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*Marilla H. Pickens.*

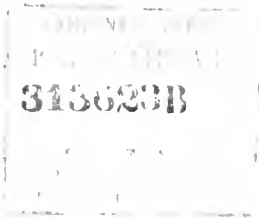


I DON'T KNOW  
DO YOU?

BY

MARILLA M. RICKER

DONE INTO  
A PRINTED BOOK BY THE ROYCROFTERS  
AT THEIR SHOPS, WHICH ARE IN  
EAST AURORA, NEW YORK  
MCMXVI



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By  
Marilla M. Ricker



You are what you think, and to believe in a Hell for other people is literally to go to Hell yourself.—*Elbert Hubbard*.

A religious man is a man scared.

**THERE** is in the city of Boston a memorial building to Thomas Paine. This Paine Memorial was finished and dedicated forty-two years ago. It is the finest monument to Thomas Paine on the earth.

For twenty years Ralph Washburn Chainey has been the Manager of this building and the Treasurer of the Paine Memorial Corporation. Under his wise and prudent management the building was freed from debt, and today it is a monument to the energy and devotion of its Manager as much as to the genius and labors of Thomas Paine.

Ralph Washburn Chainey is only forty-two, and as great an example of thrift as Ben Franklin was. Very early in life he acquired the habit of thrift—which is the basis of all virtues. He learned early that time was money, and he is always at work. He is not only able to take care of himself, but he can and does take care of others. He is sufficient unto himself, and when one is right with himself he is right with all the world. I have known him intimately for more than a quarter of a century, and if he has faults I have yet to learn what they are.

In appreciation, therefore, of his great service to the cause of Freethought, I dedicate this volume to

—Marilla M. Ricker.

As man advances, as his intellect enlarges, as his knowledge increases, as his ideals become nobler, the Bibles and creeds will lose their authority, the miraculous will be classed with the impossible, and the idea of special providence will be discarded. Thousands of religions have perished, innumerable gods have died, and why should the religion of our time be exempt from the common fate?

—*Robert Ingersoll.*

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I know of no other book that so fully teaches the subjection and degradation of woman as the Bible.

—*Elizabeth Cady Stanton.*

That God had to come to earth to find a mother for his son reveals the poverty of Heaven.





Any system of religion that shocks the  
mind of a child can not be a true system.

—*Thomas Paine.*

Hell is a place invented by priests and  
parsons for the sake of being supported.



## CREEDS AGAINST CIVILIZATION



ONE hundred fifty years ago, there was not a single white man in what is now Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. What is now the most flourishing part of the United States was then as little known as the country in the heart of Africa itself. It was not until Seventeen Hundred Seventy-six that Boone left his home in North Carolina to become the first settler in Kentucky; and the pioneers of Ohio did not settle that territory until twenty years later.

Canada belonged to France one hundred fifty-three years ago, and Washington was a modest Virginia Colonel, and the United States was the most loyal part of the British Empire, and scarcely a speck on the political horizon indicated the struggle that in a few years was to lay the foundation of the greatest republic in the world.

One hundred fifty years ago there were but four small newspapers in America; steam-engines had not been imagined; and locomotives and railroads, and telegraphs and postal cards, and friction-matches, and revolvers and percussion-caps, and breechloading-guns and Mauser rifles, and stoves

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and furnaces, and gas and electricity and rubber shoes, and Spaulding's glue, and sewing-machines and anthracite coal, and photographs, and kerosene-oil, free schools, and spring-beds and hair-mattresses, and lever-watches and greenbacks were unknown. The spinning-wheel was in almost every family, and clothing was spun and woven and made up in the family ; and the printing-press was a cumbrous machine worked by hand.

Down to Eighteen Hundred Fourteen every paper in the world was printed one side at a time, on an ordinary hand-press ; and a nail, or a brick, or a knife, or a pair of shears or scissors, or a razor, or a woven pair of stockings, or an ax or a hoe or a shovel, or a lock and key, or a plate of glass of any size, was not made in what is now the United States ☛ ☛

In Seventeen Hundred Ninety, there were only seventy-five post-offices in the country, and the whole extent of our post-routes was less than nineteen hundred miles ; cheap postage was unheard of ; so were envelopes ; and had any one suggested the transmission of messages with lightning speed, he would have been thought insane. The microscope on the one hand and the telescope on the other were in their infancy as instruments of science ; and geology and chemistry were almost unknown, to say nothing of the telephone and all

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the other various phones, and the X-rays, and hundreds of other new things.

In Seventeen Hundred Sixty-two there were only six stagecoaches running in all England, and these were a novelty. A man named John Crosset thought they were so dangerous an innovation that he wrote a pamphlet against them. "These coaches," he wrote, "make gentlemen come to London upon every small occasion which otherwise they would not do, except upon urgent necessity. The conveniency of the passage makes their wives come often up, who, rather than come such long journeys on horseback, would stay at home. Then when they come to town they must be in the 'wade' [probably that is where the word *swim* comes in now], get fine clothes, go to plays, and treats, and by these means get such a habit of idleness and love of pleasure that they are uneasy ever after."

E can all see how much improvement there

has been in all things but *creeds*. Improvements can come, and old things go, but *creeds* go on forever! A creed implies something fixed and immovable. In other words, it means you have a "heel-rope on."

The word "creed" is from *credo*, "I believe." We have had a great deal of compulsion of belief, and a thousand years of almost absolute unanimity. Liberty was dead and the ages were dark. We call

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them the Middle Ages because they were the death between the life that was before and the life that came after. Then came a new birth of thought—a “ Renaissance ”—and after this, some reformation in the form of a Protestantism.

Since then, the Protestants have continued to protest, not only against the old, but against each other. And this is the best thing they have done. Thus liberty has been saved, for each would have coerced its fellow organization, as did their infamous mother, the Roman Catholic Church, before them. From “ creed ” comes “ credulous ” and “ credulity.” And they have filled the world with their kind. In the United States alone, there are about one hundred forty types. Each is a system of credulity pitted against a hundred and thirty-nine others. They all rest on authority. They all denounce investigation—unless it has for its end the support of their authority.

Hence, with the exception of two or three denominations, to become a professed Christian means to accept credulously and without question a system of belief about Nature and man and the world which you would deny in toto if you reasoned as you do about other things, and which you do practically deny by re-explaining and refining it into anything but what is stated. Down deep in your heart you do not, and never did, believe it in the same honest

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way in which you form your other opinions.

¶ Think for a moment of the Christian idea of the world, its origin, its shape, place, importance, and its final end. Does any man or woman who has been through a common-school geography believe the ideas implied in the common Christian dogmas regarding the world? We must remember that the world taught in the geography is not the Christian world ☞ ☞

The world taught in the Christian dogmas is beneath the heavens—not a rolling sphere flying through space. It is flat, and the sun and stars pass over it daily. It is the chief object of God's creation on which to place man. It is God's footstool, and his throne is Heaven above. He created it just four thousand and four years before the Christian era began. Now we *all* know that this is *not* true ; that there is no up nor down ; that the earth is not the center ; that it is *not* flat ; that the sun does not go round it ; that it is a very insignificant little orb ; that “ up in Heaven ” is an utterly meaningless expression ; and that the world is not a creation, but an evolution.

And yet thousands of people credulously cling to creeds which embody the notions of barbarous or uncivilized ages.

Take the dogma of revelation. It tells us that the Bible is a revelation of the will and wisdom of an

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omniscient God ; that it is a perfect and sufficient rule of faith and practise. What, in the name of humanity, causes people to make such statements today? It is like trying to light the house with a saucer of tallow in which a rag is immersed, instead of using gas or electricity.

Take an example of this Bible. In Deuteronomy xiv : 21, we read, “ Ye shall not eat of anything that dieth of itself : thou mayest give it unto the sojourner that is within thy gates, that he may eat it ; or thou mayest sell it unto a foreigner : for *thou* art a holy people unto Jehovah thy God.” In Matthew vii : 12, we read, “ Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them.”

Why do you talk about the infallibility, the inerrancy, or even the moral unity of a volume written by many hands at widely different times? Are such people so ignorant that they have not read the Book they are swearing by? Are they moral idiots and do not know the plainest right and wrong? Are they scoundrels and have some deceitful reason for urging such a book as an authority? Or are they the dupes of their own credulity, clinging without thought to the beliefs in which they have been reared? They are evidently not using common-sense in an honest way.

I often hear the Bible spoken of as a holy book, full



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of a holy spirit. I sometimes reply : “ Have you read the conduct of Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Solomon, and other ancient worthies, who were said to be men after the heart of the bloodthirsty and avenging Jehovah? How long would you keep out of prison if you took them for your models? Have you read the Thirty-fifth, Fifty-eighth, Sixty-ninth and One Hundred Ninth Psalms? If not, read them, and tell me what you think of them.” ❧ ❧

There never was any intrinsic reason for believing the Bible except that a designing priesthood said so, and stupid people trusted them.

Here, by common consent, people agree to be duped. Ages and ages ago, they began to make admissions that two and two might be six, or even sixteen, in religion. They had sense enough to say that two and two are four in other things. In Divine Revelation they shut their eyes to all mistakes and wilful lies. If people should deceive in other matters as the priests, parsons and teachers do in religion, they would not escape arrest.

Another central doctrine is that of the Atonement. This is derived from the moral character of the Jewish God ; he governed the world of humanity on the principle of primitive society. Men were responsible to him in everything. Any infraction of his supposed laws rendered them subject to his

vengeance. That is why the Jew thought that God sent a thunderstorm to punish him for eating pork. ¶ What explanation besides credulity can be suggested for the continuation of this belief century after century? Preachers shout it from the pulpits, and Salvation Army people hawk it through the streets. Not one of them knows what he is talking about. Each learned it from some one who told him to say it. They all do it because it is a part of a system which they have inherited, but the reason for which they do not know, and have never allowed themselves to seek.

This cringing credulity keeps the masses from using their powers. They seem to believe that if they should lose these superstitions they would be lost ☛ ☛

ND the dogma regarding Jesus is inextricably mixed up in Christian theology with that of the Atonement. One assumption bolsters the other. He is made to occupy the central place in this scheme of blood-redemption through that other highly rational fable of the immaculate conception. If Jesus was not immaculately conceived, then Matthew and Luke have deceived; then Jesus is not God; then he is a mere man; and if so, he is not the Redeemer. Man could not redeem himself according to the first premise of the scheme. Man has been and *is* redeeming himself by learning

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Nature's laws and through them rising to a higher life ever since he reached the stage of humanity ☪  
Take the theory of the Resurrection. The account of it was written long after the assumed occurrence, and by credulous men with superstitious inclinations. Men and women of these days, understanding the laws of Nature, can not give assent to the crude beliefs which easily commanded the minds of ancient times.

Both Protestantism and Catholicism are systems built on essentially the same foundation. Remove any of these stones, and the systems will have to be rebuilt. If there is no special revelation, there is no special scheme of salvation. If there is no vengeful, blood-seeking God, there is no theological reconciliation. If there was no fall, there is no hopeless depravity. If there was no immaculate conception, there is no Redeemer in a special ecclesiastical sense. If there is no total depravity, there is no lost world. If there is no lost world, there is no yawning Hell. One and all, these fictions have their only ground for continuance in a *selfish* and unreasoning priesthood and clergy, and a credulous people ☪ ☪

In the place of the "fall," science has put the "rise" of man. It finds the Garden of Eden to have been a jungle. It finds the mythical perfect Adam to have been a savage. It finds the Biblical

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“origin of evil” to have been a puerile legend. It finds that sin and evil are made by the seeing of higher states. It finds that there was no bad until the better was reached. It finds that it is the advancing good which makes the existing bad. It finds that among the worst of sinners are those who live in and propagate outworn doctrines upon their own and others' credulity.

In the olden times, God was made a king—the world was his kingdom. His powers, virtues and vices were simply those of earthly kings exaggerated. Jewish and Christian liturgies are full of expressions showing the attitude of slaves and serfs to a tyrant. Sin has been manufactured as heresy and disobedience to the so-called orthodox system instead of to the laws of Nature.

Science has shown that the bottomless pit did not even have a top. Columbus sailed over the Western edge of the flat Christian world on which all this Christian system depended, and found that the material Heaven and Hell were unfounded myths; but the preachers and priests still threaten *hell* to the most ignorant and credulous, but they tell some of us that there is a *final judgment*.

In the old days, we used to hear a great deal about judgments. A certain honest, good-natured, old farmer in New Hampshire, who was a free-thinker, but had a very pious wife, lost many

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cattle when the black tongue was an epidemic in the State ☛ ☛

One day the hired man came in and told him the red oxen were dead.

“Are they?” said the old man. “Well, they were ‘breechy cusses.’ Take off their hides and carry them down to Fletcher’s. They will bring the cash.”

☛ An hour or so later the man came back with the news that Lineback and his mate were both dead.

☛ “Are they?” said the old man. “Well, I took them of B—— to save a bad debt that I never expected to get. Take the hides down to Fletcher’s. They will bring the cash.”

After the lapse of another hour the man came back to tell him that the nigh brindle was dead.

“Is he?” said the old man. “Well, he was a very old ox. Take off his hide and send it down to Fletcher’s. It is worth cash and will bring more than two of the others.”

Hereupon his wife reminded him that his loss was a judgment of Heaven upon him.

“Is it?” said the old chap. “Well, if they will take the judgment in cattle, it is the easiest way I can pay it.”

But they know no more about final judgments than they did about the lake of fire and brimstone which commenced to drain off in Columbus’ day. Science has vaporized the notion of a future judgment by

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the same method it has that of a past Creation. From the *facts*, it has learned *laws*. But credulity is always half-hearted with facts. It does not know enough of truth to love it. It is ever glowing over and setting up as a dogma the little it knows, or assumes to know, of the truth of former times. It has no faith in the newly discovered, because it knows nothing of it.

