

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

WHY WOMEN SHOULD  
BE SECULARISTS.

A Lecture.

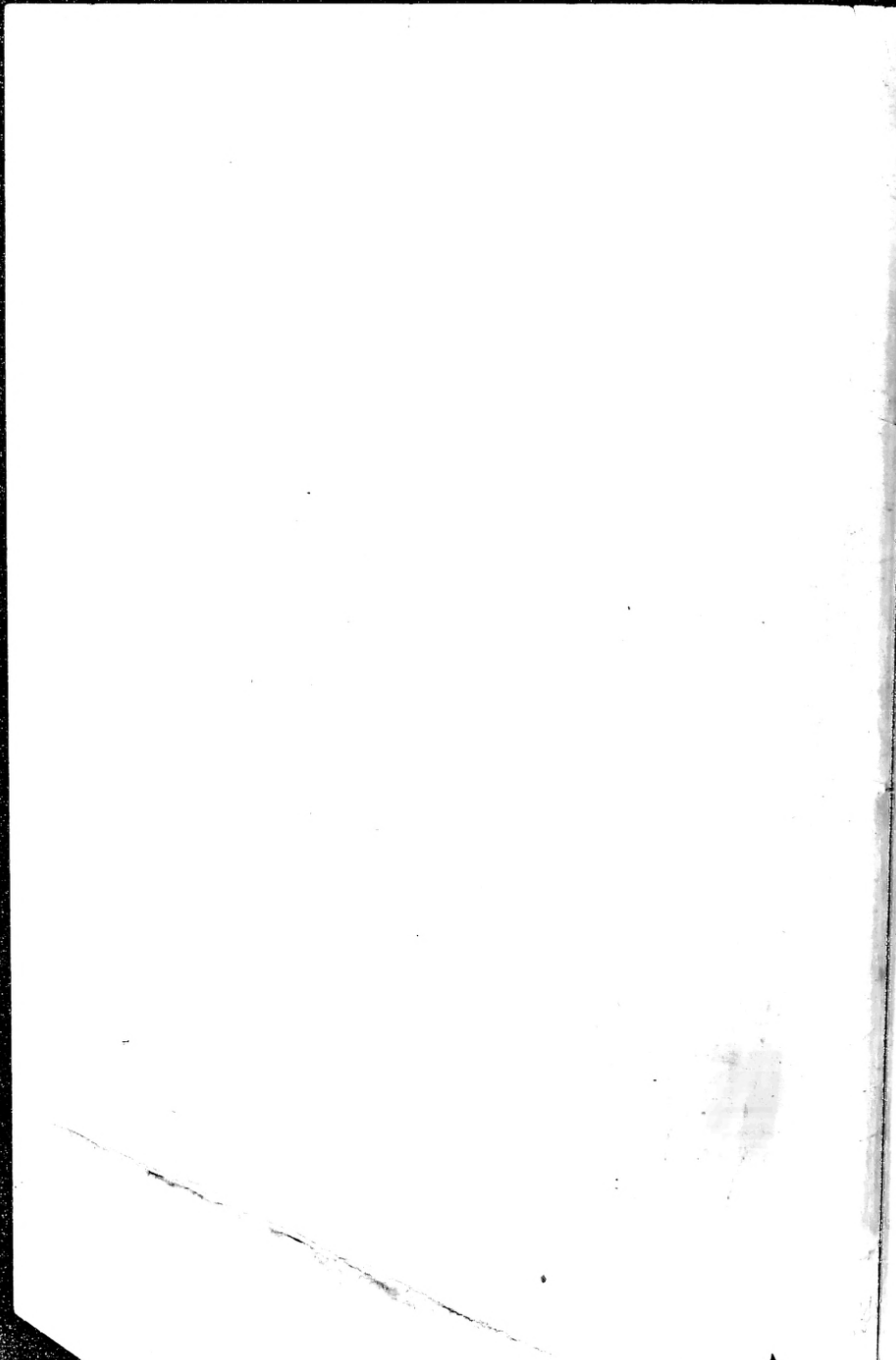
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PRICE TWOPENCE.

LONDON :  
PROGRESSIVE PUBLISHING COMPANY,  
28 STONECUTTER STREET, E.C.

