

we need not be astonished that the innovator is anathematized and his sincere convictions set down as the raving of a deluded mind and the clamor of a corrupted heart. "He blasphemeth!" is an old cry, and we shall cease to hear it only when men keep sequestered in their hearts a clean altar to the most austere of divinities which is Truth, and understand that though tongues cease and prophecies are made void, this God remains as authoritative as immortal. When that day comes we shall see too that of all the handmaidens of Truth the chief is Charity. Until then it behooves us to have much patience and make few remonstrances; to work steadfastly and endure nobly; to hasten as we can the coming day, and if our eyes shall not see it, to die content. It will come in its season despite our weakness and our adversaries' strength.

MY RELIGIOUS CONFESSION.

BY DR. NATHANIEL I. RUBINKAM.

[On returning the proofs of his article "The Bible and the Future Pulpit," together with the editorial reply entitled "The Loyalty of Clergymen" published in the November number of *The Open Court*, Dr. Rubinkam sends the following communication which we publish in justice to him.—ED.]

To the Editor of The Open Court:

Many thanks for your courtesies in sending me your reply to my article on "The Bible and the Future Pulpit." You are at full liberty to publish it in case you, at the same time, print this rejoinder which amounts to a religious confession.

When you assert that the churches are now willing to hear the truth, I would ask, what truth? Would they listen to what I regard the truth, that a "revealed" religion is a thing simply of the imagination; the truth that the Bible has no authority above other books; the truth that the church has no calling superior to any other human institution?

As to my "prejudice" it was originally, and is still, apart from dogma, in favor of the institution in which both myself and my ancestors were deeply imbedded. I was born in the lap of the old orthodoxy. I was educated at the University of Princeton under President James McCosh. After a year in the household of the great German pietist, Dr. August Tholuck, I came back to America and graduated at the Princeton Theological Seminary under Dr. Charles Hodge.

During twenty years of service in the orthodox pulpit, I made one long persistent study of the evidences of what I was preaching. I left no stone unturned. I went to the Orient, studied "holy" places, and the "sacred" persons who were the alleged vehicles of revelation.

Still dissatisfied I returned to Germany and gave long years to research, and took my doctor's degree in Oriental philology and the historical criticism of the Old Testament. My conviction became well grounded, absolute and incontrovertible, that the Bible is a book for the study and dispute of scholars, but in no sense a revelation to the modern man. As to the dogmas founded upon it, I became thoroughly convinced that the idea of the "second person of the Trinity," a child of the "third person," dying to appease a "first person" angered at the human race, was the merest theological drivel.

In spite of all my ancestral and personal prejudices *for* the church, in spite of all family and social influences, I was deeply imbued with the conclusion that the Christian's devil in hell and Father in heaven were pure theological fictions.

My historical critical studies of the Bible showed me that no miracle has occurred in the course of human time.

In spite of my prejudice for the pastoral relation, in spite of a good salary, ten years ago I walked out of one of the best of the Chicago churches.

I was at that time nearing middle life, and did not know whence financial support would come.

In the ten years since I left the ministry, I have come to a world-view as complete and satisfactory, I believe, as it is possible for a man to obtain.

I am not an atheist, for atheism as well as theism in any theological sense, has been wiped from my vocabulary. I believe that every effect has a cause, and if we could reach the author of the vast and wonderful universe, he too must be an effect, requiring a cause, and hence we come simply to an infinite series of causes. I am not an infidel, as we have no national revelation to deny, and as I am, I trust, true to myself. I am not an agnostic. I dislike the phrase manufactured by Huxley. I am open to all the knowledge which may be discovered by the indefatigable endeavors of science, psychical research included.

I am none of the *ites* following the *isms* which the inquiring religious minds of the world have formulated. I am simply a child of vast, glorious, baffling nature, and belong to the race of humanity still in the evolutionary struggle.

To be explicit: In my opinion, all of the world's "revealed religions," all heavens and all hells, and all supernaturalism, are simply and wholly the products of the imagination.

It is the privilege and duty of every intelligent man and nation, improving upon the past, from present experience and knowledge of nature, to formulate a new ethics and religion. These should be taught our children in the public schools, not as dogma but as present knowledge, leaving to the unfolding wisdom of the future to do the same. This is the only logical attitude toward the thought of evolution.

