

"I'm not ashamed to own the Truth,
Or to defend its cause,
Maintain the goodness of our God,
The wisdom of his laws."

THE DOCTRINES OF THE POPULAR FAITH
CONTRASTED WITH
THE TEACHINGS OF MODERN SPIRITUALISM.

A LECTURE,

Delivered on the Evening of the 5th March, 1891, at the

Longbrook Street Chapel, Exeter,

BY

H. JUNOR BROWNE.

"If God loves only those who love Him, what better is he than a sinner ?
and can God, who is infinitely perfect, be less just than man His creature ?"

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FRIENDS,

As it is erroneously supposed, by the generality of people, that all who reject and denounce the falsities of the popular faith and the conceptions of God it upholds, are athiests, I shall preface my Lecture this evening with the following lines, addressed

TO THE INFINITE.

“ Oh ! sacred Presence, Life divine,
We rear to Thee no gilded shrine
Unfashioned by the hand of art,
Thy temple is the childlike heart.
No tearful eye, no bended knee,
No servile speech we bring to Thee,
For Thy great love tunes ev'ry voice,
And makes each trusting soul rejoice.
We will not mock Thy holy name
With titles high of empty fame,
For Thou with all Thy works and ways
Art far beyond man's feeble praise ;
But truly as the birds that sing,
The soul's spontaneous gift we bring,
And like the fragrance of the flowers
We consecrate to Thee our powers.”

It is a curious fact that although all profess to be animated by the love of truth, there is nothing most people dislike more than those truths which disprove that which they have been taught to believe in as divine verities. They prefer adhering to time-honoured falsities even if they traduce the character of the Almighty, rather than accept that which is self-evidently true, and which represents God in the most adorable aspect, namely, as infinitely good, just, and merciful. Thomas Carlyle declared that there were thirty millions of people in England mostly fools, and I quite agree with him if he referred to their religious beliefs. From having been taught *what* to think instead of *how* to think, the generality of people profess to believe that which will not stand a rational analysis, and which is palpably false and contradictory. For instance, they profess to believe on the one hand that God is good, and on the other hand that He cursed with an eternal curse all mankind yet unborn, because Adam and Eve transgressed ; that He is just, yet that He decreed from the foundation of the world the cruel murder of the innocent Jesus, in order that the guilty might escape from the just consequences of their moral wrongdoings ; that He is merciful, yet that He has prepared a place of eternal torment for the great majority of His children. These are only a few of the many glaring inconsistencies of the popular faith, but they are sufficient for my purpose. As evidence that the orthodox entertain grave doubts of God's mercifulness, I need only mention that they are constantly beseeching Him to have mercy on them ; “ Oh, Lord, have mercy upon me ” is their frequent prayer to our all-merciful Father.

With these few observations, I shall now proceed to briefly compare the doctrines of the popular faith with the teachings of modern Spiritualism, and see which is the more enlightened and rational of the two, and therefore the more worthy of our acceptance and support.

Death is claimed by the orthodox faith to have entered into the world through sin; or, in other words, had Adam and Eve not transgressed, they would have been living on earth to the present day.

Science, on the other hand, proves that death was the natural sequence of physical birth long before man existed on this planet, countless millions of insects and animals having lived and died for thousands, if not millions of years before man appeared upon the scene.

Death is also popularly held to be a consummation to be dreaded by all, as "The great King of Terrors," whereas the fact is, death is a natural and beneficent change which should be looked forward to with complacency by all who have done their duty to their fellow beings when on earth, death being simply the newbirth of the spirit into a higher domain of life. Death has been well termed "the white-winged angel" that comes to call the spirit to its heavenly home when the worn-out physical body is no longer a fit habitation for it.

The reason why death has always been represented by priestcraft as an occurrence to be looked forward to with so much fear and dread is to frighten and overawe its confiding dupes, and thus make them subservient to its purposes. For their selfish ends priests have in all ages traduced the character of the Almighty, representing Him, whose love is infinite, and whose mercy endureth for ever, as a God of wrath and vengeance, who has created the wicked for the day of evil, and who will laugh at them when their calamity cometh, and their dupes seem to like it, for they cling to it tenaciously against the light of truth and reason.