1891



## Why Women should be Secularists.

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IT has been said that "every nation has got the government it deserves." The same might, perhaps, be as truthfully, or as untruthfully, stated regarding its religion. I am inclined to question the veracity of that proverb. If we had, in the past, taken such an axiom for granted, all great progressive movements would have been impossible. We must remember, however, that reforms, political, religious or social, have always originated with minorities—they have generally been fought for in the face of popular scorn, derision, or laughter, worked for amid persecution and hardship, accomplished finally by dint of stern resolve and noble self-sacrifice. And when these great reforms or progressions have become accomplished facts, the people have looked back shudderingly at what, before, they were content to accept without grudge; and come to regard, perhaps, as barbaric and repulsive, what at one time was considered natural and convenient. The emancipation of the slaves might never have been accomplished, if the individual desires of the slaves themselves had been first consulted. Long years of slavery and of oppression had rendered thousands of them apathetic and indifferent to freedom. Had it not been for such men as Rousseau, Voltaire, and Montesquieu, France might never have shaken herself free from the grinding oppression of the monarchy; while to Mazzini and Garibaldi, the prophets and liberators of Italy, is due, perhaps, the turning point in that country's history. Political and religious freedom go hand in hand—the women of England need both. To-day they are pleading for political rights—for a voice in the making of the laws they are compelled to obey, and in the levying of the taxes for which they are made responsible; to-morrow they will throw off the shackles of superstition, and breathe the pure air of religious liberty of thought.

I am addressing myself particularly to women to-night, because we are told, and I admit with truth, that women are the backbone of the Christian Churches to-day. The congregations of our churches and chapels are composed mainly of women, while among Freethought audiences and societies women are decidedly in the minority. However much we regret the fact, it is nevertheless true. And the reason is not far to seek. Through long ages the education of women has been neglected. Their need for mental progress has been entirely ignored.

The Church, which owes so much to woman, has always been the one to insist upon her position as the chattel and the slave of man; to deny to her intellectual liberty, to oppress her with the chains of servitude and the bonds of ignorance.

It is an admitted fact, and I do not suppose the most devout or bigoted Christian would attempt to deny it, that superstition has always been the handmaid of ignorance. The Christian creed had its origin in mythological tales, its first followers were drawn from the uneducated classes, its teachers were illiterate men; its devotees from then until now have been composed, to a large extent, of men and women who have been ready to accept, without thought, the teachings of its priests, while those who have rejected it have usually been men who have studied science and the phenomena of nature. And so heresy has spread wherever science has set her foot, honest unbelief has flourished in proportion as education has advanced, and those who have been denied the benefits of scientific culture have remained correspondingly in the grasp of ignorance and religious credulity.

In order to understand the state of mental poverty which, until recently, women occupied, it will be necessary to take a glance into the past, and to consider, for a short time this evening, the conditions and surroundings of the women of the Old and New Testaments. In the second and third chapters of Genesis, we are introduced to the "first woman," who, according to that account, was made by God, as a sort of after-thought, out of the rib of Adam as he lay sleeping. She is taught, almost at the commencement of her career that she is an inferior animal: "Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Gen. iii. 16). The book of Genesis then goes on to recount how this inferior creature, this woman, held a conversation with a serpent (and evidently animals had the power of speech in those wonderful days), and that in accordance with the directions of the serpent (who seems to have had far more knowledge of the world than either she or Adam), she picked an apple and handed one to her husband, who "likewise did eat," and who, as soon as he was found out, after skulking behind the trees, threw, like a coward, all the blame upon his wife.

Throughout the Old Testament women are treated with contempt. They are bought and sold in the same way as other objects of merchandise. Rebekah was bought with precious things by Abraham's servant for Isaac. The account of the purchase is given in Genesis xxiv. 53. Jacob paid seven years' service to Laban for each of his two first wives (Gen. xxix. 15-28). In the twenty-first chapter of Exodus, from the seventh to the tenth verses, permission is given for men to sell their daughters into slavery. We find also that, in many cases, there were

actually no formalities of marriage. Sarah made a present of Hagar, her maidservant, to Abraham; in the words of the Bible, "she gave her to her husband Abraham to be his wife"; and when he was tired of her he sent her away, with her child, into the wilderness, with the magnificent present of a piece of bread and a bottle of water from his stores of wealth. And this, we are told in the twenty-first chapter of Genesis and the twelfth verse, was with the express permission of God.

