

some other artificial basis must be found. The conception of the *unknown* without that of an *afterdeath* . . . ! No!

Of the existing Churches the Protestantism of l'Abbé Poquesal is what I would prefer. But instead of taking the Bible, I would take a compendium of moral extracts of the wise men of all nations: Confucius, Christ, etc. I am not sufficiently acquainted with India to speak of it. All my morality would turn around these two phrases:

Do to others, Do what you would wish to be done to you: Love one another.

You see that after all I am a Christian. But really my convictions are not yet settled. Be it as it may, it is by the mother's education that there is possibility of doing something.

P. S.—Note the three sorts of justice: The posthumous justice of Christ at the time of the Resurrection; the posthumous justice of the Catholic faith for the survival of the individual soul; and justice on earth, are absolutely negative. The pantheism of Buddhism, monotheist or any other, does not imply any idea of justice. No, I see no basis for it save in equality or reciprocity of conduct; that reciprocity has no sanction except law and the policeman.

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### TOLSTOY'S PARTING WORD TO THE CLERGY.

Count Leo Tolstoy's excommunication has caused a considerable excitement all over the world, and Russian newspaper reports indicate that the old venerable reformer felt the sting of it considerably more than might have been expected. We are now in possession of Tolstoy's *Appeal to the Clergy*, translated into English by Mr. Maude and forwarded us through his friend, Mr. E. H. Crosby. Mr. Maude has translated the entire document, and we have selected from it the most significant and telling passages, those which are most characteristic of the whole, cutting it down to about one-third of the original. In going over the pages as they go to press we cannot help thinking that it is a most remarkable document. It is Tolstoy's parting word; he is serious about the matter he has to communicate and takes into consideration that he is "standing on the brink of his grave." There is no frivolity, no flippancy about Tolstoy; he is a deeply religious man and his *Appeal* deserves a hearing.

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### THE GREAT APOSTACY.

In Tolstoy's article, written in reply to the clergy of his Church, the State Church of Russia, we have a symptom of the fermentation that is agitating the religious world. The reader is apt to gain the impression that the Churches are full of hypocrites, but undoubtedly there are pious souls in the Greek Church, as well as in the Roman, Anglican, and Protestant Churches, but a change in our world-conception makes our religious institutions totter in their foundations. What will become of it?

Before us lies a little pamphlet<sup>1</sup> written by an Episcopalian clergyman, rector of a church in Pennsylvania, and his essay is a "voice crying in the wilderness," and representing in many respects the opposite pole to the sentiment of Tolstoy. The Rev. Thomas Scott Bacon is a pious orthodox Christian, who is perhaps little touched by the changes that are being wrought in the world. He is shocked at

<sup>1</sup>*The Great Apostacy of the Twentieth Century.* Baltimore: The Sun Printing Office. 1903. Pp. 42.

"the Great Apostacy of the Twentieth Century," and finds in this falling away from the original doctrines of Christianity an awful symptom of the age. He does not cling to the eccentricities of the doctrine. He makes no mention of all the incredible acts of Biblical history and the miracles related in history which are enumerated by Tolstoy in a simple contrast to the moral side of Christianity, and would splendidly agree with Tolstoy in all the main points of his religious convictions; but it seems that to him the doctrines and the traditions of the Church are included in the religion of love, and ought not to be dropped, while Tolstoy would discard them for the sake of re-establishing the authority of Christ's moral injunctions. A few quotations will characterise the spirit of Rev. Bacon's essay:

"The word 'Apostacy' is chosen, after long and careful consideration of its force, in this account of the present religious condition. It is a word of divine prophecy, not to be used in human speech 'unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, discretely, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God.' It is also essentially a very solemn, and, in the exact sense of that epithet, an *awful* word, which should never designate what is not most serious,—and with which affectations or personal ambitions of any kind should in no case be associated."

The Christian doctrine is summarised as follows:

"No Christian, we may suppose, will deny that in the authentic book of Divine history this is recorded: 'Then one asked (tempting him), Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.'"