Hence, age after age we see the spectacle of men who have not studied the science of their own day denouncing it in pulpit and councils ; of men who have steeped themselves in the traditions of the past pronouncing shallow invectives against the demonstrations of (science) the present.

ANY church people say immortality must be true, or the great majority would not believe in it. But do they? They do not talk or write as if they did. If language means anything, I think the majority believe in annihilation. Most people speak of the dead body of a man as though it were the man. They say, "He was buried at Greenwood," or, "She was cremated at Forest Hills." And we hear the "late" Mr. Smith left an immense fortune. If Mr. Smith still exists, why do they say the *late* Mr. Smith? If people did n't believe that the soul and body are one, and that life ceases and mind expires when the body dies, why do they say, "They were"? What little the Church has learned

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has been by *main force* so to speak. ¶ A friend of mine many years ago was a college student. At that time they were all compelled to attend the college church. On one occasion he heard the preacher, who was also a college professor, make these statements :

*First*, that the *elect* alone would be saved.

*Second*, that among those who by the world were called Christians, probably not more than one in a hundred belonged really and truly to the *elect*.

*Third*, that the others, by reason of their Christian privileges, would suffer more hereafter than the heathen, who had never heard the Gospel at all.

The young man made a note of these propositions, and on the strength of them drew up a petition to the Faculty soliciting exemption from further attendance at church, as only preparing for himself a more terrible future.

He said : “ The congregation here amounts to six hundred persons, and nine of these are the college professors. Now if only one in a hundred is to be saved, it follows that three even of the professors must be damned, and I, being a mere student, could not expect to be saved in preference to a professor.” Far, he said, be it from him to cherish so presumptuous a hope. Nothing remained for him, therefore, but perdition. In this melancholy state of affairs he was anxious to abstain from any-

thing that might aggravate his future punishment ; and as church attendance had been shown to have this influence on the *non-elect*, he trusted that the Faculty would for all time exempt him from it.

The result was he came very near being expelled from the college—simply by heeding their sermons. The professors of some colleges have learned something, and do not insist on the students attending church ☞ ☞

ONDER for a moment on the many dishonest ways churches have for raising money. Think of the amount of money they can raise at a church-fair—alias, a confidence-game.

A young man from Kentucky told me that he attended one at Chicago. First he went to the table where refreshments were sold. A beautiful siren with big black eyes and small white hands spread the edibles before him. When he arose from the table he handed her a five-dollar bill. She put it in a little box and forgot to give him any change. She smiled sweetly at him, and asked him if he would like to walk about the room and look at the fancy articles, all to be sold for the good of the church.

¶ She took his arm and murmured, “ We are not strangers ; we both feel interested in the church.”

¶ “ We soon came,” said the young man in telling me the story, “ to a silver tea-set that was to be ‘ ruffled off.’ Would I take a chance? Of course



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I did. Then came a cake with a valuable ring concealed in it. Would I take a chance in that? Of course I did.

“ So things glided on until I concluded if I took many more chances, my chances for getting home would be slim. So I refused to tempt fortune any further, until the little black-eyed scoundrel took me on a new tack. Leaning heavily on my arm, and resting her cheek on my shoulder, she said, ‘ Please take a chance for me.’

“ It is needless to add that I took the chance, and kept on taking chances for the beautiful and unprincipled wretch that had me in tow, until I had not a dollar left. Yes, I was penniless, and then it began to dawn on me that she was working me for the success of the church. There I was, bankrupt in money and self-respect. I had been robbed—yes, robbed, for where is the difference between a pair of pistols and a pair of black eyes in a robbery? You part with your money because you can not help it *se se*

“ I know that Society looks with lenient eyes upon church-fairs, but it is my opinion that all robbers will take sentence, and when that little Chicago robber receives her sentence, she will take her place by the side of Jack Sheppard ! ”

You see he still believes in Judgments. He is learning by main force.

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A very pious woman whose father was a missionary, now living in Hawaii, wrote not long ago that professional men flocking to the Islands will be disappointed unless they are friends of old families ; and the old families are descendants of missionaries who went there in the early days and took lands and everything else from the natives.

There seems to be nothing like being a descendant from a missionary family. These people, equally pious and provident, thought it a good scheme to cheat the sinful savages out of all their worldly possessions, in order that they might be taught humility and holiness through the chastening influence of poverty. So they robbed the unregenerate to the glory of God.

Who says it does n't pay to save the heathen? Think of the ignorance and superstition of the majority of the preachers of the present day

P in Northern Minnesota, less than fifty years ago, an old Baptist was preaching on the death of Moses on the Mount, and his not being permitted to go over into the Promised Land

The preacher said :

“ I have always felt sorry for Moses. It has seemed so hard to me that he could not go over with Caleb and Joshua, the only two of the host which he had led out of Egypt, and enjoy with his people the good country towards which they had been so long

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traveling. When as a boy I read that in the Bible for the first time, I sat down and cried for sympathy with him. But Moses had a hard time from the first. He was no sooner born than his life was threatened. His mother had to hide him to save it. After three months she could hide him no longer, and so she made an ark of bulrushes and set him afloat on the river. Indeed, it seemed as though the Lord had all he could do to raise Moses."

But the people of this generation do not take the story of Moses so seriously. A bright young girl of ten, on being asked by her Sabbath School teacher, "Where did Pharaoh's daughter get Moses?" replied, with the accent on the *said*, "She *said* she 'found him in the bulrushes.'"

I attended a campmeeting in North Carolina. The exhortations and prayers would cause a graven image to smile audibly. One old Baptist preacher said he always felt so sorry to think that "Ingrain corn" did n't grow in Palestine, because he would like to think that the little Jesus had a good time playing with cob-houses.

But those preachers compare favorably with the Reverend George F. Hall, of Decatur, Illinois, and the Reverend Doctor John P. D. John, and the Reverend Doctor Frederick Bell, late of the Metropolitan Temple of San Francisco, California, who at various times challenged Robert G.

Ingersoll to debate with them. It shows what ignorance, superstition and egotism combined can do. ¶ Darwin said the herding instinct in animals has its base in fear. Sheep and cattle go in droves, while a lion simply flocks with his mate. Those who wish to lead have always fostered fear, encouraging this tendency to herd, promising protection, and offering what they call knowledge in return for a luxurious living.

In other words, the men who preach and pray, always want the people who *work* to divide with them. They work on the line that fear will compel men to join churches. This joining instinct is a manifestation of weakness. By going with a gang they hope to get to Heaven. But the moment you eliminate the Devil from Christianity, there is nothing left. You can not have a revival, alias an epidemic, of religion, without the Devil. If there were no Devil, there would be nothing to pray about, and all these people who are gifted in prayer would be without a job.

Think of the chaplains of the Army and Navy, in Congress and in the Legislatures being turned out to browse for themselves. Think of their being obliged to earn an honest living. They could not do it. I am amused when I think of the prayers that are exchanged in war times. One side will pray that the wrath of Heaven will descend on the

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other, and the other side will return the compliment with ten per cent interest.

I remember when I was a child of reading the prayer of a Hungarian officer. He said : “ O Lord, I will not ask thee to help us, and I know that thou wilt not help the Austrians. But if thou wilt sit on yonder hill, thou shalt not be ashamed of thy children.” ☛ ☛

The famous Bishop Leslie prayed before a battle in Ireland, “ O God, for our unworthiness we are not fit to claim thy help, but if we are bad, our enemies are worse, and if thou seest not meet to help us, we pray thee help them not, but stand thou neutral this day, and leave it to the arm of flesh.” ☛ ☛

All this dramatic power would be lost without the Devil. So it behooves the Christian churches to hold fast to the Devil. Get a good grip on his hoofs, horns and tail, for without him they would be relegated to “ innocuous desuetude.” He should be incorporated as the fourth person in the Orthodox Godhead, and respectfully addressed as “ Holy Devil.” ☛ ☛

This is my doctrine : Give every other human being every right you claim for yourself. Keep your mind open to the influences of Nature. Receive new thoughts with hospitality. Let us advance. ¶ The man who does not do his own thinking is a slave, and is a traitor to himself and to his fellowmen.

As far as I am concerned, I wish to be out on the high seas. I wish to take my chances with wind and wave and star. And I had rather go down in the glory and grandeur of the storm, than to rot in any orthodox harbor whatever.

—*Robert Ingersoll.*



The ignorance of the masses insures abundant contributions to the clergy and to religion.—*Ralph W. Chainey.*

The mother who teaches her child to pray makes a mistake.





## WHY I AM AN AGNOSTIC

**T**HE Millerites—or Second Adventists, as they now call themselves—are the first sect that I remember. They are a people of remarkable vigor : they have been at work for seventy years to bring this world to an end, and although they have been wrong in their arithmetic all these years, they rub out the slate and begin again.

And they prove everything by the Bible, as all other denominations do. The “ time ” has been set at least twenty times since I can remember. I recollect having awful palpitations in the kneepans upon one of the eventful days, and crawling under the barn so as not to be in the way. They used to congregate on the height of land near my father’s, “ to go up,” and one man climbed upon an old shed, and fell and broke his hip ; he fainted, and they thought he was dead. As soon as he had revived a little, they asked him if he had any requests to make before he died. He replied, “ I want you to work in ‘ durn fool ’ somewhere on my tombstone.” He recovered, and lived many years, but he was cured of Millerism.

A large share of the students of the Second Advent

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doctrine came into this world, not only naked, but without any brains, nor any place suitable to put any; and the first business they do is to wonder about their souls and talk about being “born again.” They never seem to realize that to be well born is much more essential than to be “born again.” I never knew immortality to be secured at the second birth.

I attended one of their meetings this year, and asked one of the sisters for their *creed*. She said, “Our creed is the whole Bible, from the first book of Genesis to the last word of the last chapter of Revelations.”

I thought of what a boy said when the Baptist Elder came and took tea at his home, and asked a “blessing.” ☛ ☛

The boy said: “Is that the way you ask a blessing? My father does n’t ask it that way.”

“How does he ask it?”

“Oh, he sat down to the table the other evening, and looked it all over, and said, ‘My God, what a supper!’”

And I thought, “My God, what a creed!”

I was tempted to ask the Millerite sister what she thought of the discrepancy between the first and the second chapter of Genesis. In the first chapter Man and Woman were a simultaneous creation. In the second chapter, Woman was an afterthought.

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But I had the deep sagacity to hold my tongue, and leave her and her *creed* in peace.

THE second church that I remember anything about is the Free-Will Baptist. My mother was a devout member of that church. I have heard thousands of times, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he can not enter into the Kingdom of God." And man included woman—it always did, so far as pains and penalties were concerned ☞ ☞

I remember distinctly a sermon I heard on Hell. You younger people can not have the faintest idea of the terrific sermons that were preached in those days ☞ ☞

That sermon commenced in this wise :

"Now we will look into Hell and see what we can see. It is all red-hot like red-hot iron. Streams of burning pitch and sulphur run through it. The floor blazes up to the roof. Look at the walls—the enormous stones are red-hot. Sparks of fire are always falling down from them. Lift up your eyes to the roof of Hell. It is like a sheet of blazing fire. Hell is filled with a fog of fire. In Hell, torrents not of water, but of fire and brimstone, are rained down. You may have seen a house on fire, but you never saw a house made of fire. Hell is a house made of fire. The fire of Hell burns the devils, who are spirits, for it was prepared for them. But it will

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burn the body as well as the soul. Take a little spark out of Hell—less than the size of a pin-head—and throw it into the ocean, and it will not go out. In one moment it would dry up all the waters of the ocean, and set the whole world in a blaze! Listen to the terrific noise of Hell—to the horrible uproar of countless millions of tormented creatures, mad with the fury of Hell! Oh, the screams of fear, the groanings of horror, the yells of rage, the cries of pain, the shouts of agony, the shrieks of despair, from millions on millions. You hear them roaring like lions, hissing like serpents, howling like dogs, and wailing like dragons! And above all, you hear the roaring of the thunder of God's anger, which shakes Hell to its foundations. Little children, if you go to Hell, there will be a devil at your side to strike you. How will you feel after you have been struck every minute for a hundred millions of years? Look into this inner room of Hell, and see a girl of about sixteen. She stands in the middle of a red-hot floor; her feet are bare; sleep can never come to her; she can never forget for one moment in all the eternity of years." ¶ And so this description of Hell went on for nearly two hours. Do you wonder that I, a child of ten years, said to my father, who was a freethinker, infidel, atheist, or whatever else you please to call him: "I *hate* my mother's church. I will *not* go there again!" ☛

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HE next church I became acquainted with was the Calvin Baptist Church. That church seemed to think that the most of us were born to be damned anyway !

The great Ingersoll had it right when he said it was the damned-if-you-do-and-the-damned-if-you-don't church.

The only difference between the Free-Will Baptists and the Calvin Baptists that I can see, is, that you are allowed to exercise your *will*. The Free-Will Baptists will damn you if you wish to be, and the Calvinists will damn you anyway !

The next church to which I was introduced was the Congregationalist, alias the Orthodox. Their creed is rather complex from a mathematical standpoint. They seem to think that three Gods are one God, and one God is three Gods.

I, having been taught that figures don't lie, could n't understand it, until I thought of a boy who said to his teacher when she explained to him that figures did n't lie: " You should see my sisters at home, and then on the street. You will find that figures do lie."

THEN went to Italy, and became conversant with the *outside* doings of the Roman Catholic Church. I visited many of them, saw the beggars eating crusts at the doors, and the well-fed priests saying masses inside ; saw the white hand of famine

always extended, in bitter contrast to the magnificent cathedrals ; saw well-dressed, intelligent-looking men and women going upstairs on their hands and knees, and saw hundreds of them kissing the toe of the bronze statue of Saint Peter ; saw monks of every shade and description ; and all begging for the Holy Catholic Church !