In Exodus xxi. 4 it is related that in the case of a man being a slave, and having married during his term of slavery, when he went free he had to leave behind his wife and his children; he had to "go out by himself," while his wife and family became the property of his master. A little farther on (Deut. xxiv. 1) we find that after a man had taken a wife, if she found no favor in his eyes, he might "write her a bill of divorcement, give it into her hand and send her out of his house." After he had turned her out, she might, *if she liked*, go and be another man's wife; and as nothing at all is said about giving her money, or food, or clothes, it is probable that she would have to do that or starve. After she had been cast adrift a few times, it is just as likely she would prefer starvation. It is just as well to notice, too, that the woman had no appeal. The husband was the accuser, the judge, and the jury. All he had to do was to write out his sentence of divorce, give it to his wife and send her away into the wide world. Women might also be taken as captives of war, outraged and then cast aside. Express directions for this kind of treatment are given in the twenty-first chapter of Deuteronomy from the tenth to the fourteenth verses. Polygamy was general among the peoples of the Bible; perhaps the most remarkable example of a much married man is that of Solomon, "the wisest man who ever lived," one of whose acts of wisdom was the possession of 700 first-class and 300 second-class wives. But we do not need to rely only upon the teachings of the Old Testament to find proof of the low estimation in which women have always been held in Biblical times.

In Corinthians it is stated, "For the man is not of woman, but the woman of the man; neither was man created for the woman, but the woman for the man," and again, "Let the women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home, for it is a shame for women to speak in the church." If a woman has a healthy desire for information, it is nipped in the bud. If her husband be as ignorant as herself, she must be content, and ask nothing further.

But this is not all. In the 5th chapter of Ephesians we read: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord, for the

husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church, and he is the savior of the body. Therefore, as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." Nothing is said here about the beautiful doctrine of forbearance one with another—no suggestion of mutual friendship and comradeship, which should exist in all true marriages. Peter, in fact, commands the wives to couple their conversation with fear. The New Testament looks upon marriage as a sort of necessary evil. St. Paul taught that it was only to be adopted as a concession to the weakness of man's animal nature. That purity and dignity of life, or that intellectual and sympathetic companionship should be the attributes of marriage never seems to have occurred to the New Testament teachers. Mr. Lecky, in his *History of European Morals*, says that marriage, under Christian rule, was viewed in the most degraded form. The notion of its impurity, too, took many forms, and exercised for some centuries an extremely wide influence over the Church.

There is not one word in the New Testament condemnatory of polygamy. The restriction to one wife appears only to apply to bishops and deacons (1 Tim. iii., 2, 12). Writing of the mediæval Christians, Lecky says: "Christianity had assumed a form as polytheistic, and quite as idolatrous as the ancient Paganism." Sir William Hamilton, too, in his *Discussion of Philosophy and Literature*, dealing with later Christianity, and speaking particularly of Luther and Melancthon, says: "They promulgated opinions in favor of polygamy, and went to the extent of vindicating to the spiritual minister the right to a private dispensation, and to the temporal magistrate the right of establishing the practice, if he chose, by public law."

Professor George Dawes tells us that on December 19, 1539, at Wittenberg, Luther and Melancthon drew up the famous *Concillium*, authorising Phillip of Hesse to have a plurality of wives. This important document bears the names of nine of the most prominent men of the Protestant Reformation. I find, from the same authority, that John of Leyden established the practice of polygamy at Munster, and drove from their homes all those who dared to oppose the odious custom; and other Protestants followed his example. Until quite lately, the Mormons, who are an extremely religious sect, practised polygamy. The Mormons take the Bible as their moral guide, and are so sanctimonious that even their dances and festivities are opened and closed with prayer.