"Another distinction is set upon these words of which there is no parallel in all the Holy Scriptures. A 'second' and supplemental commandment, 'like unto it,' is added; and then follows this declaration: 'On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.' This in effect declares that all the Holy Scriptures then written were dependent upon and to be understood only by that first and great commandment of God, and the second like unto it. It follows, then, of course, that the Gospel of our Lord, including all the Holy Writings of the New Testament, which are the divinely-written record and doctrine of His Church, rests upon those Commandments."

Little thought is given to the difficulties of retaining all the dogmas and Church traditions which have become incredible to us. Rev. Bacon believes that all attempts at reconciling the two standpoints, "love of God" and "love of the world," are futile. He says:

"There appear to be a few Christian evolutionists who are struggling for a 'reconciliation' (or a *modus vivendi*) between this and Christian faith and love. But there is no holding-ground for 'an anchor of the soul' in such treacherous quicksands. It drifts to the fatal *doubt*, whether there is a *personal* God to be known and loved."

What then is the burden of Rev. Bacon's belief? He believes that Christians should be fearless in their love of God and their neighbor, and he sums up the question

"We can begin now, each of us, to make the will of God to be done on earth as it is in heaven,—in that little part of earth, his own heart. We can get in touch with some other hearts, to the same effect; discover others yet which have the same inspiration and ambition and help one another in the same way. There is no limit of impossibility to what may come of this, with loving faith in God as a grain of mustard seed.

"Did any man ever propose a better method for it than this?—'As we have therefore opportunity let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.' The especial love of the brethren is distinctly mentioned. We are fellow-members of 'the household of God,'—of each soul of that 'blessed company of all believing people,' loving the Church in this way, not because it is the Church,—or our Church, but because it is 'the Church of God.' For this very purpose,—because 'God so loved the world,'—our love must reach out to 'all nations' and 'every (human) creature.' Thus may we long and toil until—(either before or after the Second Coming of Our Lord) 'the earth shall be filled with the knowledge and love of God, as the waters cover the seas.'"

The Rev. Mr. Bacon's Christianity is certainly commendable, and though his view of God is probably different from ours, we can understand him and shake hands over an abyss of scientific differences, but we would say that the two commandments of Christ are not two behests, but that according to the traditions of the Church they are one and one only, the first being interpreted by the second; and we, from our radical standpoint, believe in the God of science, believe that God is not a person but a superpersonal norm of light, so that we find no fault with this interpretation. The American Churches, which are not State Churches but free institutions, are in a position to develop in this right line, and in fact, so far as I can judge, they do expand and grow, and reach out higher to the last rung of the ladder of evolution. We need not spurn the Bible or any of the traditional dogmas of the Church, If we cease to believe them to be literal revelations of God, we can still reverence them as the landmarks of man's religious development. We must only bear in mind that life must progress, and religious truth is as much subject to the law of growth as is all other life, as well as intellectual life.

Yet there is one essential truth to be noted: whatever changes there may be in our intellectual comprehension, the right moral ideas have always been the same, and once recognised will remain unalterable. The Golden Rule, which Tolstoy takes to be the essential doctrine of Christianity, cannot be changed by any widening of our intellectual horizon, and the religion that spreads "good will on earth" is absolutely true, and will remain true, whatever the riddles of life have in store for us.

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### FREETHOUGHT CONGRESS AT ROME IN 1904.

At the International Freethought Congress at Geneva in September last year it was resolved that the next Congress should be held at Rome in 1904, Sept. 20th. No time has been lost in commencing the preparatory labors of the organisation.

M. Léon Furnémont, Deputy for Charleroi to the Belgian Parliament, and General Secretary of the International Rationalist Federation, is now in London for the purpose of forming an English committee.

Similar committees have already been formed in various other countries, notably France, Belgium, Italy, Spain, Holland, and Switzerland. On the several national committees there figure such well-known names as those of Professor Haeckel, the illustrious German professor; Professor Berthélot, secrétaire perpétuel of the Académie des Sciences at Paris; MM. Aulard, Gabriel Séailles, professors at the Sorbonne; M. Hervé, director of the Institut des Hautes Etudes at Paris; such distinguished senators as MM. Clemenceau and Delpech; and numerous deputies, representing all shades of the Republican party, among whom MM. Buisson, Lockroy, and Hubbard may be noted.