It has been truly observed that the teachings of ecclesiasticism have so warped the judgments of its votaries that they are blind to the truth, causing them to accept as divine verities the most absurd and God-dishonouring statements, merely because they have been branded by priestcraft as of divine authority. We may rest assured, however, that any book, or church, which represents God as jealous, wrathful, unjust, or vindictive, cannot be true or worthy of our acceptance. Whatever is evil in man must be infinitely worse on the part of Deity.

"The wrongs that pain my soul below I dare not throne above,
I know not of His wrath or hate; I know but of His love."

From the facts disclosed through scientific investigation, we learn that God's love is over all, whether they be young or old, learned or unlearned, both in this life and in that which is to come; He being the God of Universal Nature, and not of a sect or church; *that death*, which is as natural as birth, is a beneficent change for all, and that what we really have to dread is the memory of an evil thought, an unkind word, or a bad action.

It is popularly taught that there is no redemption beyond the grave, for as the tree falleth so it layeth. Whereas the fact is, moral probation becometh not with this life. If it did, it would be most unjust

considering the great inequality in the circumstances of men's births and the very different environments by which they are severally surrounded when on earth. Again, if there be no redemption beyond the grave, for what purpose did Jesus, after he had entered spirit-life, go and preach to those who had been in the prison-house of darkness since the days of Noah? Was it merely to tantalize these poor sinners? If so, his character must have completely changed for the worse since he entered into spiritual life, and retrogression be the order of the day there, instead of progression.

In the popular faith the humble Jesus is represented as now sitting as a great Prince on a white throne by the side of the titular deity of the Jews, Javeh or Jehovah, or as riding as the King of Kings on a white horse with a flaming sword in his hand.

Through spiritual communion, however, we learn that a more humble spirit never entered the spirit world than the worthy Judean Reformer, who there recommenced those sublime teachings for which he was so shamefully treated when upon earth. Unselfish love was the distinguishing feature of his life here, and we may rest assured that it is the same in the higher life.

The popular faith teaches that in the world to come the righteous shall see God, whereas through spiritual science we learn that man is a finite spirit, whether in the fleshly body or out of it, and that a finite being can never behold the Infinite. That, as on earth, God can only be seen through His works, so in the future life He can only be seen by His works there, which far transcend in grandeur and beauty those of earth, grand and beautiful as some of these are. This is corroborated in the 1st Epistle of Paul to Timothy vi. 16th, where, in reference to God, it is stated, "Whom no man hath seen, or can see;" and in John i. 18th, it is declared, "No man hath seen God at any time, neither heard His voice."

Although in the Gospel, said to be *according to Mark*, at the 12th chap. 32nd verse, it is declared, "There is one God; and there is none other but He." Jesus is represented in the popular faith as a god, one of three; that he is constantly interceding for mankind with the irate and revengeful senior partner of the trinity, thereby exalting in goodness the man Christ Jesus above his Father and our Father, his *God* and our God. Jesus, on the other hand, is represented in Scripture as having been so humble, that he reproved a young man for even addressing him as "good master," saying there was none good but one, that was God. Now if, as the popular faith teaches, Jesus was God, he must either have been ignorant of the fact, or have wilfully deceived the young man whom he addressed. Our elder brother no more claimed to be God than he claimed to be King of Judea. The very idea that we are brothers and sisters to the Almighty is impious. Such, however, would be the corollary if Jesus were God and our elder brother. The usual orthodox reply to this is, that Jesus was God in essence and man in substance. This argument has clearly been refuted in the following words:—

"Talk of essence and substance, and I know not what,
Either God made Christ, or else He did not,
If He did, Christ's a creature, that's plain to the view,
If not, he's a God, and then we have two."