It is instructive to compare the treatment of women under the rule of Christianity with that of the ancient Romans. Moncure Conway,

in one of his able discourses in South Place Institute some years ago said, "there was not a more cruel chapter in history than that which records the arrest, by Christianity, of the natural growth of European civilization as regards woman. In Germany it found woman participating in the legislative assembly, and sharing the interests and counsels of man, and drove her out and away, leaving her to-day nothing of her ancient rights but the titles that remain to mark her degradation. In the Pagan countries of Egypt, Greece, and Rome, woman's position was far higher than under Christian sway. The Egyptians neither degraded her by polygamy nor kept her secluded. The Greeks, who at first treated their women almost as slaves, gradually improved their condition, and learnt from the Egyptians the arts of humanity and justice towards women." Lecky, in his *Position of Women*, says: "On the whole, it is probable that the Roman matron was from the earliest period a name of honor; that the beautiful sentence of a jurisconsult of the Empire, who defined marriage as a lifelong fellowship, of all divine and human rights, expressed most faithfully the feelings of the people, and that female virtue had, in every age, a considerable place in Roman biographies." Long before the era of Christianity, the great poetess Sappho flourished, of whom Plato spoke in such high terms of honor. In ancient Greece, women taught in the philosophical schools, and lectured on scientific and literary subjects. The last prominent popular representative was Hypatia, the daughter of Theon, the mathematician, who not only expounded the doctrines of Plato and Aristotle, but commented upon the writings of Apollonius. But just at this time Christianity was coming into power, and one of its apostles was St. Cyril, who succeeded Theophilus to the Bishopric of Alexandria. Hypatia was a heretic, St. Cyril was a Christian. One day as Hypatia was proceeding to her lecture hall, she was set upon by a mob of monks who, under the religious direction of Cyril, stripped her naked, dragged her into a church, and there murdered her. They afterwards cut her body to pieces, scraped the flesh from her bones with shells, and cast the remnants into the fire. St. Cyril, the pious minister of Christ, was never called to account for this terrible crime. In fact, to the Christians the extermination of heretics was no crime, and so philosophy was stamped out and destroyed, just as the great Alexandrian Library was destroyed by Theophilus, the uncle of this St. Cyril, who for fear of the heresy which inevitably accompanies knowledge, did away with the grand array of literature which had been collected by the Ptolemys—the Ptolemys who, in the words of Draper, "recognized that there is something more durable than the forms of faith, which, like the organic forms of geological ages, once gone, are clean gone for ever, and

have no restoration, no return. They recognized that within this world of transient delusions and unrealities, there is a world of truth; and that that world is not to be discovered through the vain traditions that have brought down to us the opinions of men who lived in the morning of civilization, nor in the dreams of mystics, who thought that they were inspired. It is to be discovered by the investigations of geometry, and by the practical interrogation of nature. These confer on humanity solid, and innumerable, and inestimable blessings."

I have endeavored to show that Christianity has always been the enemy of education and of science. Such men as Galileo and Giordano Bruno have fallen victims to its bigotry and intolerance. Servetus was roasted to death over a slow fire, by order of Calvin, because he had the audacity to think for himself upon religious matters. Dr. Draper, in his *Conflict between Religion and Science*, says of the Inquisition, that "in general terms, its commission was to extirpate religious dissent by terrorism, and surround heresy with the most horrible associations; this necessarily implied the power of determining what constitutes heresy. The criterion of truth was thus in possession of this tribunal, which was charged to discover, and to bring to judgment, heretics lurking in towns, houses, cellars, woods, caves, and fields. With such savage alacrity did it carry out its object of protecting the interests of religion that between 1481 and 1808, it had punished 340,000 persons, and of these nearly 32,000 had been burnt."

It has often been argued that persecution only emanated from the Catholic Church. But Protestants have persecuted Catholics; both of these Christian sects have fallen upon each other whenever they have had the chance. Not much more than 300 years ago, in the reign of Elizabeth, who boasted of her religious tolerance, within twenty years more than 200 Catholic priests were executed, while a yet greater number perished in the filthy and fever-stricken gaols into which they were plunged (*Green's Short History of the English People*).

Whenever the Church has been most powerful, she has been most intolerant, and by "the Church" I mean all communities whose thoughts are bound by religious creeds. To-day the Church is losing her power with the spread of education, and she is becoming more tolerant. One by one, the old doctrines are slipping from under her feet. Priests of the Established Church, like Archdeacon Farrar, have rejected Eternal Punishment by Hell Fire; and the Inspiration of the Bible, the Birth of the World 6,000 years ago, the Universal Flood: all these things which at one time it was death at the stake to deny, are not now insisted upon by many ministers of the gospel, who claim to be of the Broad School of Christianity. And why are these things not as true to-day as they



were a hundred years ago? Simply because the pure light of science has streamed upon them, and civilization is crumbling to atoms the theories which have descended from primitive and barbaric times; because men and women are profiting by the experiences of the ages because the inventions of railways and the telegraph, of newspapers, and of the postal system are placing within reach of the poorest the knowledge which, in the past, was withheld from them.