I am a lover of nature, and my religion consists in a love of nature in its widest, all-enfolding sense. You quote a friend who has a satisfaction in a personal Heavenly Father, and who has a certain knowledge of Him. I have no objection to this view, for your friend. I too am an idealist and believe in the power of the human mind to create ideals, and to commune with them. I know of another who talks with Jesus, of one who communes with the Virgin Mary, of another who converses with his dead friends, and still another holds friendly intercourse with "the devil"; one acquaintance, of the baser sort, actually sees snakes and demons prowling and crawling about in his room. I have a friend in the Christian pulpit whose god is simply his higher life ideals. In my view these phenomena are all in "the mind's eye."

To me there is sufficient in wide nature to satisfy all religious aspiration, to give all possible comfort. In other words I am thoroughly happy in this religion of the natural universe, as happy as I think it possible for a man to be in this world, so far as religion is concerned.

I sympathize with Rostand's blackbird who cannot believe that the chanter's crow makes the sun to rise, and says: "It is not my fault that I am no gull."

The professors who are the editors of the religious magazine and a year ago asked me to write for them the article, could not publish it on account of their readers. They are holding down their positions, and I do not blame

them; for a church that educates young men and starts them to preach and teach its system, is in an important sense responsible—and after wife and children are added to life's expenses, the church owes them a living.

But I could not retain such a position. In spite of all the sacrifices that were involved in leaving the church, in spite of all the neglect and obloquy which follow in the train of such an action, I have been content and to a degree successful in obtaining a living in the line of my ideals.

While I continually cherish a love and a charity toward all who differ from me in opinion, I have each day the glory of possessing a completely free, unbiased, untrammelled mind.

THE BERLIN CENTENNIAL TO FICHTE.

The University of Berlin has this year celebrated the centennial anniversary of its existence. It was founded during the most trying days of Prussia when Germany lay prostrate at the feet of the French conqueror and when patriotic men despaired of the future of their country. We must remember that in spite of their deep humiliation these days were glorious times in the history of Germany, for then German genius celebrated its greatest triumphs in philosophy, literature and music. This was the period in which Kant and Fichte, Goethe and Schiller, Mozart and Beethoven, created their immortal works. In the year 1810 the great naturalist Humboldt suggested to the King of Prussia the foundation of a university, and Fichte, the most brilliant disciple of Kant, was selected as its rector.

Fichte's philosophy is considered a most thorough-going idealism, to some extent resembling Berkeley and having analogies in the Vedantism of ancient India. The only realities we know of are the feelings, ideas and volitions of the ego, and the absolute ego is God. It would be difficult to explain, defend or criticise Fichte's philosophy without entering into details, and so we rest satisfied with the bare statement, for we deem it out of place to discuss the subject in this connection.

Whatever we may think of his philosophy, Fichte stands out as a gigantic figure in the history of the German people, for he distinguished himself by moral courage evinced in the presence of the foreign usurper. He appealed to the patriotism of the citizens of Berlin through his *Reden an die deutsche Nation*, though he knew that he risked his life. It is well known that Napoleon had Herr Palm, a harmless bookseller, shot on a much slighter provocation.

Johann Gottlieb Fichte was born at Rammenau in 1762; he entered upon the theological course at the University of Jena in 1780. Financial troubles required him to become tutor in 1784, and in 1788 he accepted a similar position in Zurich where he met his future wife, a niece of Klopstock. In 1790 he gave private instruction in Leipsic, and here he became acquainted with Kant's philosophy. In 1791 he sought and found a position as tutor in Königsberg in order to be near Kant and to know him personally. He introduced himself to Kant by sending him a pamphlet on "The Critique of all Revelation," which appeared anonymously the next year and was thought to be written by Kant. As a result of this pamphlet he was offered the chair of philosophy at Jena in 1793 and was married the same year. His "Theory of Science" appeared in 1794; "Natural Law" (*Naturrecht*) in 1796; and "The Theory of Morals" in 1798. Accused of atheism, he resigned his chair in 1799, and finally took refuge in Berlin. His "Vocation of Man" appeared in