When the upholders of the popular faith find themselves floored on this point, they cunningly shift their ground and declare that if Jesus and Jehovah were not one, then Jesus was the only begotten son of their God, but they do not inform us if Jehovah had any begotten daughters, or how a son can be as old, or co-eternal with his Father. Surely the latter must be older than his son. They also forget that they claim that Jesus was the fullness of the Godhead bodily, yet it is reported that he said "the Father is greater than I." The deeper this subject of the trinity is probed the more inexplicable it becomes. A doctrine that is not true must be misleading, however revered it may be by the masses. It was evidently borrowed from the old religion of India, with its trinity of Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva, or from the Egyptian trinity of Osiris, Isis, and Horus.

A popular clergyman being asked by an old friend what his private opinion was regarding the doctrine of the trinity, replied *sotto voce*, "I reverence it for its antiquity, I adore it for its absurdity, and I preach it because I am well paid for doing so." How different would the teachings in the various Churches be if the clergy were paid for preaching that which they believed, instead of *that* which is in accordance with the articles of their respective Churches. Take for instance the doctrine of eternal damnation for unbaptised infants, which is distinctly laid down in the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England. How many of your clergy really believe this blasphemous dogma? Not one in a thousand, though few have the honesty to openly repudiate this impious charge against the character of God, whose love is over all. The greatest saint that ever lived might well have envied an infant for its innocence. Baptism is simply an old superstitious ceremony borrowed from the Hindoos, and transferred to the banks of the Jordan from those of the sacred Ganges, where it was practised for thousands of years before the time of Jesus. All the other forms and ceremonies of the popular faith can also be traced to heathen origin. Forms and ceremonies have nothing to do with true religion, they are but the trappings added, for interested motives by priestcraft, to the simple religion of Jesus, viz., love to God and love to man, which comprise all the law and the prophets. It has been truly stated, "The (so called) Christian religion has been tried for eighteen centuries, without making people even honest, the simple religion of Jesus remains to be tried."

"Creeds are but shakles that enslave the mind,
Goodness consists of actions pure and kind."

According to the popular faith the next world is divided into two compartments, namely, a very sparsely peopled place called heaven, with a very narrow gateway at its entrance, into which few go in thereat, and a densely populated place called hell or sheol, with a wide path leading thereto, rendering it easy of access to nine-tenths of God's children. Through spiritual science we learn that this is false as well as God-dishonouring, and that Jesus was right when he declared, as is reported, that in the world to come there were many mansions or spheres. We also learn that there are many grades in these spheres, into one of which, by a natural law, each individual is attracted on entrance into spirit-life, according to his or her character

formed when on earth ; for as we sow here so shall we reap hereafter, irrespective of our faith or belief, so that an honest sceptic is better than a credulous, hypocritical saint.

The popular faith teaches that the life to come is an indolent one of either eternal anthem singing, or of everlasting brimstone roasting ; whereas, through spiritual communion, we learn it is a life of activity to all who desire to progress. This activity consists in doing good to others either on the earth-plane or in the spirit-world, which is the best and only way we can serve God either here or hereafter. As on earth we all can help others either physically, morally, or intellectually, so in the spirit-world, all can assist others morally, intellectually, or spiritually who are less developed than themselves in these respects. The doing of good to others is the noblest work of man and the surest way to secure our own progress in both states of existence, so that the old adages hold good in both worlds, namely, "Thrice blest is he who blesses others," and "An ounce of help is worth a ton of pity." Heaven and hell are states of mind, not localities. When we do good we are in heaven, or are in harmony with that state ; and when we do evil we are in hell, or in sheol as it is now termed in the revised edition of the New Testament. When we enter spirit-life we carry our heaven or our hell with us, for the change called death does not alter our state of mind, but merely our condition. If we have cultivated evil passions here, they remain with us there until we have outgrown them, but *there* the means of satisfying these passions of our lower nature are wanting, so in time die out.