Now, it may be asked, What do I mean by Secularism? I mean, the religion of *this* life. Secularists are constantly charged with "negativeness." We are charged with pulling down with one hand, and building up nothing with the other—or rather we are accused of expending all our energies upon the work of destruction, and with constructing nothing—because, say the Christians, we have "nothing to construct." Let us see, therefore, what code of morals our Secularism embraces. Secularism sees only this world. It does not pretend to waste valuable time, which might be employed in practical work for the good of humanity, in discussing whether there may or may not be, in some far off misty region, which has never yet been defined, another world where all the ills of this one may be set right. Our experience of this world has never proved to us, by any possible method of reasoning, that another one, which at best must be an imaginative one, will be any improvement on the present. We are content to place the mythologies of the Bible upon a par with the mythologies of Greece, or of Rome; to read the writings of the Biblical prophets only as we might read the literature of other and more ancient religions; to study the welfare of our fellow creatures, to do right for the love of rectitude, and not for the hope of a future reward, or the fear of a future punishment. We hold that only by making happiness for those around us, and by endeavoring, individually, to make the world a little brighter for our having lived in it, can we hope to gain happiness for ourselves. We believe in the liberty of thought and of speech, but we do not believe in any individual attempting to explain the workings of some supposed cause, outside the universe of which, like us, he knows nothing. We believe in concentrating our efforts upon the improvement of this world, which is all the world we know of. If this other world, with which Christians are apparently so well acquainted, should really exist; according to their own creed, only a very few people are to get there. "Strait is the gate and narrow the way, and few there be that find it." There will be no room for the heretics, for the great reformers and inventors of all ages, for such men as Galileo, or Bruno, or Spinoza. Truly the Secularist would rather seek immortality in the hearts of men, the Secularist would rather recognise

the eternity of great works accomplished, of liberties won, of all those influences which can never die, than he would sigh for the paltry glory of never-ending psalm-singing and knee-bending. But, alas, with all our progress, with the gradual rejection of creeds among men, we women, the larger part of the community, are still bound by the fetters of the Church. Yet, as we gather by slow degrees the advantages of education, which have until recently been withheld from us, so surely shall we begin to think, to reason, and so to doubt. The great cry against women is, that they "do not think." Yes! but you have not let us think. You have withheld from us the means by which we should have been taught to think. We have only been thrown the crumbs which fell from the table of knowledge. In an excellent article by Dr. Fitch, in the latest edition of *Chambers' Encyclopædia*, upon Education, he says, speaking of endowed schools of the 18th, and the beginning of the present century: "It is to be observed that while schools of the charity class were open to girls, the whole of the grammar school education was provided for boys only. There is scarcely a record in all the voluminous reports of later charity commissions, of any school whose founder deliberately contemplated a *liberal* education for girls; certainly not one which fulfilled such a purpose, whether it was contemplated by the founder or not. A girl was not invited to the university or grammar school; but she might, if poor, be needed to contribute to the comfort of her 'betters,' as an apprentice or a servant, and therefore the charity schools were open to her." It is only recently that some of the Universities have partially thrown open their doors to women; the secular University of London led the way. Even now, when women, as in the case of Miss Fawcett, outstrip the men in intellectual attainments, they are not allowed to receive the honorable rewards of their work.

Fortunately, the emancipation of women has begun, the spirit of the age points to freedom, and by and bye, when the myths and superstitions of religious creeds shall have taken their places far back amid the shadows, women shall stand side by side with all honest men, working hand in hand with them in the arena of life for the common weal, given the same opportunities, the same rewards, the same inducements for effort. And I would have you bear in mind that in order to have strong intellectual men, in order that the race may grow in mental as well as in physical vigor, it is necessary that the minds of women should be cultivated.