I attended a church festival at Rome at the Ara Cœli, where the most “ Holy Bambino ” is kept, a little wooden doll about two feet long. It is said to be the image of Jesus. It had a crown of gold on its head and was fairly ablaze with diamonds. It has great power to heal the sick. It is taken to visit patients in great style—that is, if the patients are rich. The Bambino is placed in a coach accompanied by priests in full dress. The Great Festival of the Bambino is celebrated annually. Military bands and the Soldiers of the Guard dance attendance. Saint Gennaro is held to be the guardian saint of Naples. The alleged miracle by which the blood of this holy person, contained in a glass tube, changes from a solid to a liquid state, is well known. Thousands go to see the miracle performed. When the priest first held up the sacred vial with its clotted contents we could hear all about us : “ Holy Gennaro, save and protect us ! Bless the City of Naples, and keep it free from plagues and earthquakes and other ills. Do this miracle so that we

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can see that thy power and thy favor are still with us." And so it went on for an hour or more, until the great throng was nearly hysterical.

At last the priest stepped forward, showing that the blood flowed freely in the tube, and then such a shout went up from the big crowd as one hears only in Southern climes.

HAVE never been introduced to the Church of England, alias, the Episcopalian, but I've always thought if a man had a good voice, and understood the mysteries of the corkscrew, he would make a good rector.

I became acquainted with a High-Church Episcopalian woman not long ago, and she showed me a prayer-rug and praying-costume imported from Paris. I told her that she looked like an angel in it, as she ought after going to all that expense and trouble; if she did n't, dressmakers might as well give it up and wait for Gabriel. The attitude of prayer threw the back breadths of the skirt into graceful prominence, and hence the necessity (which will be at once recognized by all the truly *pious*) of increased attention to the frills and embroidery required by the religious attitude of prayer ☉ ☉

An old farmer in Indiana said he was a "Piscopal."

☪ "To what parish do you belong?"

"I don't know nothing about parishes."

“ Who confirmed you? ” ¶ “ Nobody.” • “ Then how do you belong to the Episcopalian Church? ” ¶ “ Well, last Winter I went down to Arkansas visiting, and while I was there, I went to a church and it was called ‘ Piscopal,’ and I heard them say that they had done the things they ought not to have done, and left undone the things they ought to have done, and I says to myself, ‘ That is my fix exactly,’ and ever since then I ’ve considered myself a ‘ Piscopal ’ ! ”

And I came to the conclusion that that is why the membership of that church is so large !

KNOW but little about the Methodists, but I do know that John Wesley, one of the founders of that church, believed in witchcraft, and was one of the latest of its supporters.

History tells us that Brother Wesley preached a sermon entitled, *The Cause and Cure of Earthquakes*. He said that earthquakes were caused by sin, and the only way to stop them was to believe in his theology and teachings, thus showing great knowledge of seismology ; but people who bank on gullibility are usually safe. I know the Methodists make a great hullabaloo about their religion, and appear to think their God is deaf.

The Methodist Conference has refused to allow women to be delegates to the General Conference. The Methodist sisters should discipline the Church.



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HAT I know about the Universalists I like.

They seem to think that we are all in the same boat, and that one stands as good a chance as another, of which I approve. When I was a child, Sylvanus Cobb, at that time the great Universalist preacher, preached in the adjoining town. One Sunday, my father and I went to hear him. His sermon caused a great commotion, and the Baptist who preached that terrific sermon about Hell said to my mother, "There is a wicked man about here preaching that everybody is to be saved; but, Sister Young, let us hope for better things!"

BELIEVE that the Unitarians, as a class, think for themselves. I approve of that, and the Evangelical Alliance disapproves of them. That is in their favor.

I taught school at Lee, New Hampshire, fifty years ago. One of the committee was a Unitarian, and one was a Quaker. I was tired of selecting suitable reading matter from that obscene old book, the Bible, and I suggested that we read from some other book, which we did for two mornings, when the Unitarian materialized at the schoolhouse, and with much suavity suggested that we read from the Bible every morning, and recite the Lord's Prayer; and I, teaching school for my bread and butter, bowed to the suggestion, and the next morning said: "Pupils, Mr. Smith prefers that we read

from the Bible. Therefore, we will this morning read the startling and authentic account of Jonah whilst he was stopping at the submarine hotel.” That is the most narrow-minded thing I ever knew about a Unitarian ; but I always thought Mr. Smith voiced the opinion of the parents of the pupils rather than his own.

I am somewhat acquainted with the Church of the Latter-Day Saints, alias the Mormons. They are a prudent, industrious, painstaking people, and only about two per cent of them ever *did* practise polygamy, and that is a very small proportion for any Christian church. Brigham Young never did have but seventeen wives, but Solomon had five hundred wives, and one thousand other lady friends, and David, whose honor and humility show greater in his psalms than in the history of his ordinary, every-day life, was, as the Bible says, a man after God's own heart.

I am sure that Brigham Young compared favorably with David. And if God interviewed Moses, why should n't he have interviewed Joe Smith?

There are more than one thousand religions. They are founded mostly on fraud. All their saviors had virgins for mothers, and gods for fathers.

The churches own more than thirteen billions of property, and they are *all* too dishonest to pay honest taxes. Many of the churches could n't be

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run three weeks without the women. They do all the work, for which they get no credit.

The churches claim all the distinguished people, especially after they are dead and hence can not deny their claims. They have many times claimed that Abraham Lincoln was a churchman. The Honorable H. C. Deming, of Connecticut, an old friend of Lincoln, said it is false. Lincoln belonged to no church, and at one time said, "I have never united myself to any church, because I have found difficulty in giving my assent without mental reservation to the long, complicated statements of Christian doctrine, which characterize their articles of belief, and confessions of faith." But still they claim him. Honest, very !

O institution in modern civilization is so tyrannical and so unjust to women as is the Christian church. The history of the Church does not contain a single suggestion for the equality of woman with man, and still the Church claims that woman owes her advancement to the Bible. She owes it much more to the dictionary.

History, both ancient and modern, tells us that the condition of women is most degraded in those countries where Church and State are in closest affiliation (such as, Spain, Italy, Russia and Ireland), and most advanced in nations where the power of ecclesiasticism is markedly on the wane.

It has been proved that, whatever progress woman has made in any department of effort, she has accomplished independent of, and in opposition to, the so-called inspired and infallible Word of God; and that the Bible has been of more injury to her than has any other book ever written in the history of the world.

William Root Bliss, in his *Side Glimpses From the Colonial Meetinghouse*, tells us many startling truths concerning the Puritans, and reminds me of what Chauncey M. Depew said—that the *first* thing the Puritans did, after they landed at Plymouth, was to fall on their knees, and the *second* thing was to fall on the Aborigines.

The business of trading in slaves was not immoral by the estimate of public opinion in Colonial times. A deacon of the church in Newport esteemed the slave trade, with its rum accessories, as home missionary work. It is said that on the first Sunday after the arrival of his slaves he was accustomed to offer thanks that an overruling Providence had been pleased to bring to this land of freedom another cargo of benighted heathen to enjoy the blessings of a Gospel dispensation.

At a Bridgewater town meeting of the year Sixteen Hundred Seventy-six, a vote was called to see what should be done with the money that was made from selling the Indians.

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John Bacon of Barnstable directed in his will that his Indian slave Dinah be sold and the proceeds used "by my executors in buying Bibles." By men who sat in the Colonial meetinghouse, the first fugitive-slave law was formed. This law became a part of the Articles of Confederation between all the New England Colonies.

The affinity between *rum* and the religion of Colonial times was exemplified in the license granted John Vyall to keep a house of entertainment in Boston. He must keep it near the meetinghouse of the Second Church, where he extended his invitation to thirsty sinners who were going to hear John Mayo or Increase Mather preach.

HE importation of slaves began early. The first arrival at Boston was by the ship *Desire*, on February Twenty-sixth, Sixteen Hundred Thirty-seven, bringing negroes, tobacco and cotton from Barbados. She had sailed from Boston eleven months before, carrying Indian captives to the Bermudas to be sold as slaves, and thus she became noted as the first New England slave-ship.

In time, slaves were brought to Boston direct from Africa ☪ ☪

Advertisements of just-arrived negroes to be sold may be seen in the *Boston News Letter* of the years Seventeen Hundred Twenty-six and Seventeen Hundred Twenty-seven. The pious Puritans did

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not hesitate to sell slaves on the auction-block. I find in the *Boston News Letter* of September Nineteenth, Seventeen Hundred Fifteen, a notice of an auction-sale at Newport, Rhode Island, of several Indians, men and boys, and a very likely negro man. They were treated in all respects as merchandise, and were rated with horses and cattle.

Peter Faneuil, to whom Boston is indebted for its Cradle of Liberty, was deep in the business. In an inventory of the property of Parson Williams of Deerfield, in Seventeen Hundred Twenty-nine, his slaves were rated with his horses and cows. "Believe and be baptized" is all that was essential. I think many of them would have been improved by anchoring them out overnight.

A negro preacher whom I knew came to me when I was in Florida, and said: "What shall I preach about tomorrow? I'se done preached myself 'plumb out.' I'se worked on election sanctification and damnation predestination till I can't say another word to save my life."

I said, "Preach a sermon on 'Thou shalt not steal' for a text."

"Yes," he said, "that certainly *is* a good text, but I am monstros 'fraid it will produce a coolness in my congregation!"

Doubtless it would produce a coolness in many a congregation today.

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OW I want to talk a little about *law* and its penalty. We want to consider the invariable laws of Nature. Let us look at it in the way in which we became acquainted with it—through experience.

To the child, law is an educator ; he plays with fire and is burned. Law and its penalty have done their work. A burnt child dreads the fire. On that point his education is complete. He cuts himself with a knife ; again the law works. Do not play with edged tools is the lesson. And so, whenever he comes in contact with external objects, he learns something very definite from them ; and if he has any sense, he soon conforms to the order which he sees in force all around him. He does what he can to act in such a way as not to run counter to Nature's laws ; or, at least, Nature teaches him to do so by repeated suffering when he acts otherwise. The law thus far is all in favor of life, and is teaching the child to preserve it. He must eat not to starve ; he must be clothed not to freeze ; he must not be burned, or cut, or crushed. In one word, he must take care of himself, and be careful of external objects, or he must be hurt.

But his education has another connection with law. If he has proper parents he learns that he can not lie, or steal, or do many other things without suffering a penalty. If he has no home education in this

matter, the reform-school and the jail step in and take up the lesson.

And so the law teaches him that his actions must be of a certain quality, both with respect to external Nature and his fellowmen, or that he must pay a penalty ☛ ☛

Thus he comes to man's estate, and law has been to him an educator and a good one. He has learned that Nature's law means punishment every time it is violated, and that man's law, whatever it may attain to, *aims* at the same object as Nature's law. ¶ But neither his education nor his contact with law ends with his youth. Hitherto he has obeyed blindly for fear of the penalty. He now obeys intelligently, and connected with the penalty to be incurred by disobedience is the reward to be obtained through obedience. He finds that every act, every thought, of his brings him in direct contact with law. He can not elude it by standing still, for no man can stand still. He must go forward, or backward. This is an inexorable law ; with progress, improvement ; without progress, what? Rest? Repose? No ! Deterioration. No man can stand still in this universe for a day without losing something. The man who means to do anything in life must go forward ; if he falters, another goes ahead ; and then he learns that the penalty of faltering is failure ☛ ☛



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Nature works no special miracles in any one's favor. Nature works no miracles, anyway. The sun and the moon did *not* stand still at Joshua's command ! ☛ ☛

No riches and influence can buy exemption from Nature ☛ ☛

Law says to the poor man who is dependent on his daily toil : " You have only yourself to rely upon. Take care of your health ; be temperate, honest and industrious, for sickness, imprisonment, idleness, mean to you death."

It says to the rich man : " Inherited wealth has exempted you from *daily* labor of body, but it has not earned for you rest. Go to work ; do something, or your mind and body will be enfeebled ; your sympathies will disappear ; you will become dry as the summer's dust ; you will sink into a nonentity." ☛ ☛

The whole cry of Nature's law is onward and upward. Evolution is the word—there is no God about it. It is not alone the survival of the fittest—that is only a part of the process. It is the fittest of one generation becoming something better and higher for the next.

It is the fashion now to say that the struggle for existence becomes yearly more fierce, but that is not so. The truth is that those who struggle become with each survival fitter to struggle, and that for

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which they struggle is placed one step forward. Men used to want thousands and hundreds of thousands; now, they want millions and hundreds of millions. They used to want general knowledge; now, they are all specialists, and cry out that life is too short. Steam used to content them; now, electricity does not satisfy them, and they are grasping at the possibilities of the mighty currents of air caused by the revolutions of the earth itself. ¶ The law of progress is not limited to the mind. The body shares in it. Men are stronger, larger, longer-lived than they have ever been. Even with the animals, finer, better breeds are constantly producing themselves under law.

This law of the survival of the fittest and the elevation of the type of the fittest pronounced against slavery, and a nation paid the penalty in blood, as Spain has, and other nations will pay it. It has pronounced against the subjection of women, and let those who stand in the way, beware, lest some ruin crush them as it falls!

The type of sympathy has become higher and tenderer. Sweet hands of mercy are now stretched down even to the brutes. Let those lovers of the past who can see no progress in the present, who would question this onward tendency, and the result of law, let them remember that they must run rapidly to keep from being overwhelmed by the

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*expansionists.* ¶ Nature's law teaches us that like begets like. You plant a grain of wheat, and you reap wheat. You breed Morgan stock and the foal is of Morgan blood. The child is the offspring of certain parents, and it inherits their blood. If parents choose to unfit themselves to be healthy parents, who shall be blamed?

HALL gravitation cease as I go by? Teach children that no amount of so-called religion will compensate for rheumatism ; that Christianity has nothing to do with morality ; that " vicarious atonement " is a fraud, and a lie ; that to be born well and strong is the highest birth ; that to be honest and pay one's debts spells peace of mind ; that the Bible is no more inspired than the dictionary ; that *sin* is a transgression of the laws of life, and that the blood of all the bulls and goats and lambs of ancient times, and the blood of Christ or any other man, never had, and never can have, the least effect in making a life what it would have been had it obeyed the laws of life. If you have marred your life, you must bear the consequences. If you have made a mistake, be more careful in the future. Let the thought that the past is irretrievable make you more careful in the present and for the future.