It is popularly taught that the other world is a bourne from which no traveller can return ; that there is a great gulf separating the two worlds which prevents this. If so, how came all the spirits, mentioned in the Old Testament as having communicated with and manifested themselves to men in the flesh, to get over this great gulf ? How came it that Moses and Elias appeared on the mount to the disciples ? and how about the bright spirit which John saw on the Island of Patmos, who reproved John for attempting to worship him, saying, "See thou do it not, for I am one of thy brethren the prophets ?" Why is it enjoined in Scripture to believe not every spirit, and to try the spirits, if they cannot return and communicate with mankind when the necessary conditions are present ? Spiritualism is not only taught in the Bible, but we are therein enjoined to cultivate our spiritual gifts, for to one is given one gift and to another a different gift, &c. Again, if it be wrong to communicate with spirits now, it must have been equally so in Scriptural times, unless it can be proved that God has in the meantime brought in an amending act.

It is popularly taught that man's future state for eternity is fixed by his faith or belief in this life, which, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, is solely dependent on the circumstances of his birth ; whereas we learn through the investigation of spiritual science that man's character is formed, not by his faith, which is a specious name for pious credulity, but by the daily actions of his life here, and that according to his character so is his condition on entrance into spirit-life. If it were otherwise it would be most unjust to all who

never heard of the popular faith, and to those who, in accordance with the reason with which God hath endowed them, have had the honesty to reject such a God-dishonouring belief, which was invented long after Jesus was put to death.

The popular faith teaches that God, who is infinitely good, just, and merciful, will, in the future state, visit the majority of mankind with an infinite punishment for a finite transgression, unless they stultify their reason and receive in blind faith its superstitious, priest-made creeds. Through spiritual science we learn that, by the eternal law of effect following cause, suffering is the natural result of sin, that *that* suffering is mental, temporal, and remedial, therefore it is not, as popularly taught, physical, everlasting, and vindictive.

It is also popularly taught that man can escape the just consequences of his moral wrong-doings here through the merits and sufferings of another, and that thereby the great law of effect following cause can be contravened. Through spiritual science we learn that there is no escape from the consequences of sin by any magical, mystical, or priestly process, and that every sin committed brings its own punishment either in this life or in that which is to come; that the only way we can blot out our transgressions is by covering them over by good actions either when here or when we have entered into spiritual life. It, therefore, follows that the popular doctrine of forgiveness of sins through vicarious sacrifice, which was not invented till long after the cruel murder of the worthy Jesus, is but a snare and a delusion. To uphold the old heathenish doctrine, that there can be no remission of sin without the shedding of blood, is tantamount to maintaining that two wrongs make one right. The putting to death of the worthy man Christ Jesus by his own countrymen is but an example of man's cruelty to man. To ascribe this unjust murder to God, for the purpose of appeasing His divine wrath and satisfying His otherwise implacable revenge is, I maintain, rank blasphemy.

Then trust not faith in foolish creeds,
Blood ne'er can whitewash wicked deeds;
But let your acts here always be
Those which from sin will make you free.

Now let me ask, which of the two views set forth, think you, is the more enlightened, the more rational, and consequently the more worthy of acceptance by us as rational and responsible beings? Do not let the falsely claimed divine authority of a book or church bias your decision. That the churches place themselves at the head of nearly every public charity, I admit, but this is deplomacy on their part, and is for the purpose of giving to their false creeds and dogmas the semblance of truth, in the same way as the chemist coats with sugar his nasty pills in order to induce you to swallow them, and to deceive the palate. The simple religion of Jesus had no absurd creeds, inexplicable dogmas, or any of the imposing ceremonies of ecclesiasticism; neither had it, nor did it require grand anthems and loud sounding organs to attract his followers, as do the churches which falsely profess to teach the religion Jesus inculcated. When you consider the humility of the man Christ Jesus and see or hear of a bloated bishop being enthroned in gorgeous apparel, cannot you