The ancient Spartans, who were remarkable for the wondrous vigor and strength of their men, recognised this necessity, at any rate as regards the physical education of their women. They desired men of

strong bodily configuration ; their ideal heroes were hardy, daring, and resolute. Professor James Donaldson, writing in the *Contemporary Review*, in 1878, says of the Spartans : "The one function which woman had to discharge was that of motherhood. But this function was conceived in the widest range in which the Spartans conceived humanity. In fact, no woman can discharge effectively any one of the great functions assigned her by nature without the entire cultivation of all parts of her nature. And so we see in this case. The Spartans wanted strong men: the mothers therefore must be strong. The Spartans wanted brave men; the mothers therefore must be brave. The Spartans wanted resolute men—men with decision of character: the mothers must be resolute. They believed with intense faith that, as are the mothers, so will be the children. And they acted on this faith. They first devoted all the attention and care they could to the physical training of their women. From their earliest days the women engaged in gymnastic exercises; and when they reached the age of girlhood, they entered into contests with each other in wrestling, racing, and throwing the quoit, and the javelin." Farther on in his essay, Professor Donaldson says: "Such was the Spartan system. What were the results of it? For about four or five hundred years there was a succession of the strongest men that possibly ever existed on the face of the earth. The legislator was successful in his main aim. And I think that I may add that these men were among the bravest. They certainly held the supremacy in Greece for a considerable time, through sheer force of energy, bravery, and obedience to law. And the women helped to this high position as much as the men. They were themselves remarkable for vigor of body and beauty of form." Dealing with the education of the Spartan women, Donaldson says: "Many of the wives were better educated than their husbands, and the fact was noticed by others. 'You of Lacedemon,' said a stranger lady to Gorgo, wife of Leonidas, 'are the only women in the world that rule the men.' 'We,' she replied, 'are the only women that bring forth men.' There is a great deal of point in what Gorgo said. If women bring forth and rear *men*, they are certain to receive from them respect and tenderness, for there is no surer test of a man's real manhood than his love for all that is noblest, highest, and truest in women, and his desire to aid her in attaining to the full perfection of her nature."

And so even now, late in the day as it is, we have begun to learn the lesson that it is necessary, if men would advance, the women should advance also.

Ah! but we are told, women are not logical like men, they are more impulsive, they are naturally more sentimental and superstitious. I

admit it, but I contend that their position in these respects is the result of their past training, or, rather, neglect of training. Does not the tree of ignorance always bear the fruit of superstition? And just in proportion as women become educated so do they become logical and self-reliant. No one, however, pretends to deny that the highest education and belief in Christianity often go together. But one must remember, also, that part of the doctrine of Christianity is "to become as little children"—or, in other words, when dealing with religious questions, it is necessary to accept the Bible narratives, with the simple credulity of children. When an educated person comes, therefore, to deal with Christianity—if he wishes to remain true to his faith—he must necessarily put inductive and deductive reasoning out of sight; he must be prepared to swallow whole, miracles, resurrections, marvellous births, and other wonders, without the slightest attempt at mental mastication. In dealing with these matters, the educated Christian is compelled to throw reason and logic to the winds, or his belief would falter. *But it is impossible to settle these matters without the use of reason.* The Christian must therefore be content to shelve them, and he finds the usual hackneyed phrase very useful at this crisis: "*These are mysteries, we do not attempt to understand them.*" Now, that is where the Secularist differs radically with the Christian. The Secularist maintains that it is the duty of every man and woman to reason out, upon the lines of experience, each and every question which affects the problem of life. Secularists cannot see the necessity of making exceptions to this rule whenever religion is concerned. Naturally, women who have always been kept in subjection—who have been taught that blind unquestioning obedience and servile submission are qualities which they should possess, are more readily adaptable to religious dogmas than men, who have always enjoyed a wider freedom than women. Submission to the rule of the Church, and humble reverence for its ministers have always been part and parcel of religious teachings.

As I have said, too, men are, by their training in the past, and in the present, more logical in thought than women. It has often occurred to me that this is one reason, out of many, why women are more devoted to the Christian faith than men. It, however, only partially explains it, because, as we have just seen, a vast number of people are content to put into the background their logic and reason when they come to deal with questions of belief.

