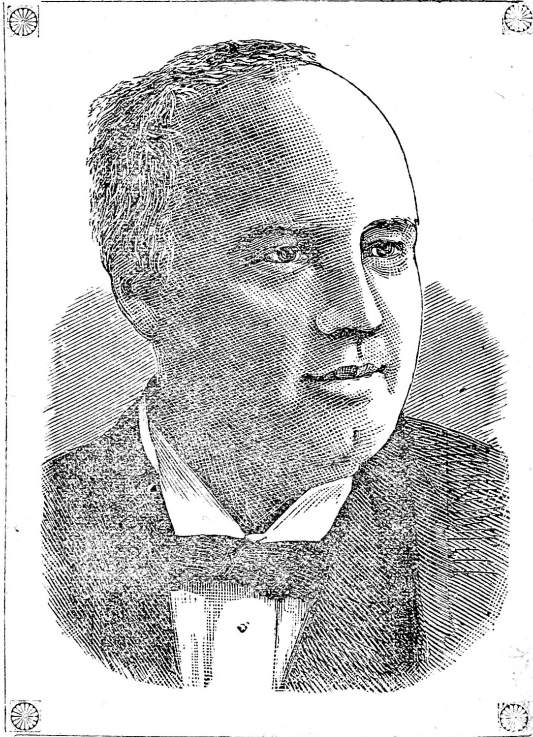


NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY [SECOND EDITION.

# DIFFICULTIES OF BELIEF.

A DISCOURSE DELIVERED TO OVERFLOWING AUDIENCES BY



**COLONEL INGERSOLL,**

The Great American Orator and Wit.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

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# DIFFICULTIES OF BELIEF.

A DISCOURSE BY  
COL. INGERSOLL,

Delivered in Chicago and other Cities in America, to overflowing audiences,

(specially reported.)

COLONEL INGERSOLL lectured last night at the Opera House. The night was a most disagreeable one, sleety snow and fierce winds united in battling with the pedestrians. Indeed, it took a brave man to venture out of doors. Nevertheless the Opera House was crammed. From parquette to upper gallery there was not a vacant seat. The audience was a peculiar one. There were quite a number of the very best people in the city, and not a few church members, while saloon keepers and sporting men were out in force, and occupied front seats. Probably one-fifth of the audience were females. The great bulk of the audience was from the middle class of society, intelligent, well-dressed, well-behaving men and women, the class from whom free-thinkers draw most of their recruits. All in all, it was an excellent audience, just the kind of audience that suited the orator of the night.

At eight o'clock Colonel Ingersoll came to the front in company with the Rev. Dr. Cravens of the Unitarian Church. The reverend gentleman in eloquent words introduced the orator as a noble man, a man of genius and brains who was zealously laboring to break the chains that bind the religious freedom of mankind. He rejoiced that liberty and freedom had such a grand champion, who had consecrated his great talent and his unsurpassed eloquence to the noble cause.

Colonel Ingersoll bowed to the audience, and was received with great applause.

He said that he was glad that he had lived long enough to see one gentleman in the pulpit brave enough to say that God would not be offended at one who speaks according to the dictates of his conscience; who does not believe that God will give wings to a bird and then damn the bird for flying. He thanked the pastor and he thanked the church for allowing its pastor to be so brave. He then tackled the subject of discourse announced for the night, and for two hours held the close attention of his audience. His argument was, in the main, as follows:—

One of my great objections to religion is that it makes enemies instead of friends. Whenever a man believes that he has got the truth of God, there is in him no spirit of compromise. Whenever a man really believes that it is necessary to do a certain thing or to believe a certain thing in order to be happy for ever, there is in that man no spirit of compromise. Our religion to-day divides the whole world into saints and sinners: into people that will be glorified, and people who will be damned. It cannot make any compromise with any foreign nation; it must either compel that nation to accept its doctrine, or it must remain hostile to that nation.

Another objection is that this religion consists primarily of the duties we owe to God. In other words, we are taught that God is exceedingly anxious that we should believe a certain way. Now I do not believe there is any infinite being to whom we owe anything. And the reason I say that, is this: I cannot owe any duty to any being who requires nothing, to any being I cannot possibly help, to any being that I cannot in any possible way increase the happiness of; and if God is infinite, I cannot make him happier than he is. Anything that I can do, or may do, cannot in the slightest way effect him, consequently there cannot exist any relations between the finite and the infinite.

Some tell me it is the desire of God that I should worship him. What for? That I should sacrifice something for him. What for? Is He in want? Can I assist Him? If He is in want and I can assist him and will not, I would be an ingrate and an infamous wretch. But I am satisfied that I cannot by any possibility assist the infinite. Whom can I assist? My fellow men. (Applause I can help to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and enlighten ignorance. I can help at least, in some degree, towards covering this world with a mantle of joy. I may be wrong but I do not believe that there is any being in this universe who gives rain for praise, who gives sunshine for prayer, or who blesses a man simply because he kneels.