perceive the mockery of ecclesiasticism, and that the whole of this priestly assumption is a palpable public swindle, kept alive for the purpose of exalting the few over the many? Does not the existence of this huge, arrogant, and expensive priestly institution, still in full swing up to the present time, prove that Carlyle was right when he wrote that there were thirty millions in England mostly fools? Protestants see the humbug of Roman Catholicism, but are blind to the humbug of Protestantism, with its close imitation of that of which it is a mere offshoot; as of old, they see the mote that is in their neighbour's eye, but cannot perceive the beam that is in their own. All that God, who dwelleth not in temples made with hands, requires is, that man should act justly and walk humbly in the sight of Him who is ever present, and who knoweth the secrets of men's hearts. If the money that has been expended in building the immense cathedrals and the various churches had been expended in the erection of homes for the houseless poor, and had all the amounts, paid annually to the clergy, for preaching those foolish old Jewish fables which turn from the truth, been devoted to feeding the hungry and clothing the naked, we should not have required the scheme lately initiated by General Booth for the amelioration of the condition of the outcasts of England. Do right, is all the religion required to be taught the people, for this comprises all the law and the prophets, as well as love to God and love to man. God requireth not the praises of men or of angels, for all His works glorify Him. The teachings of Jesus were summed up in a few words, namely, love ye one another. He had no cathedral, or even a church, and he preached without money and without price.

The popular faith, I maintain, is impious, for it represents God as jealous, revengeful, unjust, unmerciful, and vindictive; it also is immoral, as it teaches that man can go on sinning with impunity if he will only at the eleventh hour believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and him crucified. No wonder, with such misleading teachings, that the world is still steeped in sin and misery. No wonder, that with all your old cathedrals, churches, and chapels, large court-houses and prisons are still required in your midst; as long as people are taught to worship a wicked God, who is represented as having decreed the cruel murder of one of His noblest sons, and to have broken almost every one of His own laws, how can they be expected to become righteous? Teach them the truth, as revealed by spiritual communion, viz., that if even they escape from punishment in this life for evil deeds committed, there is a world of retributive justice in which every sin brings its own suffering, and from which there is no escape, and you will soon find an improvement. Do not teach them that God is so wicked as to have created a fiery hell to eternally roast them in, but rather that there is hope and happiness for all eventually in that life towards which every one of us is travelling, each day that passes bringing us nearer and nearer thereto. Modern spiritualism corroborates all the truths and moral teachings of both the Hebrew and the Greek Scriptures. It is only their absurd legendary fables and the God-dishonouring and false dogmas, still popularly taught, that it denounces and repudiates.

The generality of those belonging to the popular faith, I may here

observe, look on spiritualists in anything but a favourable light, forgetting that all who believe in a future life for man are spiritualists. While viewing ancient spiritualism with feelings of respect and even reverence, they inconsistently hold Modern Spiritualism to be a superstition. Instead of this being the case, it is the exploiter of all superstition. Surely that which rests on a scientific basis, the phenomena of which can be obtained in your own homes, cannot be a superstition? Without these phenomena, I maintain we have no rational evidence of a life to come, and religion is a mere farce based on credulity or speculation as to there being a future life for man. Then if, as some assert, the phenomena of Modern Spiritualism be all the result of trickery and delusion, this argument will apply equally to the phenomena recorded in the Scriptures, with the advantage to the former that their reality can be tested, which cannot be done with the latter. That there has been a large amount of imposture connected with the movement by unscrupulous persons does not effect the genuine manifestations, any more than a forged bank-note proves that all others are forgeries. On the contrary, in both cases it is palpable evidence that there are the genuine to copy from. Those who, on the other hand, assert that the spiritual phenomena of our day are work of the Devil, must first prove that such a personage exists; and, even if they were able to do this, they would only be knocking the ground from under their own feet, for if the Devil is the author of the modern manifestations, he must have been the author of those in scriptural times, both being of a similar character in many respects. The question may arise: Why are spiritual phenomena so uncommon now? The answer to this is simple—Because the Church has, for more than a thousand years, closed its doors against spiritual manifestations, and people have in consequence neglected to cultivate their spiritual gifts as enjoined in the Scriptures, and to prove all things, holding fast to that which is good.

Through the realization of the facts brought to light through Modern Spiritualism, a silver lining is given to every dark cloud in this world of trial, pain, and sorrow. I can truly say, from personal experience, that the knowledge obtained through the investigation of spiritual science has given me that peace which passeth all understanding in the darkest hours of my life, which the popular faith failed to supply under less trying circumstances. This knowledge supports and comforts in the hour of death in a manner that no religion based on mere belief can ever supply, as thousands besides myself can testify. This knowledge bridges the tomb, withdraws the veil, and brings heaven to earth by uniting us, even while here, with the loved ones gone before.