And, above all, teach children that prayer is idiotic. There may be one God or twenty. I do not

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know or care. I am not afraid, and no priest or parson can make me believe that my title to a future life, if there be one, is defective. And the great and good man Thomas Paine, who wrote the *Age of Reason*, and said, "The world is my country, and to do good my religion," is a good enough god for me. And the great Ingersoll, who said, "I belong to the great Church that holds the world within its starlit aisles ; that claims the great and good of every race and clime ; that finds with joy the grain of gold in every creed and floods with light and love the germs of good in every soul," is in my opinion an excellent god—as good as any that ever lived, from Confucius to Christ. A friend of mine said to me, "Ingersoll should have been a Christian." I replied, "The dog-collar of Christianity did not belong on his neck : he preached the truth ; he preferred that to the Bible. I can not imagine the great Ingersoll preaching from II Kings xiv : 35."



Fear paralyzes the brain. Progress is born of courage. Fear believes—courage doubts. Fear falls upon the earth and prays—courage stands erect and thinks. Fear retreats—courage advances. Fear is barbarism—courage is civilization. Fear believes in witchcraft, in devils and in ghosts. Fear is religion — courage is science.

There are real crimes enough without creating artificial ones. All progress in legislation has for centuries consisted in repealing the laws of the ghosts.

—*Robert Ingersoll.*



## A LETTER AND THE REJOINDER A LABOR OF FOLLY

*From the Portsmouth "Times"*



UR old friend, Marilla M. Ricker, of Dover, lifelong advocate of "woman's rights," zealous champion of "freethought," admirer of Bob Ingersoll, worshiper of Tom Paine, and collaborator of Elbert Hubbard, who fears neither God, man nor the Devil, because she does not believe particularly in any of them, is engaged in a labor of folly, in that she is fighting the doctrine of the immortality of the human soul.

In the prosecution of her warfare she has gone into print and issued a pamphlet in which she takes issue, primarily, with one Elder E. A. Kenyon upon his proposition of a universal consciousness that "if a man die he shall live again," and even goes so far as to assert that the majority of mankind believe in annihilation. Moreover, she pronounces the doctrine of personal immortality "a most selfish and harmful one," "pernicious in its results," and operating for the enslavement of mankind, filling the world with gloom and making of man a crawling coward.

We invite no controversy with Marilla, and will have none. We concede her right to believe anything, or nothing, to say what she thinks, write what she pleases, get it printed where she may, and circulate it as she can ; but our advice to the dear sister is to “let up ” on this contention, wherein she is out-Ingersolling Ingersoll. He did not believe in immortality, but he did not deny it. He claimed that he did not know, and that no man could know it to be a fact ; but he never sought to blot out hope. And the truth is that but for this hope of immortal existence, entertained by the vast majority of the race, in all lands and ages, life would not be worth living, and men and women everywhere would lie down and perish in despair. It is this hope, or faith, or consciousness—however we may express it—of life beyond the grave, or the immortality of the soul, that inspires mankind to all that is noble and heroic in the great struggle for progress and development here. Without it there would be no incentive effort beyond that which impels the brute. Without it, in fact, man would be mere brute, and nothing else.

That the horrid doctrines of Calvinism were dinned into Mrs. Ricker’s ears in childhood, and the fear of eternal torment held up before her, instead of the infinite love of a God of Mercy and Justice, may have impelled her to repudiate all idea of God



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or Justice, or life to come ; but she ought to be intelligent enough to sift the error from the truth and cling to the latter. If not, she should at least be willing to allow others to do so. She may repudiate the old Calvinism, or even Christianity itself. She may become a Mohammedan, a Buddhist, an Agnostic or an out-and-out "heathen" if she will. She may accept annihilation as the universal fate of humanity ; but she should be willing to allow mankind in general its indulgence in that one "Great Hope," which has illumined with immortal splendor the darkest passages of human life, and sustains the soul of man and woman in the severest trials and conflicts of earth.

### THE REJOINDER

(From the *Portsmouth "Times"*)



WAS amused when I read in the *Portsmouth Times* an article from my friend Metcalf, entitled, *A Labor of Folly*. The genial Henry said I was a lifelong advocate of "woman's rights," which is true.

And an admirer of Ingersoll. Could any one help admire that great and good man? And a worshiper of Thomas Paine. Worship is rather a strong word to apply to me, but I think the man who said, "The world is my country, and to do good my religion,"

and who did more than any other man to put the stars on our flag and to give that flag to the breeze, should be loved and respected.

He, the aforesaid Henry, said I collaborated with Elbert Hubbard. I am proud of that, whether it is true or not.

I consider Hubbard the most brilliant writer in this country.

Henry also said I feared neither God, man nor the Devil, because I did not believe particularly in any of them. If he would add an " o " to God and make it good, take the " d " from devil and make it evil, then I would have something tangible to write about besides man, in whom I believe.

Henry also said that I was engaged in a "labor of folly," fighting the doctrine of the immortality of the soul ☞ ☞

I simply expressed my opinion on the subject. My friend Henry wrote me not long ago that there was no earthly need of a Freethought paper ; that thought was as free as air always and everywhere. I take issue with him there, and I call his attention to the *Little Journey* to the home of Copernicus—of January, Nineteen Hundred Five—by Elbert Hubbard. Copernicus was the founder of modern astronomy ☞ ☞

If Henry will read his life he can see what freethought meant at that time. I also call his attention

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to Giordano Bruno. He can see what happened to him and how free thought was at that time. Henry said I could write what I pleased, and get it printed where I could.

That was well added, for I could not in the year Nineteen Hundred Nine, in the city of Dover, New Hampshire, get my article on Immortality printed in the only paper in the city ; so you see how freethought is up to date.

I certainly "take issue" with Henry, "That the hope or consciousness of life beyond the grave, or immortality of the soul, inspires mankind to all that is noble and heroic in the great struggle for progress and development here."

Robert Ingersoll did not believe in immortality, but he was a great, tender-hearted man, full of kindness, full of generous impulses. No man ever loved the true, the good and the beautiful more than he. He would take the case of a poor man into court without pay ; he would give a young reporter an interview when he could sell every word he spoke for a dollar ; he would present the proceeds of a lecture to some worthy object as though he were throwing a nickel to an organ-grinder ; and when there was persecution he was on the side of the persecuted.

I do not believe in individual immortality, but I do the best I can, pay one hundred cents on the

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dollar, and I am not afraid to die. I know thousands who believe as I do.

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, believed in the immortality of the soul—so do his followers. He also believed that sin was the cause of earthquakes, and the only way to stop them was to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. He did n't know much about seismology, but he certainly had faith, plus.

John Calvin founded the Presbyterian Church ; he believed in the immortality of the soul. So do his followers ; but Calvin was a murderer.

Henry, it is absurd to say that without hope of immortality we should be degraded to brutes ; in my opinion it is not true. What we want is a religion that will pay debts ; that will practise honesty in business life ; that will treat employees with justice and consideration ; that will render employers full and faithful work ; that will keep bank-cashiers true, officeholders patriotic, and reliable citizens interested in the purity of politics (and the woman citizen will be)—such a religion is real, vital and effective. But a religion that embraces vicarious atonement, miraculous conception, regeneration by faith, baptism, individual immortality and other monkey business is, in my opinion, degrading, absurd and unworthy.

Henry, you say you want no controversy with me.

## A LETTER AND THE REJOINDER

I enjoy controversy, but if you are averse to it I'll stop and we will unite in singing one stanza of that Christian hymn :

King David and King Solomon  
Led merry, merry lives  
With their many, many lady friends  
And their many, many wives ;  
But when old age came o'er them  
With its many, many qualms,  
(It was said )  
King Solomon wrote the Proverbs  
And King David wrote the Psalms.

But did they?



Where religion is afraid of liberty,  
liberty should be afraid of religion.

—*Lemuel K. Washburn.*

So long as man believes that he has an  
immortal soul, he will fear the future.




For ages, a deadly conflict has been waged between a few brave men and women of thought and genius upon the one side, and the great ignorant religious mass on the other. This is the war between Science and Faith. The few have appealed to reason, to honor, to law, to freedom, to the known, and to happiness here in this world. The many have appealed to prejudice, to fear, to miracle, to slavery, to the unknown, and to misery hereafter. The few have said, "Think!" The many have said, "Believe!"

—*Robert Ingersoll.*





## T H E   H O L Y   G H O S T

F all the weird, fanciful and fabulous stories appertaining to the gods and other pious frauds, that concerning the Holy Ghost ranks them all ! Now listen to what the Bible has to say about that mythical personage—alias, the Holy Ghost. You will see that scarcely any two references to it agree in assigning it the same character or attributes. (It reminds me of what an old lady said at a prayer-meeting : “ Dear brothers and sisters, it seems to me that there are no two of a mind here tonight, nor hardly one ! ”)

In John xiv:26, the Holy Ghost is spoken of as a person or personal God. In Luke iii:22, the Holy Ghost changes and assumes the form of a dove. In Matthew xiii:16, the Holy Ghost becomes a spirit. In John i:32, the Holy Ghost is presented as an inanimate senseless object. In I John v:7, the Holy Ghost becomes a God—the third member of the Trinity. In Acts ii:1, the Holy Ghost is averred to be a mighty rushing wind. In Acts x:38, the Holy Ghost, we infer from its mode of application, is an ointment. In John xx:22, the Holy Ghost is the breath, as we legitimately infer by its being

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breathed into the mouth of the recipient after the ancient Oriental custom. In Acts ii:3, we learn the Holy Ghost “sat upon each of them.” In Acts ii:1, the Holy Ghost appears as cloven tongues of fire. In Luke ii:26, the Holy Ghost is the author of a revelation or inspiration. In Mark i:8, the Holy Ghost is a medium or element for baptism. In Acts xxviii:25, the Holy Ghost appears with vocal organs and speaks. In Hebrews vi:4, the Holy Ghost is dealt out or imparted by measure. In Luke iii:22, the Holy Ghost appears with a tangible body. In Luke i:5, we are taught that people are filled with the Holy Ghost. In Matthew xi:15, the Holy Ghost falls upon the people as a ponderable substance. In Luke iv:1, the Holy Ghost is a God within a God—Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost. ¶ These are only a few quotations. There are many more, but we can all see what a multifarious personage, or rather *he, she, or it* the Holy Ghost is.

REMEMBER hearing much about the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost. The sin against the Holy Ghost consisted in resisting its operations in the second birth—that is, the regeneration of the heart or soul by the Holy Ghost. And it was considered unpardonable simply because as the pardoning and cleansing process consisted in, or was at least always accompanied with, baptism by water, in which operation the Holy

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Ghost was the agent in effecting the “new birth,” therefore, when the ministrations or operations of this indispensable agent were resisted or rejected, there was no channel, no means, no possible mode left for the sinner to find a renewed acceptance with God ☛ ☛

When a person sinned against the Father or the Son, he could find a door of forgiveness through the baptizing processes, spiritual or elementary, of the Holy Ghost. But an offense committed against this third limb of the Godhead had the effect of closing and barring the door so that there could be no forgiveness, either in this life or in that which is to come.

To sin against the Holy Ghost was to tear down the scaffold by which the door of Heaven was to be reached. This *sin* against the Holy Ghost has caused thousands of the disciples of the Christian faith the most agonizing hours of alarm and despair.

¶ It has always been my opinion that many people who thought they had sinned against the Holy Ghost simply had dyspepsia.

The destruction of religions and superstition means the upbuilding of charity and ethics.—*Ralph W. Chainey.*

Superstition is nothing but a misplaced fear of some fancied supernatural phantasm of divinity.



All that is good in our civilization is the result of commerce, climate, soil, geographical position, industry, invention, discovery, art and science. The Church has been the enemy of progress, for the reason that it has endeavored to prevent man from thinking for himself. To prevent thought is to prevent all advancement except in the direction of faith.

—*Robert Ingersoll.*



## HOW CAN WE "TAKE" CHRIST?

**R**ECEIVE many letters from various people telling me that Christ is mine if I will only take him. I am always amused at the solicitations of these people and feel as President Taft did when Peary "laid the Pole" at his feet. Taft replied he had no idea what he should do with it. I should not know what to do with Christ if I took him.

What can they mean by taking Christ? The word Christ is used to designate a certain individual who died, if he ever lived, nearly two thousand years ago. Now to take this person we should have to take him from the earth where he was buried. I am at a loss to comprehend what Christians mean when they offer Christ to any one. What right has an individual today to offer another a person who has been dead two thousand years? I fail to see any sense in such an offer.

Certain men and women go about the world asking people to come to Christ, to accept Christ. What do they mean—do they know?

In my opinion the supreme dogma of Christianity is the divinity of Jesus. If Jesus was a man, all that was related of his divine acts in the four Gospels is

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false. How would a person like the Nazarene peasant be accepted today were he to play the part of a god?

Suppose a person who had lived in our neighborhood should come to us and say, "I am God, and I want you to help me save the world; quit your work and follow me." What would you think of him? Would any one pay the least attention to him, except to think he was insane and have him placed in an asylum for safety?

The people who are preaching the divinity of Jesus know nothing about him except what they read in a book that was written by unknown authors. Jesus is the last hope of Christian theology. He is the only solution of the divine problem that Christianity has to offer. Is not the direction of the world's most rational thought away from the Christian notion of Jesus? In my opinion it is.

ET us look at the once famous stronghold of New England Orthodoxy, the Andover Theological Seminary, which was chartered on June Nineteenth, Eighteen Hundred Seven, and opened for instruction on September Twenty-eighth, Eighteen Hundred Eight. I think it was about seven years ago that it was transferred to Cambridge and became a part of Harvard University. At that time the school consisted of seven instructors, twelve students and a library of sixty-five thousand books,



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with an endowment of eight hundred fifty thousand dollars in productive funds and an annual income of thirty-five thousand dollars.

