reach. Any argument therefore for the Christian’s future life based upon the desire for immortality is futile in the extreme.

The proposition that “Science is the providence of life and spiritual dependence may involve material destruction,” is next objected to by Mr. Shepherd, and he refers to the

accident at Sheffield to show that science does not always prevent ruin and devastation. But surely it must be admitted, even by Christians, that the Sheffield flood arose because the teachings of science had been neglected. In any case, however, if attention to the laws of nature fail to produce safety, there is but little chance of any other power interfering on our behalf. "It was not spiritual dependence," says Mr. Shepherd, "which led to the Sheffield flood—it was dependence on that very science which the Secularist regards as the providence of life—they depended upon the embankment. It had been scientifically constructed. But science made a mistake." Had the rev. gentleman acquired a little more scientific knowledge probably he would have recognised that the simple fact of the embankment giving way proved most conclusively that it had not been scientifically constructed. Science could make no mistake. Ignorance of scientific laws, or of some of the circumstances which they might be expected to control, may lead to error, but a thorough knowledge of science never. Suppose an astronomer, but imperfectly acquainted with mathematics, should make a calculation as to the time of an eclipse of the sun, or of the occultation of a planet behind the moon, and it should afterwards turn out that he was wrong in his prediction, would that prove mathematics to be at fault? Certainly not; and any person who should reason as Mr. Shepherd does, and say, see here your boasted science of figures made a mistake, would be deservedly looked upon as a man who had not learned the merest rudiments of logic. The mathematician made the mistake not because his science led him astray, but because he was unacquainted with the principles of that very science which he professed to follow. A chemist places two substances, of the properties of which he knows but little, into a bottle, and an explosion takes place, which kills him. Does this prove that chemistry made a mistake? On the contrary, her laws are infallible. The manipulator was guilty of the blunder, and that because he was ignorant of the science with which he was dealing.

But what reason can be given why that providence of God, of which we hear so much as watching over all the affairs of man, did not prevent the Sheffield flood or the fire of Santiago? "The reply is clear," says Mr. Shepherd. "If God were constantly working miracles to rectify human mistakes, men would never be able to depend upon the laws which govern matter." Exactly! Hence the necessity for

men to depend upon the laws which govern matter, which is the same thing as depending on science. Here Mr. Shepherd has unwittingly conceded the whole point for which the Secularist contends, and himself disposed of his own argument. A dependence on the laws which govern matter is the position of the Secularist, and, judging from Mr. Shepherd's admission, it is also that of the Christian, despite what he says about his special providence. The fact is, the majority of Christians consider that the ages of miracle working have passed away, and although they profess to believe in answers to prayers, whenever they require any material end accomplished, they take care to employ material means for that purpose. Does the cholera attempt to land on our shores, science, not prayer, is summoned to repel the dangerous invader. Does the cattle plague show signs of returning again, science is consulted in preference to any other power to avert the calamity. Does the lightning threaten to level the "house of God" to the ground, "spiritual dependence" is ignored, and science is immediately applied to the Church steeple to prevent the catastrophe. Mr. Shepherd says that "it has always happened that the men who have been most distinguished for scientific knowledge, have been Christians." If this were so, it would only show how little faith Christians have in their religion. For nothing can be more clear than the fact that the Bible ignores science, and puts in its place a "special providence," which it asserts watches over sparrows, and takes care of the hairs on one's head. Science has demonstrated the falsity of the Biblical system of astronomy, of the Mosaic account of the creation of the world, of the Adamic origin of the human race, of the Noachian deluge, and the doctrine of demoniacs believed in by Christ. It is hardly correct, therefore, to state that science is favourable to Christianity. But is it true that the most eminent scientific men have been Christians? It is very difficult to ascertain what constitutes a Christian. If a man keeps in the fashion and goes to Church once or twice a year, even if it be to take a nap, and he does not pointedly call in question the alleged truth of religious dogmas, he is of course put down as a Christian; whereas if such a man were questioned, he probably would be found as sceptical about the supernatural as the most advanced Secularist. Newton is sometimes called a Christian, but he disbelieved in the doctrine of the Trinity, one of the essential articles of faith without a belief in which the Athanasian