Spiritualism, therefore, notwithstanding all the misrepresentations and ridicule that have been leveled against it, is a subject well worthy of the earnest investigation of all who desire "more light," who are not afraid of the truth, and who can stand the sneers of their prejudiced and ignorant friends, in the attainment of that which truly robs death of its sting, and the grave of its victory.

I shall conclude by repeating a few lines that came to me, without thought on my part, many years ago. They are as follows, and are

AN ODE TO TRUTH.

Oh, Truth ? thou beauteous gem, thou pearl of all the seas,
Visible throughout God's works to men of all degrees ;
Shine forth in all thy splendour, enlighten ev'ry mind,
Extinguish cherished errors, emancipate mankind.
From bigotry and priestcraft the souls of men release,
Let superstitious follies and false religions cease.
Then true worship by our acts shall senseless creeds displace,
And base notions of our God no longer man disgrace.
Then shall thy simple teachings, by Jesus once proclaimed,
Divested of all errors by which they've been defamed,
Shine as the second advent, or Love's sublime new birth,
And countless milleniums reign verily on earth.

ADDENDA.

At the close of the address, the Lecturer replied to a number of questions put by the audience in reference to the subjects under consideration. He also stated that if, during his short stay in Exeter, any of those interested were willing to take a suitable Hall in the City for the purpose, he was prepared to meet in debate any accredited member of the various churches with which Exeter is so well supplied, from the Bishop downwards. He further stated that he alone was responsible for the statements he had made that evening. On the other hand, he does not hold himself responsible for the acts or statements of others professing to be Spiritualists. Spiritualism differs from the popular faith in this respect ; that while the followers of the latter are supposed to be bound by the same belief, those of the former are held to be individually responsible for their respective views, actions, and statements. So far from the popular faith being harmonious as is claimed for it, we have only to look at the innumerable sects into which it is divided, to prove the inharmony of the one book on which they all profess to base their varying beliefs, and of the jealousies, if not hatred, which exist among them, while he who they claim as their master is reported to have said, "Love ye one another."

The following, which appeared in the "Devon Evening Express" of March 9th, expresses, with a few slight emendations, the views held by the Lecturer :—

CHRISTIANITY : ITS FOUNDER AND ITS FOLLOWERS.

A CONTRAST.

In Nazareth a boy did live ;
One destined to the world to give
A pure religion for all time.
The brain which harboured thoughts sublime,
Had not in College routine grown,
But reason fruitful seed had sown.
The rich were not they whom he sought ;
He loved the poor, the poor he taught,
And for his work his only pay
Was homely hospitality.
No priestly palace his abode,
An ass the proudest beast he rode ;
Aspired he not to princely state,
Nor lived he as a potentate.
He loved good cheer and cheery mirth,
And all the good things of the earth ;
His prayers were in few words addressed,
Good deeds he deemed his worship best.
The sea, the field, the mountain wild
To him were temples undefiled ;
No mitre, gown, or special dress
Had he to clothe his righteousness ;
His work was not a trade of gain,
His death was but a death of pain.
His followers must to College go,
And then with mediæval show,
Believe themselves a special race,
Wear solemn airs and lengthened face.
The rich they praise, the poor deceive
With surplice, mitre, and lawn-sleeve ;
Their pay by thousands must be told,
Yet preach they, curs'd is love of gold ;
A palace must be their abode,
Their legs in gaiters must be clothed ;
A retinue have they to wait
Upon their spiritual lord's estate ;
In lengthy prayers and pagan creeds
They waste their time ; man's goodly deeds
They say are nought 'less he receive
And inexplicable creeds believe ;
They cannot worship, save in mass
'Mid sculptured stone and coloured glass ;
His simple life they imitate
In lux'ry, pride and high estate,
And for his truths of love and light,
A funeral pall as black as night,
They draw around the searching mind
That would their Master's meaning find.

M. B.

1617

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