It has been said that the highways were scoured every Summer for students, and enticing scholarships held out, but to no avail. No students materialized.

Why is this? In my opinion it is the rising generation's dissatisfaction with traditional theology; they have outgrown it. Ingersoll said that once in five years the President of the Seminary summoned his professors before him to make oath that they had learned absolutely nothing during the preceding five years and would not learn anything for the next five years. And that promise was not subject to recall.

But even Andover could n't remain in that condition. In Eighteen Hundred Eighty-six it announced its new system of "progressive orthodoxy." This created a division between the Old School and the New, and marked the beginning of the end of Andover; and after much litigation it consented to be "gathered in" by Harvard or "swallowed," or perhaps they would say "merged."

They have now a new building located upon land adjacent to that of Harvard University, and the last account from the "Great Seminary" was that they had twenty-four pupils. The library of the

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Seminary and that of the Harvard Divinity School have been combined and are housed together in Bartlett Hall.

THE defenders of the Gospel of Christ don't seem to be increasing ; on the contrary, there seems to be great depression in matters ecclesiastical these days, even in puritanical New England. It plainly shows that the young men of the present day are not anxious to wear the " Dog-Collar of Christianity," and as far as I 've heard no Christian arose to remark that the morals of the " Reverend " Clarence Richeson were contaminated by reading the words of Thomas Paine, Robert Ingersoll, Elbert Hubbard or Lemuel K. Washburn. The Reverend Clarence seemed to be a product of the Christian Bible, and talked to the last of his God and his Bible.

What is left of Christianity? Who wrote the Christian Bible? The smallest child in a Sunday School would answer the question by saying " God," but the most learned person on the globe would say, " I do not know." It is being admitted by thinking persons that answers to religious questions possess nothing more than a religious value. When a person is graduated from a Sunday School he is wiser than he will be after he has lived forty years, provided he learns anything by living. ¶ " God " is a term used to express what man

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does not know, but it does not seem to me necessary to assign to the Bible divine authorship, as it can be accounted for on other grounds. It is certain that men and women have written books. It is not certain that there is a God and, if so, that he has written a book. If man could write the Bible, there seems to be no need for God to do so. It is a fact that no one knows who wrote a word of the Bible, and yet it will require many more years to kill the foolish superstition that God inspired certain men to write this book.

Nothing grows slower than truth, and nothing faster than superstition. Falsehood was never known to commit suicide. Unknown men wrote the Christian Bible, not an unknown God.

OT many years ago I saw that a teacher in the Holyoke (Massachusetts) High School was dismissed for saying that Jesus was one of a family of ten. Jesus is a word that paralyzes the mental faculties. As to the accuracy of the statement we have only the Gospels for authority. At any rate, if Matthew and Mark are reliable he had four brothers and sisters.

In Matthew xiii:54 we read: "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary, and his brethren, James, and Joseph, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us?"

¶ Mark confirms Matthew about the size of

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Mary's family. ¶ I tried to learn something concerning this case, but silence a yard wide lay all about it. I fancy the teacher was silenced in some way. Leastwise I could learn nothing.

It does n't take much to silence a teacher, or it did n't fifty years ago, especially if she were dependent upon teaching for her bread and butter; which I was.

I, at one time, tried to substitute one of Ralph Waldo Emerson's books to be read in school in the morning instead of the Christian Bible. I was informed by one of the committee that the Bible must be read every morning and the Ten Commandments repeated. The next morning I selected the "truthful" and startling account of Jonah whilst he was sojourning at the Submarine Hotel. I at that time made up my mind that if I were ever financially independent I'd say what I thought concerning the Christian religion, and no one doubts that I've done so.

ESUS is the last hope of Christian theology:

It can be but a few years at most when faith in Jesus as God will be the mark of intellectual stupidity. It seems to me that mankind will soon be sensible enough to dismiss this dogma to eternal oblivion.

It is the last relic of heathen mythology that clings to modern civilization. The Christian church is

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put to its utmost ingenuity to hide the absurdity in this dogma.

The dogma of the divinity of Jesus rests upon fictitious events, and hence its fate is sealed.

Many persons regard any one that calls Jesus a man as a blasphemer. There is a great amount of pious nonsense in the world, and there is more connected with Jesus than with any other character whom Christendom honors.

The reverence paid to Jesus by Christians is the homage of idolatry.

The first thing for people to do is to get rid of the silly notion that there is anything holy in the name of Jesus any more than in the name of Hercules, Bacchus or Adonis. All the gods of the past are myths to the present. Jesus stands in the way of the world's advancement. The path of civilization is over his grave. The mind has been fettered by worship of this myth. We want to get rid of the Christian superstition.

Whenever a man believes that he has the exact truth from God, there is in that man no spirit of compromise. He has not the modesty born of the imperfections of human nature ; he has the arrogance of theological certainty and the tyranny born of ignorant assurance. Believing himself to be the slave of God, he imitates his master, and of all tyrants the worst is a slave in power.

When a man really believes that it is necessary to do a certain thing to be happy forever, or that a certain belief is necessary to insure eternal joy, there is in that man no spirit of concession. He divides the whole world into saints and sinners, into believers and unbelievers, into God's sheep and Devil's goats, into people who will be glorified and people who will be damned.

—*Robert Ingersoll.*



We need no myths, no miracles, no gods,  
no devils.—*Robert Ingersoll.*

The world is my country and to do good is  
my religion.—*Thomas Paine.*

The presence of a hypocrite is a sure  
indication that there is a Bible and a  
prayer-book not very far away.





## COLONEL ROBERT G. INGERSOLL

**I**T is difficult to sketch this many-sided man. He was full of pity and sympathy for the poor and unfortunate. He was great enough to applaud the good, and good enough to forgive the erring. He could charm a child with his speech, or sway thousands by his magic words. He was the supreme philosopher of commonsense.

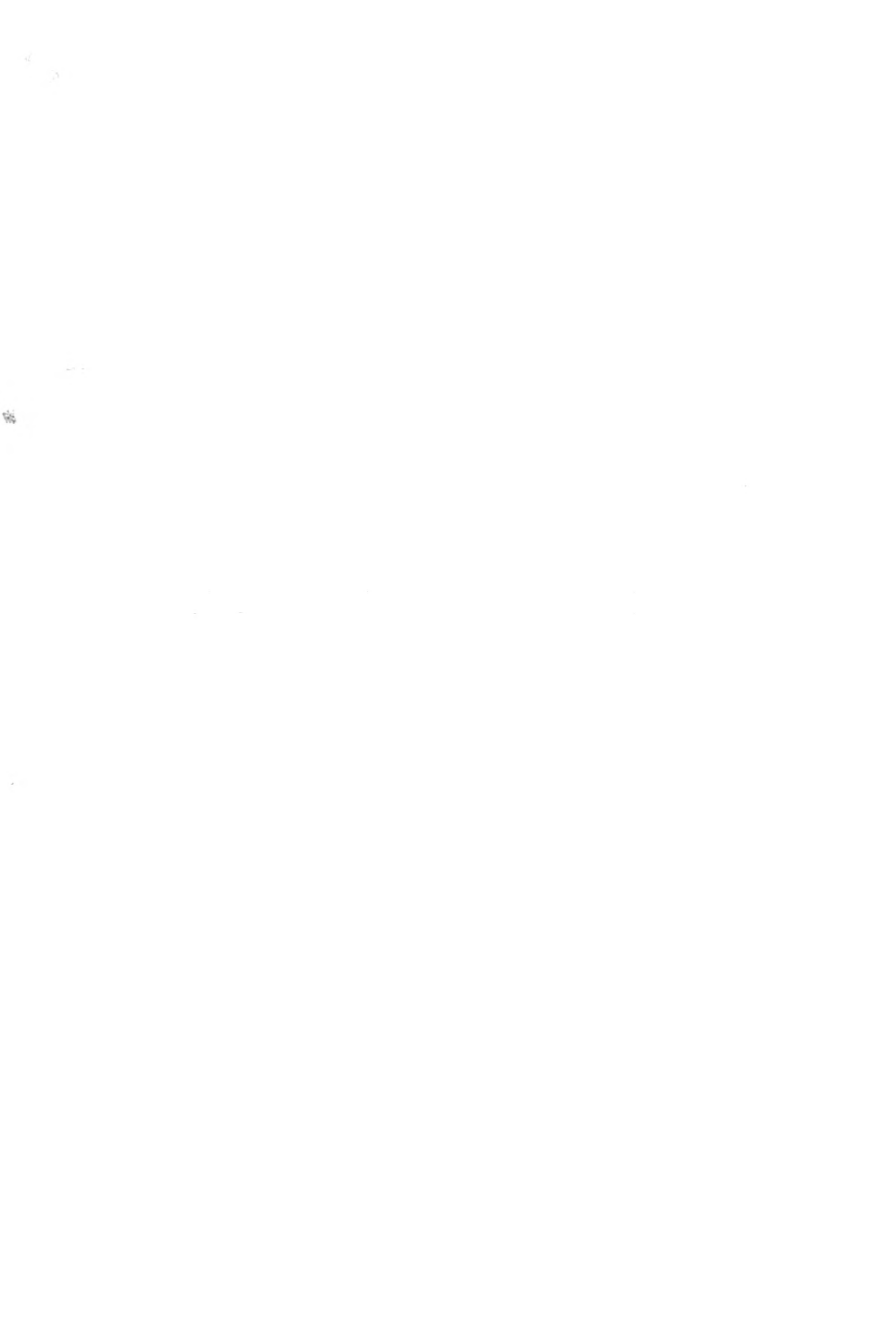
He knew how to answer a fool, but he never forgot to be courteous to an opponent. He would take the case of a poor man into court without pay; he would give a young reporter an interview when he could sell every word he spoke for a dollar; he would present the proceeds of a lecture to some worthy object as though he were throwing a nickel to an organ-grinder; he would lead a reform with a dozen workers if he believed them in the right, just as if he had a million followers; and where there was persecution he was on the side of the persecuted. Ingersoll was the truest American that America ever bore.

He was the orator of her rivers and mountains, of her hills and dales, of her forests and flowers, of her struggles and victories, of her free institutions,

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of her Stars and Stripes—the orator of the home, of wife and child, of love and liberty. The head, heart and hand of Ingersoll were perfectly united and worked together. As he thought, he acted; when he had anything to say, he said it aloud. He was not ashamed of his thoughts. He did not hide or go around the corner, or beat about the bush. He spoke honestly what he saw, what he thought, what he knew.





The entire New Testament is the work  
of Catholic Churchmen.

—*Lemuel K. Washburn.*

God is not a fact ; nothing that can be  
seen, heard or felt ; nothing that can be  
found out or in. God is a verbal content.



## MARK TWAIN'S BEST THOUGHT

**T**HE best thing Mark Twain ever said was, "I should like to see the ballot in the hands of every woman." Freethinkers should also remember him with gratitude ; he said enough from our point of view to warrant that. "Give me my glasses," were his last words. It will be but a short time before some pious evangelical hypocrite will add, "I want to read my Bible!" They are already writing about his "highest sphere of thought," namely, his religious thought.

I remember when a Presbyterian deacon said of him, "I would rather bury a daughter of mine than have her marry such a fellow." The church people are all anxious to avoid their own history concerning Mark Twain and many other people. ¶ The Reverend Doctor Twitchell said at Mark's funeral that a simple soul had gone trustingly to the beyond. He did n't mention where the beyond was, and he prayed to the Christian God that courage in the faith of immortality be given to those who mourn.

Through all these Christian notices runs an under-current that Mark Twain was only secondarily a

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humorist. I knew him somewhat in the old days and have heard him lecture. He certainly laughed superstition from the minds of thousands, and the most of his books bear witness to his broad and liberal views.

The Reverend Doctor Van Dyke mixed much religious sophistry with his remarks at the funeral of Twain, but the reverend doctor is a theological acrobat ☞ ☞

He preached once on the Atonement, and said there are a thousand true doctrines of the Atonement, which is saying substantially that no doctrine specifically is true—for instance, the doctrine of the Westminster Confession, to which Van Dyke pledged loyalty when he was ordained a Presbyterian minister. He at that time ripped up the Westminster settlement, and reopened the whole question for discussion.

Any preacher who believes in the geology of Moses, the astronomy of Joshua, and the mathematics of the Trinity, must do an immense amount of “side-stepping.”



Religion is inherited fear.

—*Lemuel K. Washburn.*

In my opinion a steeple is no more to be excluded from taxation than a smokestack.

Faith is the cross on which man crucifies his liberty.





## AN IRRELIGIOUS DISCOURSE

**W**E are living in the Twentieth Century of what is called the Christian Era, and we have not outgrown the superstitions of the First Century. And worse than this, we have not had the courage to abandon the fictions of the Book of Genesis for the truths of modern science. Just what the world is afraid of, that it fears to trust its senses, its reason, its knowledge, surpasses my understanding.

¶ One of the first things that men and women should learn is, that there is nothing in the universe to be afraid of ; that all the malignant deities are dead ; that the ancient gods that presided over the destiny of earth and of earthly things have all fallen from the sky ; that in the realm of Nature everything is natural, and that no man is pursued by a god of wrath and vengeance who would punish him for his unbelief. Every god that can not hear the truth without getting mad should be dethroned. Every priest who can not join in singing the songs of civilization should be warned to look out for the engine while the bell rings.

This world of ours is a world to be enjoyed, but it can not be enjoyed if we fear every manifestation

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of Nature and if we put a cruel god behind every cloud ☉ ☉

Let us live without fear, without superstition, without religion.

HERE is nothing above, beneath or around you that cares whether you are a Christian or an unbeliever. The real reason why a priest hates an unbeliever is that he can not get a dollar out of him. He damns those who know better than to swallow his say-sos. But it still remains a fact that an infidel can raise as many bushels of potatoes to the acre as can the Roman Catholic. The sun will not wrong an honest man. The stars will not punish a single human being for telling the truth. The sky will not persecute a person who gives his thoughts, his talents, his time, to finding ways to help mankind.