And by following this plan they are, as they think, honestly able to accept Christianity in its entirety, and to regard belief in such matters as the Trinity, the Incarnation and the Atonement as essential to their salvation. Individuals of this school, like Jonathan Edwards, or, to

take examples of the present period, men like Mr. Spurgeon or Dr. Talmage, are, as far as their religion is concerned, perfectly consistent; and for my part I would far more respect men of this type than those who belong to what is called the Broad school of Christianity, the men who are neither true to Christianity nor Secularism; but who, to use a vulgar phrase, run with both hare and hounds, and endeavor to keep within distance of the advanced thought of the nineteenth century while at the same time they pander to the superstitions of a creed which is barbarous and unfit for a civilised community. I am not contending, however, that consistent Christians are not honest. I know that great names are cited upon the side of Christianity, such as those of Mr. Gladstone, Cardinal Newman or Sir Isaac Newton; and that, on the other hand, Secularists can refer to such men as Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer, or Colonel Robert Ingersoll as having rejected the Christian dogma. The real fact is that great names prove nothing so far as individual thought is concerned. What we need to do is to think for ourselves,—what we have no right to do is to control the thought of others.

Mothers have no right to take advantage of the plasticity of their children's minds to instil into them doctrines which by and bye they will have to unlearn. Of all confidences there is none greater, none more unflinching, than that of the child in its parent. Long before reason has grown, the myths of the Bible have been related as veritable facts to the infant mind. Slowly but surely the child is moulded for the Church prison, and its impressionable nature stamped with creed and dogma. What a terrible responsibility is this! and yet it is undertaken every day and every hour by the mothers of our nation, undertaken as a duty, as a labor of love—undertaken, too, with honesty and sincerity. And so the child is sent out into the world, handicapped at the outset; his mind warped with the narrow tenets of the Christian faith. He goes forth to take his part in the world's struggle wrapped round with the mantle of superstition, which clings and drags around his mental form, impedes the free movement of his thought, and obstructs his reasoning faculties. And for this, as I have said, the mother—nay, the education of the mother—is responsible. Well, indeed, if women were taught to *think*. Then would the wider field of duty appear; the individuality of the child would not be sacrificed to the authority of the parent; the spirit of enquiry would be nurtured and stimulated; and the child would gain in self-reliance and perception, while he would be untrammelled with delusions and faiths. *We have no right* to bind the intellects of our children. *We have no right* to pollute their minds with the horrible doctrines of Everlasting Dam-

nation and of the natural depravity of man; we have no right to describe to them the barbarous and bloodthirsty actions of the men of the Bible, and fill their youthful minds with horror at the awful doom awaiting those who will not accept these stories as divine.

One duty at least we owe to our children—to give them fair play. I do not mean, by that, that we are to bring them up in ignorance of Biblical knowledge. Such knowledge is necessary and useful. But so also is a knowledge of other religions of the world. The history and development of Buddhism, of Hinduism, of Muhammadanism, and of other ancient or modern faiths are of value to every thinking individual, inasmuch as something may be learned from each of them. But if we place before our children the religion of the Bible, it is surely our duty to acquaint them with the important fact that it is but one out of many religions; and that having special prominence in this country, it is perhaps necessary to study in particular its history and methods.

I think it is generally admitted that women are both practical and sympathetic. If the great majority of women were Secularists, how much more temporal work might be done. The time spent in praying to the God of the Christians to grant favors or to avert disasters, to alter decrees which, at the same time, he is supposed to have immutably determined, might be occupied in useful work; the hours spent at the confessional or at the altar might be employed in the discharge of the duties of citizens; the days given to Scripture reading would be spent in the search for truth; the observance of religious rites and forms would give place to following after the teachings of science; the inmates of nunneries, at present shut away from the world, and officiating only in the solitudes of the cell, as the brides of Christ, would become earnest, active workers, helping to spread the doctrine of intellectual freedom.