creed says man will be damned. Dr. Priestley, an illustrious scientific discoverer of his day, was a most advanced Unitarian and a Materialist, and therefore would not be recognised as a Christian by Mr. Shepherd. In our own day Mr. Darwin and Professor Huxley have been denounced by the Christian world as "infidels," and therefore I suppose they are not Christians. Sir Charles Lyell is Christian but in name. The greatest scientific man, perhaps that ever lived, was Goethe, he made a discovery, that of transcendental anatomy, which eclipsed all that had preceded it, with the exception of gravity. He was a Pantheist, consequently not a Christian. The illustrious Humboldt whose fame is world-wide in natural history, and whose name will live for ages to come, certainly was not a Christian. In France scarcely any of the scientific men even profess Christianity, and Germany—the most scientific land of modern days—is notoriously sceptical.

But we are further told that science will not satisfy man's heart. No one said it would if by heart be meant the emotional feelings. It has no bearing upon these, but there is plenty of room for their cultivation without going to religion or science. When the beauties of nature are sufficiently appreciated and truly valued, enough will be found within the universe to venerate and adore. And here one may recognise a noble aspect of Secularism. A Secularist has a higher opinion of human life, and a better appreciation of the world in which he lives than to regard it as a "vale of tears." We do not groan to be delivered from our present state of existence. We desire rather to improve that existence by suppressing the inferior, and encouraging the superior qualities of human nature. We recognise the possibility of a happier state of society if mankind would but foster and cultivate better and more exalted conditions.

The last point attacked by Mr. Shepherd is that morality can exist independently of scripture. Here it may be mentioned that one thing is certain, that of all the moral codes that have been given to the world by different men, that contained in the Bible is the most imperfect. It makes it an equal sin to wish for something in your neighbour's possession, and to murder a fellow creature; to repeat the word Jehovah and to steal; to do a trifling article of labour on the Sabbath and to commit adultery. Moreover, it teaches that the breaking of one command is a violation of the whole, a most absurd principle, and one which if acted upon in human society would prove most disastrous. Then

the so-called commandments are really nine prohibitions and one commandment. Does anyone believe that all the positive side of man's duty to man is summed up in "Honour thy father and thy mother," and "Love thy neighbour as thyself?" Assuredly not. There are many other positive duties required to enable a man to live a progressive and useful life. Bible teachings frequently sanction immorality of the worse form; any secular scheme therefore need not be very perfect to surpass it. "When you look at lands where Christianity is unknown," writes Mr. Shepherd, "do you find there a high morality independently of scriptural religion?" I answer, what sort of morality do we find here in England, where Christianity is said to flourish so extensively? Read the records of the police courts, and the vice and depravity which are constantly being made known through the medium of the newspapers, and then cease to talk of the immorality of foreign lands. Visit the rural districts of "Christian" England, and the painful fact will be too apparent, that the majority of the inhabitants are sunk into the deepest ignorance and most depraved wretchedness. Scripture teachings can have had but little influence for good upon the morals of a people, when we find that, after three centuries of the rule, discipline, teaching, and example of 20,000 clergymen, besides dissenting ministers, the very classes of society which have been most under their direction and control, are the greatest stigma upon our social condition. Wesley once gave a picture of Christian society, which indicates the "high morality" produced where "gospel truths" are disseminated. After stating that "Bible reading England" was guilty of every species of vice, even those that nature itself abhors, this Christian author thus concludes, "Such a complication of villainies of every kind considered with all their aggravations, such a scorn of whatever bears the face of virtue; such injustice, fraud, and falsehood, above all, such perjury, and such a method of law, we may defy the whole world to produce." More recently Buckle, in his "History of Civilisation," has confirmed many of the statements advanced by Wesley. And two years ago Mr. Baker, the inspector of factories, in his report of workers in South Staffordshire, published a number of facts which showed the great amount of immorality and ignorance existing under a Christian Government. If such a disgraceful state of things as these were to occur in a community governed by Secular principles, Christians would not fail to preach of the immoral tendency of Secularism.