Everything that man believes in that can not be found, that can not be proved, that can not stand the test of commonsense : everything that contradicts Nature, that is opposed to established facts, that is contrary to the laws of the universe, must be given up.

We must have a new man : the man born of woman, not the man made by God ; the man who has been growing better ever since his advent on earth, not the man who has been growing worse ; the man who started with nothing and has conquered the

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earth, the sea and the air ; not the man who began perfect and has not got halfway back ; the man who made the telescope, the steam-engine, the power-loom, the telephone and the wireless telegraph ; not the man who made the thumbscrew, the rack, the ducking-stool and the stocks ; the man who has carried the torch of liberty to enlighten the world, not the man who has carried the crucifix to enslave mankind.

It is quite common to be told what Moses said or what Jesus said. Now, if all that these two Hebrew gentlemen (who in my opinion never lived) said, is preserved in the Bible, I appeal from what they said to those who know more. I assert that Moses said a lot of stuff that is n't so, and a lot more that never was so, and that all that Jesus is said to have said is practically worthless to the world today ; that there is not in all of his utterances a single word that will help man to get a living, a single word that will aid man in his struggle for knowledge ; that there is not a statement of a single scientific fact, or a plea for human liberty in all his language. He told his generation nothing that was not already known, except a mess of superstitious nonsense about angels and devils, heavens and hells. His so-called gospel of salvation was to follow him, and he landed on a cross.

The truth is this : the world has outgrown Moses

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and Jesus. It does not take commands from either. This age believes in work, not worship ; in deeds, not prayers ; in men, not monks ; in liberty, not in pious obedience ; in human rights, not in submission ; in knowledge, not in revelation.

For hundreds of years man was bound by a religious faith, and the priest was his cruel master. He dared not doubt ; he dared not rebel ; he dared not dream of freedom ; but there came a time when religious tyranny could no longer be borne. Then Mankind cried out to the Church: Give back man's brain to man ; restore to him the mind you have robbed him of ; take from his head and heart the paralyzing fear that makes him a coward and a slave, and leave to him the liberty with which Nature dowered him, that his mind may discover and preserve those mighty thoughts which make man brave, honest, free and happy.

That cry was heard far. It was heard by glad ears, and liberty sprang from the ground like the warriors from the fabled dragon-teeth of Cadmus. The war between liberty and tyranny, between fact and fable, between truth and falsehood, between man and priest, was on, and for centuries this war has raged, nor is it yet over. Freedom still lies bleeding, but victory for the right will sooner or later be won.

That victory will not be complete until every man

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will dare to say : Let come what will come, no man, be he priest, minister or judge, shall sit upon the throne of my mind, and decide for me what is right, true or good. I am my own master, my own teacher, my own guide. I will keep my reason free from control and will never surrender my own convictions to the dictates of another.

Nature has made every man commander of his own destiny ☪ ☪

UT we are yet victims of ecclesiastical villainy.

The priest is still the worst enemy of mankind. His church is like that monster of fiction which lived on little children. In the name of the children I protest against the action of the Church in stealing their tender brains, in making them slaves of superstition before they are old enough to know to what they are doomed.

The age of consent to a religious faith should be determined by law, if necessary. Today any boy or girl may be the victim of a designing priest or clergyman, or of a designing religious system.

No person under eighteen years of age should be allowed to join a church or consent to a statement of faith. Mental purity should be guarded and protected as well as physical purity.

While the Church is powerful in numbers and while its religion is supported by wealth and fashion, the world is becoming more and more emancipated from

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its pernicious influence. The light that truth gives is still ahead of us, but *it is there*, and some day the world will grow warmer under its rays and men become better and kinder to one another.

A hundred years ago the God worshiped in orthodox churches went about drowning little boys and girls who went skating on Sundays. Those were the "good old days" when men and women had religion for breakfast, dinner and supper, and took it to bed with them. It takes a long time to get such a horrible religion out of the system.

Men and women still have a mean faith, a faith which can see others damned with satisfaction if they can only be saved. Nothing but a mean religion could make men and women as mean as that. I would rather starve than preach the doctrine of endless pain for a human being—or even for a dog. I believe that this world is hard and dark and cruel enough without borrowing suffering from another world to make darker and harder the road of life and add torture to the nights of pain and misery.

A church must be sunk pretty low when it lives on the fears and tears of mankind; but what lower depths of degradation does it sound when it can deliberately create fears and tears that it may live and thrive in its vile and cruel business! A human being without pity should be shunned and despised;

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but a human being who can fill the heart with terror should not be allowed in a civilized community ☞ ☞

The mind today wants to get out into the open, into the free daylight, wants to walk the earth, look at the stars and sky, feel the warmth of the sun and smell the odor of the ground; it has become tired of being shut up in a faith, in a creed, in a church; tired of being kept in the darkness of the past, in the tomb of dead thoughts, in the moldy caskets of unreal things, and in the dungeon of fear.

The mind is striving to break the chains of the priest and be free from the bonds of the Church.

¶ You can not have men free where the priest demands and claims their obedience. The greatest menace to our national institutions is the power that controls men; that controls their thoughts, their actions and their destinies. Liberty can survive only where men are free: free to think, free to read, free to speak and free to act. The mind must not be bound by any vow of obedience. One man, no matter what his office, what his position, what his rank, has no right to compel another's obedience. This is the worst oppression on earth.

HAT is needed in this country is more men who dare think and speak for themselves; who dare belong to no church; who dare work for

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the right as they see it, and speak the truth as they understand it; who dare live their own lives independent of fashion's demands or society's usages; who dare put liberty above conformity, and who dare defy customs, law and religion in their zeal to help their fellow-beings.

There is more than one liberty—more than the liberty to do right—that is partly won for every civilized being. There is another liberty that is dangerous and that persists even where civilization exists—the liberty to take another's liberty from him. This liberty is usually taken from another in the name of God and what is called holy; but there is nothing on earth so holy as liberty, and he who takes it from another robs him of the dearest right possessed by man. Binding a human being with the chains of faith before that being is old enough to judge whether the faith is reasonable or true is the assassination of freedom.

The greatest danger which confronts our nation today is not political but religious, and the preservation of our free institutions does not depend upon our army and navy, but upon the emancipation of the human mind from ecclesiastical slavery. As Thomas Paine well said, "Spiritual freedom is the root of political liberty." You can not have free schools, free speech and a free press where the mind is not free.



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There is too much faith in this country and too little sense. Men have given up about everything they possess to be saved ; but it is more necessary, and more commendable in the workingmen of this nation, to save their dollars than to save their souls.

SUBJECT that needs to be investigated quite as much as, if not more than, the high cost of living is the high cost of worship. There may be some justice in the criticism of the price of meats. We must remember, however, that we do get something for our money when we buy meat, but let us not forget that we get absolutely nothing for the money spent for worship. Money given to the Church is lost to the world. It is not used to improve homes ; to help the poor and needy ; to alleviate suffering ; to bring hope to the sick or to give a few comforts to old age. It goes into the pocket of ecclesiastical greed.

This country just at present is suffering from those twin curses of humanity—religion and Bull-Mooseism. The priest and Bull-Mooseism are the two worst trouble-makers in this country. To get rid of this precious pair of knaves would be to bring peace on earth and hasten the dawn.

I don't know which is the bigger knave, the priest or the Bull-Mooser, but I do know that the priest is engaged in the meaner business of the two.

When a man tries to sell me a mouse-trap to catch

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elephants, I am suspicious of his mental sanity ; and when a man tells me that eternal happiness can be won by enlisting in his salvation army, I question his moral sanity. I know that religion is offered at cut rates, but there is no discount on morality. You can not have the reward of good behavior unless you behave. You may save your soul by saying, " I believe," but you have to *do* something to save your body.

There is too much of this " believe-in-me " business. You don't want to believe in any one you know nothing about. The faith of a little child in its parents is beautiful, but the faith of a grown-up man in a priest is idiotic. Faith has ruined more than it has saved. With faith goes obedience, and he or she who obeys is lost.

There is no honest call today to believe, because there is opportunity to know. Faith is hatched in the nest of imposition. He who yields obedience is a fool, and he who demands it is a scoundrel.

In this age, as in the past, a lie made " holy " is allowed to assassinate the truth. Nothing is cursing this nation ; nothing is cursing human life ; nothing is cursing honest effort and brave striving so much as what is called holiness. It is holy to believe all you are told ; holy to wear the robes of hypocrisy ; holy to rob the poor in the name of God, and holy to put the poison of faith to

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the lips of a child. It is holy to repudiate Nature and make a lie of your body, your mind, your life. To purify the dwelling-place of man, it is necessary to drive from the earth everything that religion has made holy.

The only really sacred things were holy before a church was ever built, before there was a priest on the globe.

Human love and the home which human love built for its offspring were the first holy things which men and women knew, and it is this human love of ours which is holier than mosque, temple or church ; holier than priestly robe or ecclesiastical rite ; holier by far than all the holy things of faith.

HE Church has always lived by robbing the home ; the priest has always lived on the wages of the toiler. The gods of religion have never done aught to lighten the heavy load on the shoulders of labor. The priest has said to mankind that his Lord left this consolation to the world : “ Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest.”

What the priest really means is this : Come unto me and I will do the rest ; and by the time he has done it, there is nothing of manhood left.

The priest also teaches that his Lord and Master said, “ Ask and ye shall receive,” and adds, “ The Lord will provide.” How many poor wretches have

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believed those words ; but their outstretched hands withered away day by day, and at last dropped empty by their sides. There they lay white and cold, holding not the bread they fondly expected, but holding the hand of death.

It may be pious and it may be beautiful to say, "The Lord will provide," but it is a lie just the same. When, the other day, the bodies of a mother and her two children were being carried to the grave with the words, "starved to death," written on their faces, but not written on their caskets, it was a sufficient refutation of the religious teaching that "The Lord will provide." It is the plain, unvarnished truth that the Lord will *not* even provide the coffin for the poor victim of such a false, deceptive, religious faith.

In olden times it was customary for the Church to say, God's light lights the world. Not so today. God's light has gone out. It is man's light that lights the world and the Church too. Our enlightenment is human, not divine. No altar of religion burns with the fire of truth. Science carries the torch of knowledge : liberty is the way and truth is the goal ☛ ☛

Our earth gods no longer make their homes.

It was not safe for them to live any more. Their sons may once have married the daughters of men, but they can not get a license to do so today.

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Parents will not stand for it. ¶ So the gods have gone, bag and baggage. Where they have gone, no one knows. The skies give no sign that they are hiding up there. The telescope has found *seventy million stars, but not one god.*

It is time for the pulpit to stop repeating the old superstitions about God and about what he has done for man. He has never done any more for man than he is doing today ; never spoken to man any more than he is speaking today ; never revealed himself to anybody any more than he stands revealed to you and me and to every human being everywhere ☞ ☞

Every word that ever came from the mouth of God man put in his mouth, and every book revealed by God was written by man.

Half the work of man for the next one hundred years will be to kill the lies told about what God has done ☞ ☞

Whether there is in all the vast universe a higher and nobler being than man, I don't know. Whether there is in all the vast universe a better place for man to live than on this earth, I don't know ☞ And no one knows any more about these matters than I do ☞ ☞

We have found out much that is not so ; now we want to find out all we can that is so. And it is of no use to go to the Church to learn anything. The

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Church is only a place where falsehoods are kept in cold storage. The man who thinks and studies is the man who is helping the world most, not the man who preaches and prays. To find the truth one needs to get as far from the Church as possible. ¶ Christians of all denominations have lots of pity for the man without a church. Let me assure these persons that the man without a church does n't want one. As a rule, he is satisfied with what he has. He has a home, which is better than a church. If those persons who are pitying men and women for not having a church would, instead, pity the man without a home, and pity him enough to help him get one, they would show much better sense and manifest a truer sympathy with their fellow-beings ☪ ☪

CAN not see any good in painting a thing white that is black, or calling a thing beautiful that is ugly. There are persons who talk as though they believed that a Northeast storm was sunshine. I am not made that way. I am as ready and as willing as anybody to acknowledge the good in Nature, or the good in life, but I do not believe in lying, in saying that wrong is right, or that suffering is to be enjoyed. There are lots of hard things in our life, and it does not alter facts to call them by some other name. A man dying with a cancer can not be made to believe that he is having a good time.

## AN IRRELIGIOUS DISCOURSE

¶ The most that any man can do who goes through this earthly existence is to use his fellow-mortals right and square ; to give them an honest day's work when he works for them and an honest day's pay when he hires them ; to say nothing to hurt them and everything he can to assist them ; to help them out of trouble and not get them into trouble. If one does this, and does no more than this, he has done what beats every religion on earth.

We have got to deal with men and women as they are and where they are. The man who is natural ; the man who has not been made a fool of by a priest or parson ; the man who has not swapped his commonsense for a foolish belief ; the man who has not had his mind stuffed with religious dope, knows that this life on earth is the important life, and that it is a higher work to determine his fate here than anywhere else.

There is not a person living who would not be well and strong and happy here rather than hereafter. I would rather have the power to make every cripple straight and whole ; every poor, unfortunate man and woman prosperous and contented ; every sick person well, every bad person good, and every slave to vice master of his appetite and passions, in this life on earth, than to save the human wrecks, the human unfortunates, the human victims of vice and crime, for another life somewhere else.

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HAT men and women want is happiness, not Heaven. They want a good home on this globe, not a loafing-place in Abraham's bosom. They want the opportunity to enjoy the good things of this life, not the promise that they will hear the angels sing. They want better wages for their work, better treatment from their employers, and better things to eat and drink and wear. They want better things here, not hereafter. They want to be happy while they are living on earth, not have the assurance of happiness after they are dead ☛

If I ever attempt to write my creed, I shall say: I believe in so much that I can hardly expect to express all of my faith in one statement. I am all the time believing in something new. But there is one thing that I most heartily believe in now and have believed in ever since I was a child, and that is, SUNSHINE—external and internal and eternal sunshine ☛ ☛

Sunshine is the joy of the universe, and joy is the sunshine of the human heart. Let us be bright and cheerful. Let us be happy. Let us give to the world the sunshine of our hearts.