Let us look for a moment at some of the work that is being accomplished to-day in the name of Christianity; and it may be as well to bear in mind that women are always to the front whenever practical work is to be done. Let us take, for instance, the British Women's Temperance Association. Perhaps no organisation for reform is more energetic or can show better results than this society. But what I want to draw special attention to is that the work is said to be done *in the name of Christianity*. Now, putting aside the fact that the founder of Christianity on more than one occasion clearly sanctioned the practice of wine-drinking, it must be obvious to anyone who at all seriously considers the matter, that the drink question has absolutely nothing whatever to do with any distinctive creed. In order to reform a drunkard he must be brought to see that excessive drinking is injurious to

*himself*; that unless it be given up it will sooner or later end in the destruction of his body. (I say nothing about the *soul* because, according to Christians, the repentance of an hour is sufficient to atone for the sins of a lifetime, and is a certain passport to glory.) I say, then, that the acceptance or non-acceptance of a creed has nothing to do with the drink question. In fact, the followers of Muhammad set the Christian bishops and priests a good example, for one of the Muhammadan rules is abstention from intoxicating liquors, and the Muhammadans have no taverns or gaming houses. Christians, too, are in the habit of sending out batches of missionaries to preach the gospel of Christ to the poor deluded heathen; and the same ships that carry the missionaries are loaded with barrels of vile, adulterated rum which it is intended they should consume in the intervals of digesting the good news which these Christian ministers preach to them. The North American Indians are indebted to Christianity for the introduction of drunkenness among them! Then there is the great Peace Movement, started in this country chiefly by the Quakers. Both the Peace Society and the International Peace and Arbitration Society has its Female Committee, a band of women who are pledged to support arbitration and use their influence to put down war *in the name of Christianity!* And yet the Archbishop of the Christian Church, as by law established, publicly consecrates the flags of the army, and in times of war the Christian priests pray to the God of the Christians to bless the murderous work of hewing down their fellow creatures or blowing out their brains. Take, for instance, the case of the Zulu war, when thousands of Zulus, fighting in defence of their own country, and with only assegais to defend themselves against the scientific weapons of civilised England, were butchered wholesale by the English soldiers; who, upon their return to this Christian land, were publicly applauded for their heroic deeds, and upon whose breasts her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen pinned medals of honor. And then the drums rolled and the trumpets played, and the ministers of the Christian Church offered public thanksgiving to God for this glorious victory. And the women—the peace-loving women of England—knelt within the Church pews and joined devoutly in the national thanksgiving. And yet the Peace Movement is called a Christian movement! and the religion which has been responsible for centuries of oppression and bloodshed poses as affording its blessing and sanction to English Peace Societies.

But I might go on interminably enumerating the great reform movements of the age which have been engendered by the spirit of progress and of humanity, and which are totally distinct from any question of creed or belief. I maintain that all great progressions tending towards

political or social freedom, all noble endeavors to better the conditions and surroundings of mankind have been undertaken *in spite of and not as a consequence of* Christianity. I do not need to remind you of the prominent place that women have taken in the secular work of the Salvation Army. I am endeavoring to show how much the secular work of women is impeded, and not advanced, by the Christian creed. If the women of the Salvation Army devoted themselves entirely to secular work, so much the more would their services be of value to the community. But it is at least one step nearer truth when religionists of the nineteenth century admit practically, if not theoretically, that the salvation of the body is of more urgent necessity than that of the soul; it is at least one point gained when secular work comes first and spiritual work second; it is a significant sign of the times when Christians are forced to admit that the only way in which it is to-day possible to keep alive their creed among the poorest classes is to sandwich the Atonement in between a good supper and a night's rest, and silver the pill of Eternal Damnation with a coating of material help. The Christian women of the Salvation Army have, in spite of themselves, had to reject at least one of the teachings of the New Testament. If they had followed the advice of St. Paul in one particular respect they could not have undertaken the positions of preachers; they would have had to "keep silence"; and if the women had kept silence, I will venture to say the Army would not have become the big thing it has turned out to be. Mr. Stead, in his article in the *Review of Reviews* for October, 1890, says that the Salvation Army was "largely founded by a woman," and that "the extent to which the Salvation Army has employed women in every department of its administration has been one of the great secrets of its strength." I am not quoting this remark in order that women may appear to take special credit, but only as proving the truth of the assertion that women possess, perhaps in particular, the faculty of persuasion.

The conversion, therefore, of women to Secularism will mean the increase of Secularism among men, and among the children who will be the men and women of the future; it will mean the gradual relinquishing of prayer for helpful work; it will mean the abandonment of penitential submission for the display of energy in improving the surroundings of life; it will mean the closing of the eye of faith in the supernatural and the increase of confidence in noble self-effort; it will mean the ultimate death of tyranny and fear and the beautiful realisation of the Brotherhood of Man.