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It has become the fashion to distinguish between theology and religion. At one time, not so long since, the terms were synonymous, but they now seem to be diverging with the development of the thought which associates religion with the natural, and theology with the supernatural. Theology is that which expresses a knowledge of a personal deity. It is sometimes called a science, and it has certain generalisations which give its pretensions a color of exactitude. To discard theology is simply to abandon or discredit the supernatural. That this is the line of movement of the best thought of the age hardly admits of much doubt. On the other hand new interpretations are given to religion. The worship of art or science is religion in the natural sense. The worship of Humanity—Father Man—is religion with the Positivists. The desire to be good and do good, is a religious impulse in the eyes of the clerical author of "Village Politics." (See Reviews). And religion may be confined to the cultivation of morals. An Oxford professor—the author of *Ecce Homo* and of *Natural Religion*—finds the synonym of Religion in the term Culture, a word closely allied with Worship, but with an appropriate meaning of its own. Thus the word has become a shield to protect those who are in transition from a recognition of the supernatural to positive belief only. In this sense all intelligent earnest men are religious. Though the interpretation may be strained, the meanings indicate the vastness of the change that is rapidly disintegrating old forms of religious belief.

The death-beds of Freethinkers are a perennial source of comfort and joy to the faithful. The subject formed the staple argument in Mr Forlong's attempt to establish the truth of Christianity in Wanganui; "Tom Paine" serving as an example of what a man may come to whose belief and life are not governed by the fear of punishment after death. If true that Thomas Paine did shrink in the last moments and confessed his life a lie—and no greater untruth than the statement about this great man has ever done duty in vouching for the credibility of a hard-pressed religion—it would not be a good argument for the truth of Christianity. The weakness of the body immediately preceding death is generally an index to the mind. That is not the time when men are most likely to take just and comprehensive views of evidence or of questions involving sustained reasoning power. The death-bed argument tells against the system of rewards and punishments, for these are the inducements which tend to silence reason, acting as they do on the self-preserving instincts of the weak. There are of course weak natures who in weak moments would recant former opinions, but the fact expresses nothing more than a distressing phase of human nature. A belief in the "innocency of honest error," as Lecky has it, is the best protection against contingencies. Paine had braved death more than once without changing his opinions. The evidence moreover is overwhelming that the Christian story about his death-bed recantation is a pious fraud.

Geology has something to say about the theory of earthquakes, but it is equally certain that the time is far distant when the 'last word' will have been said on the subject. One thing is known, that the capacious bosom of mother earth contains the fires, the gases, the vapours, or other agencies which cause these visitors to fright so many isles from their propriety. The disaster at Ischia in Italy by which so many as 5000 human beings lost their lives shows the energy of the forces at work. Does it at the same time show a Providence? A Providence that observed the fall of a sparrow would be directly responsible for every life lost in that fearful catastrophe. It is more rational to suppose, however, that the conflicting elements of Nature were the efficient agents, and that Providence was asleep or non-existent. For, a Providence which does not *provide* is a contradiction. How silent are the ecclesiastics over the calamity! To-day, thanks to the spread of knowledge, they are content to see the Government issue an order that the houses in Ischia shall in future have no masonry in their structure, but be built of wood or iron. The deposition of Providence is a scientific fact.

The Rev. Charles Strong's orthodoxy is to be tested by the Melbourne Presbytery in a practical manner. Imagining that he is unsound on the divinity of Christ, he is to be questioned by the Presbyterian Inquisition as to his belief in the doctrines revolving in the system of which the god-man is the centre. If he refuse to answer he will be held contumacious. If he answer hesitatingly, his heresy will be met by a "libel," in the technical vocabulary of the Corporation. If he answer that he does not believe in the godhead of Jesus, he will be pronounced a heresiarch at once and perhaps deposed. Of Presbyterian actions of "libel" we know as little as one outside the pale ought to know of affairs of the kind, and therefore it is necessary to say that we cannot speak with authority on points of procedure. Mr. Strong is said not to have given prominence to the atonement and its associated doctrines. The inference might be drawn from this that he is in doubt, and in that transition state where conscientious minds hold opinions in abeyance or provisionally until a kind of certitude has been reached. The feature of the controversy affording edification, is where the *life* of the alleged heretic has attached to the man a large body of the laity of Melbourne, and his own congregation unanimously, who are ready to place *it* above all doctrines and confessions—a very hopeful outlook for the progress of the reformation which is gradually eliminating the supernatural and finding its account in good works alone.

The publisher of this Review informs us that he has no reason to complain of the general willingness of booksellers to undertake the agency on the usual business terms, but he has met with a number of refusals, chiefly on prudential grounds—the fearful consequences of being found selling freethought literature. The dread of being boycotted by their Christian customers has in-