Nature has no need of a Holy Ghost.  
—*Lemuel K. Washburn.*

All progress has been due to the Devil.  
He was the first investigator.—*Ingersoll.*

God takes care of the weed. Man must  
take care of the corn.



## DECAY OF CHRISTIAN MORALITY

**T**HERE is a great deal of exaggerated rhetoric employed in praising what is called "Christian Morality." I have examined with considerable care everything that may justly come within the meaning of this expression, and I am bound to say, out of respect for the truth, that such morality does not deserve praise and can not be praised by the honest lips of an honest person.

I am perfectly aware that I have made a statement which challenges the sincerity of the Christian pulpit, but every one knows that there is not a minister in Christendom whose practise agrees with his preaching.

While it is common to hear a clergyman in pious ecstasy exhaust the vocabulary of laudation in his praises of the beautiful morals of the "Sermon on the Mount," it is exceedingly rare to see one of these parsons sacrifice his commonsense to the nonsense of Jesus.

We are learning that the theological morality of the Christian faith is not the right kind of morality to make manhood and womanhood. The great weakness of Christian morality is this : It depends

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upon the Christian idea of Jesus, and when the world has outgrown the superstition about this person, all of his moral precepts will lose their value and their splendor.

Men and women of any intellectual penetration know that the New Testament story is founded upon unreliable tradition ; that its heart is a myth. ¶ Where men live independent of the foolish faith of the Gospels, there is a character of self-reliance which towers like a mountain-peak above the dead level of Christian endeavor. The person who accepts the Christian theology is no more in sympathy with the best thought of the age than is the man who wanders about the streets, begging his food and sleeping wherever he can, in harmony with the highest comforts of our civilization.

There is a nobler purpose in a train of cars carrying grain and produce across the continent than in a conference of clergymen trying to keep alive a theology which teaches that God was born of a Jewish maiden who lived and died in Palestine, and devising ways to make the people believe the ridiculous superstition.

Truth is born where men are allowed to think and speak their thoughts. Error can not be maintained where man is permitted to ask questions. The only way to preserve Christianity is to put it in a tin can and have it hermetically sealed.

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We are getting a new examination of the universe as a basis for our philosophy. The telescope has afforded man visions far beyond the seventh heaven of the Apocalypse. The genesis of things is found to lie millions of years back of the Genesis of the Bible. The chaos out of which this world was made has been discovered to be a previous state of existence.

Science is laying the new foundation for our faith, and knowledge is building the new temple of the mind ☛ ☛

Men and women everywhere are stating their opinions, and the world recognizes that there is to be a religious controversy upon this earth which will shake to its base everything that is not true. Not one stone of falsehood will be left standing upon another. Every dogma of superstition must find a grave, and truth alone be revered by man.

HE world has taken a step forward of Christianity, and in its march of advancement has left behind the Christian God, the Christian Savior, the Christian Bible, and the Christian Faith ☛  
But the world will not stop here. It must go further. The question which the human mind wants answered today is this : Is the decay of Christian theology to be followed by the decay of Christian morality?

I think that it is, and I also think that this morality

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is about as near dead now as it can be. ¶ It is true that the author of this morality is painted in divine colors for human adoration Sunday after Sunday, and that his other-world ethics are inculcated by the pulpit; but beyond these attempts to give the peculiar moral teachings of Jesus the show of life, there is absolutely no sign of them in the world of man ☉ ☉

The morality of the Christian system is not designed for humanity in its present condition, nor does it possess the elements necessary to make man into the image of any higher virtue. It is, in fact, an unreal, unnatural morality which Jesus taught, and the notion that men and women do not practise it because it is too far above them, depends upon an estimate of this morality which we are not willing to allow.

I do not wish to be misunderstood on this point. I want to say that the general moral duties of man, as they have been taught for ages by teachers of every race and of every religion, are not Christian, and that Christian ethics are found in the code of moral duties taught by Jesus *which are different from the recognized standard of morality adopted by mankind generally.* Christian morals are Christian *only wherein they differ from all other morals.*

It is because they are peculiar to Christianity that they are Christian.

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Because I do not believe in Christianity—in the Christian theology and in Christian morals—I do not wish it said that I do not believe in morality, for I do. I believe that man can be good and true and that he can do right, and I believe that he ought to do right.

I do not say that every one can reach the same moral altitude. I do not even say that every individual can be good and true. Some persons do not seem to be morally adjusted. I think, however, that we do not trespass beyond the domain of truth when we predicate the power of man to be moral.

The notion that man can not be good has been the apology of half the criminals of the world. It is the creed of all crime. If we affirm the idea of human depravity, we may as well erase our statutes, for, if man can not be good, it is the height of folly to expect him to be so.

The healthy faith of man is faith *in* man.

The theology which has been preached for the past few centuries is not calculated to make men moral. Those ministers who have shouted themselves hoarse for the salvation of the soul, and who have made no account of man's behavior in their scheme to save the race, are the ones who have rubbed humanity in the dirt and undermined the moral foundations of the world.

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VERY ethical principle that supports our social structure is independent of ecclesiastical relations, and it is not essential that we recognize any theology in order to comprehend the necessity of moral obedience.

There is no sympathy between right, truth and justice, and the "Apostles' Creed." We may go so far as to say that the attempt to establish a perpetual union between Christianity and morality would result in an absolute divorce of these two forces ☛ ☛

I wish to make it plain beyond a question that the Christian faith, in itself, is entirely distinct from all moral effort on the part of man.

To believe that Jesus was the Christ does not carry any obligation to do right; does not make it incumbent upon the believer to do a single moral action ☛ ☛

It is sufficient to establish our predication that not a single church in Christendom makes moral character the condition of membership, or good behavior the way to Heaven.

There is a code of Christian morals which has been taught, but never practised. The special duties which Jesus enjoined upon his followers have never been reduced to conduct. It is not too much to say that the moral precepts of Jesus, if carried into action, would cause social revolutions beyond



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precedent, and produce a state of existence compared with which anarchy would be government, and confusion would be order.

But, before we undertake to examine the Christian morals, let us shed a few tears of rejoicing upon the grave of Orthodox theology. We do not ask to have a coroner's jury decide what caused the death of this theology. We bless the cause, whatever it was. We only wish to feel assured that it is really, truly dead, and the fact that "not a single treatise written by a New England Puritan is a living and authoritative book" seems to prove it beyond a question. The persons who still preach this theology and profess to believe it are only "sitting up with the corpse."

While it is asserted that a wrong interpretation of this theology sent it out of the world, it is pretty evident that a right understanding of it inspires no wish to have it back. Much of the superstition in morals sprang from fear of God, which the Christian church has inculcated as the highest incentive to right doing.

The truth, broadly and frankly stated, is this: God is no longer the inspiration of morality. Fear of God does not check the actions of man today, nor is the attempt to make human and divine interests identical sufficient to insure obedience to moral laws. The ancient basis of morals is gone,

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and another and better one must be found to inspire a freer life, a fuller life, a better life, and a higher 

We who have rejected the Christian theology are looked upon as orphans. But, if I understand the position of freethinkers, the question of a supreme power is neither affirmed nor denied by those who wish to have no further business with the God of Orthodoxy.

We read that, "the fool hath said in his heart there is no God," but we prefer to say nothing about the matter. Theologies may come, and theologies may go, but humanity goes on forever, and so we do not deem it as important to worship the fleeting shadows of the universe which are cast upon the minds of men as it is to hold fast to those realities which make human existence a blessing and "a joy forever."

We are called "infidels" and denounced as "unbelievers" because we will not march in the ranks of hypocrisy, and dance to the music of Orthodoxy. We believe no statement which our reason can not approve; we accept no doctrine which is contrary to commonsense; we have confidence in human nature; we believe in truth, justice and love; we accept life as a blessing, and try to make it so; we believe in taking care of ourselves, in helping others and in being just and kind to all, and we say to the

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Christian Church, "If this be Infidelity, make the most of it."

It is suggested by some that if man's exact relation to the Deity were understood, the whole question of morals would be settled at once. But would it not be truer to say that if man's exact relation to his fellowmen were understood and respected, the highest individual welfare, no less than the general good, would dictate the morality which the world needs? And is not this the grand task for the human race, to rightly interpret the effect of human action upon the individual and the community, and to deduce from human experience the rules for human conduct?

I do not know that I owe to God any duty. I do know that I owe a duty to my neighbor. I plead total indifference to the demands of divine ethics, but I trust that I am not completely callous to the wants of my fellow-beings. I owe it to myself to be moral. I owe it to my race, to every man and woman that I meet in life, to be as honest, as true, as upright, as my nature will permit. I can comprehend and appreciate obligations to humanity, but moral indebtedness to the Deity I know nothing about.

¶ The Christian morals are founded upon the assumption that the work of man here is to do something that he may escape punishment hereafter, and hence the morality of the Christian Church

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has had little reference to the concerns of the present life.

Christian morality is based upon the Christian faith that the human race is under the curse of God, and that, to evade the penalty pronounced upon him, man must perform certain duties—these duties being taught as paramount to all we owe to self, to family, to society, and to the world. ¶ But an almost universal disbelief of the Christian dogmas prevails today, and, consequently, a new morality, with man's welfare for its supreme object, is fast supplanting the outworn and valueless performances of Christian duties.

The moral teaching of the New Testament may be the highest and purest of its kind of teaching, but it is not the kind which is needed today. It is a false morality, yea, a dead morality for the most part, which the Christian Church demands of men. The general conviction is that no salvation is needed by man, and that all the virtues advertised as requisite for such safety as the Church is prepared to secure, are spurious virtues.

Those actions which advance man along the way of general prosperity, which make it easier to live and get a living on the earth, which have their value determined by their respect for human beings, are what the world needs.

The generally acknowledged author of Christian

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morals offers no salient points for criticism, as he can not be regarded as a historical person whose career has been carefully followed and marked by the biographer. He is a mythological man, with a little less of the fabulous and a little more of the real than attaches to the gods and goddesses of ancient Greece and Rome.

The name of Jesus adorns an anatomy of words. It pictures a person, not of flesh and blood, but of faith and fancy. Jesus is a man of the imagination ; but mythical as he is, certain men and women believe in him in their own way, and are not over-tolerant of those who are disposed to ask for the proofs of his life and works.

This person has left no more marks of his living upon the earth than have the birds the marks of their flight through the air. The New Testament is no more history than is Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. We can not make any positive assertions in regard to the life and character of a man when we do not know who was his father, where or when he was born, with whom he lived, nor when he died. The only historical fact connected with Jesus which is not disputed is that Mary was his mother. This is a very important point in his history, but it is not sufficient to constitute a biography.

Notwithstanding the fact that the entire narrative of Jesus is without a single chronological date, and

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the vastly more significant fact that not a single incident connected with the career of Jesus is mentioned in contemporaneous history, we must perforce speak of him as a person whose life was watched and noted from his miraculous advent to his miraculous ascension, and look upon his disciples as so many Boswells ready to mirror to the world his every speech and act.


We must do this—Why? Because the world will not candidly and critically study the gospel-story. ¶ For the present, then, we will speak of Jesus as a man, and accept him as the author of the moral code in the New Testament. But a word or two about the man. The Christian world sets him apart as the model of the race, as the masterpiece of Nature, as the utmost which earth can produce. Every man must here fetch his word of praise, and every word be a mountain to meet the demand of the Christian Church for reverence of Jesus ☛

DO not believe in the infallibility of any man, but I believe in the improvability of all men ☛ Is man no longer heir to the virtues of life, that he must erect monuments of praise forever over the name of Jesus? I shall take the liberty to express my dissent from the common expressions of admiration for this man. I can not praise everything which he did, nor can I think that every word he uttered is a star of wisdom. He said some good

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things, but much of what he said is good for nothing. His theology will do for Sunday Schools, but it will not stand half a dozen questions by commonsense. His Hell is barbarous, his Heaven childish, and his ideas of humanity show but a superficial knowledge of human nature. His life can not be imitated with advantage to the race, and his notions of human existence are wholly inadequate to the complex, varied civilization of this age.

Let us see what he did. He paid no filial respect to his parents ; he refused to acknowledge his mother and his brothers ; he lived a roving, wandering life ; he paid no heed to the laws of his country ; he placed no value upon industry, and even went so far as to tell men and women that God would feed and clothe them ; he helped himself to the property and possessions of other people without paying for them, and destroyed what belonged to others without offering an equivalent ; he had no property, no home, not a place to lay his head ; he hated the rulers, yet sought to establish a kingdom for himself ; he failed to reach the throne he sought, and died upon the malefactor's cross.

Is this the man for the Twentieth Century to honor? Is this the man for men to follow in this age? Is this the man whose life all should strive to imitate? 

The man who took the life of Jesus for a model

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would hate father and mother, brother and sister ; he would have neither wife nor child ; he would live from place to place ; he would be a lawbreaker and an idler ; he would live the life of a wanderer and die the death of a criminal.

Have I put a false color in this picture which I have painted? Have I misrepresented the life of Jesus? Read the four Gospels and see. I find this character sketched in the New Testament, and it is there called Jesus, and it is this character which we are adjured to imitate if we would be perfect.

¶ To the man or woman who declares that the life of Jesus is the way to salvation, I have only this to say, “ Why then do you not imitate it? ”

Now, I wish to ask, “ What kind of morals would such a man as we have sketched naturally teach? ”

¶ You will answer, “ The morals he lived.” At least, we find such morals taught in the New Testament ☛ ☛

My point here is : If the life of Jesus was an honest, faithful exponent of his moral teachings, then such a morality as he practised is not wanted today—and that such a morality is not wanted is shown by the fact that no one practises it.