Judging of a tree, therefore, by its fruits, the Christian root must be bad indeed.

"Look," says Mr. Shepherd, "at the palmiest age of Greek philosophy and Greek art. What was the state of morals in Greece, during the age of Pericles and Alcibiades? Was there ever an age in Greece of greater moral depravity?" Is it not easy to retort and ask our rev. friend to glance at the palmiest age of Christianity. What was the state of morals in England during the age of Henry VIII., Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth, and George IV.? Was there ever a period of greater moral depravity and intellectual poverty than during what is known as the "dark ages." Greece and Rome, with all their immorality, will bear comparison with the early ages of Christianity. If history may be relied upon, Christian England is indebted to Pagan Rome and classic Greece for the incentive to much of that morality, culture, and heroism, which give the prestige to modern society. Upon this point, Dr. Temple, in his "Essay on the Education of the World, is very clear." "To Rome," says the Dr., "we owe the forms of local government which in England have saved liberty and elsewhere have mitigated despotism." . . . "It is in the history of Rome rather than in the Bible that we find our models of precepts of political duty, and especially of the duty of patriotism." . . . "To the Greeks we owe the corrective which conscience needs to borrow from nature."

Coming to the present time, the influence of Christianity is visible in Spain and in Rome of to-day. Spain is a country professed to be governed by Christian principles, and what is its condition? As a nation, it is rotten to its very core. Standing upon the brink of bankruptcy and ruin, it requires but the application of the spark of determined heroism to kindle the flame of revolution and anarchy, whereby it will be made to share the fate of all corrupt and imbecile monarchies. In Rome, we behold another melancholy proof of the influence of Christianity. Rome, once the mistress of the world, renowned alike for its valour, its learning, and its taste; from whose forums emanated that eloquence which still shines forth as the production of a noble and heroic people—Rome, once the depository of poetry and the cultivator of art, whose grandeur and dignity could command the admiration of the world—such *was* Rome, but alas! how has she fallen. Now she is a miserable, downtrodden, priest-ridden country, the victim of a vacillating and despotic policy. Her former glory, dignity,

and valour, are gone, and are replaced by a shameless, mean, and cowardly terrorism. She has lost her prestige, her independence has disappeared, and she stands forth a wreck and a monument of reproach to a degrading priesthood and an unprincipled tyrant, who have sapped her vitality and destroyed her very life. With these facts from history, Mr. Shepherd should be more guarded in his assertions as to the influence of Scriptural religion. The truth is, Christianity and morality have no necessary connection whatever with each other.

For the information of the Rev. R. Shepherd, and those who think with him, it may be necessary in conclusion to give a brief but correct answer to the question "What is a Secularist?" A Secularist is one who prefers a knowledge of the natural to faith in the supernatural; who selects reason rather than belief; who will rely upon "those principles having reference to finite determined time as opposed to the undetermined infinite" believed in by Christians. As the question of the existence of God is simply one of conjecture, Secularism leaves it for each mind to decide, if it can, for itself. A Secularist rejects the popular religious dogmas, such as the "Infallibility of the Bible," "Efficacy of Prayer," "Original Sin," "Eternal Torments," "Salvation through Christ," etc., inasmuch that these Christian tenets interfere with and would prevent the performance of Secular duties. The free search after truth Secularism considers is one of man's first duties, and it also urges that the right and duty to express an opinion are equally imperative. In short, a Secularist is one who is willing, irrespective of any creed, to unite into one common brotherhood to promote the welfare and happiness of the human kind, or, in the words of Mr. Shepherd himself, "a Secularist is one who efficiently discharges his worldly duties, and so promotes his own interests, and the welfare of the community." It matters but little what a man's belief may be, providing that that belief does not interfere with a progressive career. To learn how to perform the functions of life aright; how to regulate his conduct in every-day life; how to excel in virtue and intelligence; how to promote the good of others—in a word, how to secure "the greatest happiness for the greatest number," is the object a Secularist has in view. And if there be a God of love and justice, we cannot believe that such a being will punish his children, for doing that which their reason assures them is right and commendable.