I know that it is considered respectable and pious to profess great admiration for the doctrines taught by Jesus, and the world has paid them the outward compliment of profession, saying that the moral



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code of the New Testament was the despair of man ; but it has never seriously set to work to reduce this code to practise, which proves that such profession is only a part of the universal accomplishment of fashionable hypocrisy.

O not understand me as saying that there is no moral precept contained in the Gospels which is worthy of being practised. I make no such declaration, and wish no such construction put upon my words. What I desire to enforce is this : That the morality of Jesus sprang from a philosophy which has passed away, and therefore, that it is, for the greater part, obsolete and worthless. That Jesus shared the general belief of his age that the world was soon to be destroyed, is shown by his estimate of earthly things ; and that a morality founded upon such a belief should survive and outlast the faith which inspired it reveals a condition of things that is not flattering to our intellectual perception or to our moral sense.

The morals of the New Testament are founded upon a theory of the universe which is found now only in creeds—those epitaphs of religion. The most superficial observation is sufficient to enable us to perceive that theology can no longer be the basis of morality, and that the authority of the New Testament can not be accepted on this question.

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There is nothing more firmly impressed upon the mind of man than the fact of the stability of the universe, notwithstanding an occasional earthquake; and the value of earthly things has a higher moral significance consequent upon the assurance of material existence.

Morality must have a physical basis; that is, the moral code which man can practise to his safety and his honor must not contradict human nature. The defeat of the New Testament morals is assured by their antagonism to the nature of man. The morals of Jesus were designed to fit man for what he called the "Kingdom of Heaven," but the only morality which is worth the name is that which fits man for living his life on earth.

Jesus constantly urged men to the performance of moral duties that they might be rewarded by their "Father in Heaven." Such a motive for good behavior is offensive to the rational mind, and moral commandments which are enforced with a Heaven and a Hell do not spring from an opinion of human nature which deserves our respect.

The most comprehensive criticism which one can make upon the morals of the New Testament is, that they are not practicable. Is the character of Christians fashioned by the power and influence of the words which Jesus left in the world? This question should be pressed to an answer, and

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honesty would answer it in a way which would shake every church-building in the land and tear the mask from the face of every Christian worshiper on the globe.

Jesus taught that men and women were to love him more than father or mother, son or daughter. Imagine human beings loving a man whom they know nothing about, and consequently can care nothing about, and who has no more claim to their affections than has the ghost in Hamlet, better than they love parent or child ! Such morality as this is not fit for a Hottentot.

If any command is implanted in our nature and is a part of the bone and fiber of our very being, it is to love beyond all else those who have borne us and cared for us through infancy and childhood, and those whose existence depends upon us, and to whom we stand pledged by the holiest ties of our beings, to watch over and protect, to care for and love, to the last days of our lives. It is love of parent and child which is alike the supreme obligation and the supreme benefaction of our humanity. No being has walked this earth who had the moral right to demand a greater love than is due to father and mother, son and daughter ; and if Jesus claimed such affection, his claim is an impertinence which we are bound to treat with indignation and scorn.

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OR the Christian Church to make of the words of Jesus commands to the world is to deserve the severest condemnation. Jesus taught that men were not to make for themselves a home, not to cultivate those virtues which blossom into the family, and not to save the fruits of their toil to make old age with its tottering form and feeble limbs less liable to the hardships of the world, but he summed up all the duties of life in these words : “ Sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and come follow me.”

To obey such teaching as this would overturn every monument of prosperity upon the earth, blight every feeling of happiness that gladdens the heart of man, and convert the busy, working, loving world into one vast army of tramps, following a king without a kingdom, a leader without a purpose, a commander with nothing to give those who followed his command.

Jesus taught that we were not to resist evil ; that is, that if a thief stole our watch and chain, we were bound to run after him and give him our purse also ; that if a man took away our coat, we should wrong him if we did not send him the balance of the suit ; that if a man struck us on one side of the face, we were to invite him to strike us on the other side also ; that if, as it were, the armies of some foreign powers were to invade our land, and burn

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and destroy our cities and towns, pillage our homes and murder our families, we were in duty bound to look upon them as benefactors and thank them for their work of destruction, and ask them to come and do it again.

Such moral teaching as this would make a nation of cowards and slaves.

It is our duty to punish thieves and robbers, not to reward them ; to resist wrong and injustice, not to submit to them like cravens ; to protect our country from foes, even though we are obliged to shed their blood and our own in so doing.

Is there a Christian on the globe who pays the least heed to a single one of the moral commands of Jesus? You all know there is not.

I need not tell the Christian Church that the morality taught by Jesus is decaying when every church is its coffin, and every minister its gravedigger ☛ ☛

If you wish to see how much respect for the moral teachings of Jesus one of his professed followers has, just steal his coat, and if he gives you his cloak also, as he is commanded to do by his Lord and Master, please publish his name in the daily papers—for the benefit of others who wish to get a cloak ☛ ☛

We find among the express commands of Jesus this advice : “ Lay not up for yourselves treasures

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upon earth." The most liberal translation of this counsel can not make it anything but poor advice. Every material blessing of mankind has come from the savings of human labor, and the value of laying up treasures upon earth is more evident than that of laying up treasures in Heaven, whatever this saying may mean. When every Christian tries as hard to be poor as he tries now to get rich, we shall think that he has some regard for the moral teachings of Jesus.

It must be apparent to all that what may be claimed as Christian morality is not only decaying, but that it ought to decay. There is no sense in it. Imagine a man telling people in the Twentieth Century to "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," and endeavoring to prove that because the fowls of the air do not have to broil a beefsteak for their breakfast or make biscuit for tea, human beings will be fed whether they provide anything for their appetites or not. ¶ Jesus tells us that our Heavenly Father will feed us because we are better than the fowls of the air, and that he will clothe us because he clothes the grass of the field. Our earthly fathers seem to have done more in the way of providing food and clothing for us before we were able to take care of ourselves than any Heavenly Father. Others may put their

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trust in God for something to eat and drink and wear, if they wish to, but I prefer to give the matter a little thought myself. ¶ Jesus concludes these admonitions by saying, “Take no thought for the morrow.” This is bad counsel, and it shows the good sense of mankind that it has never been followed. The whole world lives in what one of our poets called, “The bright tomorrow of the mind.”

¶ We will refer to only one more of the peculiar moral injunctions of Jesus. In the fifth chapter of Matthew, in the forty-fourth verse, we read, “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.”

If we were to do as herein commanded, we should have an inverted morality which would place the crown of virtue upon the forehead of vice.

Let us see if the preacher of this doctrine practised it.

¶ Did Jesus bless the Scribes and Pharisees when they refused to acknowledge his claim to be the Messiah? This is the blessing which he pronounced upon them : “Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye devour widows’ houses and for a pretense make long prayers ; therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.” “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of Hell?” That is not a very sweet blessing!

¶ And these men did not curse Jesus. They only

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did not agree with his opinions. Jesus, also, in his wrath against his enemies, calls them, in the seventeenth and nineteenth verses of the twenty-third chapter of Matthew, "Ye fools and blind," forgetting, doubtless, that he had previously declared, when preaching on the Mount, "Whosoever shall say, 'Thou Fool,' shall be in danger of hell-fire." ❧ ❧

The moral teachings of Jesus were inspired by a false estimate of all earthly things. There is no doubt that Jesus believed the world was coming to an end in his generation. How to get into the Kingdom of Heaven was of more consequence than how to reform mankind, or improve the world, since the end of earthly things was near at hand. This appears to have been the thought of Jesus, and explains much of his language.

But today we do not believe that the earth has run its course, and that the end of all material things is near at hand. We are living without fear of failure on the part of the universe, and are giving our attention more to human wants than to divine commands ❧ ❧

*Not fear of offending God, but fear of wronging man, is the highest basis of morals.* We have reached a time when apologies are not respected, when repentance is looked upon as the mask of villainy, when the stature of life is most shorn of manliness



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by prancing in the garb of humility, when a brave facing of life's trials and demands counts for more than cowardly surrender in the name of God. In fact, we have come to say to the world of humanity, "Be moral, and you need not be religious." Work for man is coming to be a sufficient excuse for neglect of God.

UT we want no cheap moral duties held up for man to perform. It is serious business to live this life of ours and live it well, and it is hard work to do it. Morality sets us as high a task as we are able to perform, and a higher task than has yet been performed by most of mankind. The effort of this age is to expose the sham of what is called holiness, and make sacred the surroundings of human beings. We must throw off the past, and stand upon that sunlit height where we can feel that "somehow life is bigger after all than any painted angel, could we see the man that is within us."

This is the moral duty of the world: to respect the man that is within us. We ought to rear on the earth a range of moral Alps that would stand and command the admiration of the world as long as eye could see and heart could feel. We need a rational hope and a burning purpose in this century, something noble to live for and the courage of nobility to work and win it.

## *I DON'T KNOW—DO YOU?*

The improvement of the world is the only object of life worthy of man. Do and say nothing that will not improve mankind. Were this simple admonition heeded, we should have the key to the kingdom of the only heaven that man needs in our own pocket.

It is time for the reign of commonsense to begin on earth ; time for men to elevate morality above religion ; and time for us to say, “ Millions for the world, not a cent for the Church.” The battle between Freedom and Christianity has begun, and I believe that when it ends Christianity will be buried beneath the ruins of its own dogmas, there to remain forever. It possesses no spirit that can rise again from its ashes and mount on wings of flame to a higher life. When superstition dies, it dies to the root.

The Christian minister can not arrest the march of liberty by crying, “ Infidelity ! ” and threatening with everlasting cremation all those who refuse to heed his words.

But let there be no base understanding of freedom. The new John the Baptist must not be a cowboy, saying, “ The kingdom of highwaymen is at hand.” As a person when in perfect bodily health knows not from any intimation from the respective parts that he has a stomach, a brain, or a heart, so a person when living in perfect freedom is uncon-

## DECAY OF CHRISTIAN MORALITY

scious of law, of creed, of custom. The healthy man physically is the free man physically ; the healthy man mentally is the free man mentally ; the healthy man morally is the free man morally ; liberty of the individual is health of the individual, and a free man means a man who is true and obedient to all natural laws.

HERE is a misunderstanding of freedom upon the one side, and a misrepresentation of it upon the other, that make it hazardous for one to employ the word. To connect this word with morality in the eyes of many is to confound the Madonna with Mary Magdalene. It is to start the ghost of Don Juan ☞ ☞

The conservatism of society has ever regarded liberty as the black flag of the moral marauder, the emblem of a piratical intention upon the casket of the world that contains the jewels of honor, justice, virtue and social order.

So persistently and malignantly has freedom been represented as a wrecker's light, kindled only to lure to destruction, that to represent it as worthy to be trusted is to arouse the spirit which pursued Voltaire to his grave with a lie, erected a shaft of calumny over the tomb of Paine, and which now, with the coward's weapon of slander, attacks the living who refuse to acknowledge that the voice of the Church is the voice of God.

*I DON'T KNOW—DO YOU?*

But nevertheless we believe with Burns that :

Upo' this tree there grows sic fruit,  
Its virtues a' can tell, man ;  
It raises man aboon the brute,  
It maks him'ken himsel', man ;  
Gif ance the peasant taste a bite,  
He 's greater than a lord, man,  
And ni' the beggar shares a mite  
Of a' he can afford, man.

And so we exclaim in the words of one of our own true poets :

Always in thine eyes, O Liberty !  
Shines that high light whereby the world is saved,  
And though thou slay us, we will trust in thee.

You have all heard of the man who refused to open his eyes for a year, and who declared that during that time nothing could be seen on account of the darkness. But the endeavor to perpetuate old errors by keeping the eyes closed to the facts of science, the truths of philosophy, and the progress of the human race, has not been crowned with success. The further attempt to convert the world to what James Parton calls a "kitchen religion" is merely waste of power.

The preaching of Christianity is making "much ado about nothing." What we want is manhood and womanhood.

It is said by the Church that the man who lives

## *DECAY OF CHRISTIAN MORALITY*

for his family and brings all that he can win of what is fair and bright and glad to those he loves, may be a good man, but he is not a Christian, and therefore has no religion.

Give me then the man who is not a Christian, and who has no religion, for if the man who loves his wife and children, who gives to them the strength of his arm, the thought of his brain, the warmth of his heart, has not religion, the world is better off without it, for these are the highest and holiest things which man can do.



There is only one thing worth praying  
for : to be in the line of evolution.

—*Elbert Hubbard.*

Jesus as Savior of the world is a theological  
creation, and not a historical character.



Born Jan 29, 1737.

Friend and adviser of Washington, Jefferson, Franklin, Monroe, etc., etc.

Author of *Common Sense*, *The Crisis*, *Rights of Man*, and *The Age of Reason* ;

Editor of *Pennsylvania Magazine* ;

Enlisted in Continental Army ; appointed Aide-de-Camp to General Nathaniel Greene ;

Secretary of Committee on Foreign Affairs, Congress and Pennsylvania Assembly ;

By his writings did more for the American cause in the Revolution than any other one person ;

First proposed American Independence ;

First suggested the Federal Union of States ;

First proposed the abolition of Negro slavery ;

First suggested protection for dumb animals ;

First proposed arbitration and international peace ;

First suggested justice to women ;

First pointed out the reality of human brotherhood ;

First pointed out the folly of hereditary succession and monarchical government ;

First proposed old-age pensions ;

First suggested international copyright ;

First proposed the education of the children of the poor at public expense ;

First suggested a great republic of all the nations of the world ;

First proposed “the land for the people” ;

First suggested “the religion of humanity” ;

First proposed and first wrote the words, “United States of America” ;

Founder of the first Ethical Society ;

Proposed the purchase of the Louisiana Territory ;

Inventor of the iron bridge, the hollow candle—principle of the modern central-draft burner, etc., etc.

Died June 9, 1809.



