I find, too, that this religion has made man heartless to his fellow men. Just think of the idea of sending Scotch Presbyterian missionaries to Africa, and of the cruelties practiced there: is it not the height of egotism to suppose that anyone could be more savage and barbaric than the Scotch Presbyterian creed?

The Colonel then referred to the subject of inspiration, and said whatever else might be meant by the term they must mean that it is true, and he added: Well, if it is true there is no need of its being inspired. Anything actually true will take care of itself. I will tell you what I mean by inspiration. I go and look at the sea, and the sea says something to me; it makes an impression on my mind. That impression depends, first, on my experience; secondly, upon my intellectual capacity. Another looks upon the same sea. He has a different brain, he has a different experience, he has different memories and different hopes. The sea may speak to him of joy, and to me of grief and sorrow. The sea cannot tell the same thing to two beings, because no two human beings have had the same

experience. So, when I look upon a flower, or a star, or a painting, or a statue, the more I know about sculpture, the more that statue speaks to me. The more I have had of human experience, the more I have read, the greater brain I have, the more the star says to me. In other words, nature says to me all that I am capable of understanding. Now when I come to a book, for instance, I read the writings of Shakespere—Shakespeare, the greatest human being who ever existed upon this globe. What do I get out of him? All that I have sense enough to understand. I get my little cup full. Let another read him who knows nothing of the drama, who knows nothing of the impersonation of passion; what does he get from him? Very little. In other words, every man gets from a book, a flower, a star, or the sea, what he is able to get from his intellectual development and experience.

Do you then believe that the Bible is a different book to every human being that receives it? I do. Can God, then, through the Bible, make the same revelation to two men? He cannot. Why? Because the man who reads is the man who inspires. Inspiration is in the man and not in the book. There was a time when the Bible was the best book on geology. Has anybody now the hardihood to say that is a standard work on geology? There was a time when it was the best astronomical treatise that anybody knew anything about. Does anybody claim now that it is a standard work on astronomy! According to this book a personal God made us all. It seems to me than an infinite being has no right to make imperfect things. I may be mistaken, but it has always seemed to me that a perfect being should produce only the perfect. If God made us all, why did he not make us all equally well? He had the power of an infinite God. Why did God people the earth with so many idiots? I admit that orthodoxy could not exist without them but why did God make them? If we believe the Bible then he should have made us all idiots, for the orthodox christian says idiots will not be damned, but simply transplanted, while the sensible man who believeth not will be sent to eternal damnation? If there is any God who made us, what right had he to make idiots? Is a man with a head like a pin under any obligation to thank God? Is the black man, born in slavery, under any obligation to thank God for his badge of servitude?

What kind of a God is it that will allow men and women to be put in dungeons and chains simply because they loved him and prayed to him? And what kind of a God is it that will allow such men and women to be burned at the stake? If God won't love such men and women, then under what circumstances will he love?

As I look around I see that justice does not prevail, that innocence is not always effectual and a perfect shield. If there is a God these things should not be. Famine stalks over the land and millions die, not only the bad but the good, and there in the heavens above sits an infinite God who can do anything, can change the rocks and the stones, and yet these millions die. I do not say there is no God, but I do ask what is God doing? Look at the agony,

and wretchedness and woe all over the land. Is there goodness, is there mercy in this? I do not say there is not, but I want to know, and I want to know if a man is to be damned for asking the question.

But to go on: here we are and they say that this God picked out one tribe and thought he would civilize them. He had no time to waste upon the Egyptians, who at that time were a vast and splendid nation, with systems of laws, free schools, who believed in the rights of women; who believed in the one man marrying the one wife; who had courts of justice and understood the philosophy of damages. He had no time to waste upon India, with a vast and splendid civilization and a grammar more perfect than ours to-day. But he took a few of the tribe of Abraham and thought he would see what he could do with them. He established a perfect despotism, with no schools, no knowledge of geology, astronomy or medicine. He told them how to stop the leprosy, but it never occurred to Him to tell them how to cure it. He told them a few things about what they might eat, and one thing about cooking, that they should not cook a kid in its mother's milk. But He took these people under His mighty care and for the purpose of controlling them He wrought many wonderful miracles. Now is it not a remarkable thing that no priest has ever yet been able to astonish another priest by telling about a wonderful miracle. It reminds me of a man who sat imperturbed while another told an improbable story, and upon being told that he did not appear to take much interest in it replied, "Well, no, I'm a liar myself." (Great laughter.)

Now, without desiring to hurt the feelings of anyone, I propose to give a few reasons for thinking that at least a few passages of the Old Testament were not written by Jehovah or by the real God. In all civilized countries it is not only admitted, but fashionably asserted, that slavery is, always was, and for ever will be, a hideous crime; and I have no respect for a man who thinks slavery is right. Such a man ought to be a slave himself, were it not for the fact that somebody would have to be disgraced by being his master. It is now asserted that a war of conquest is simply murder, and that a war of extermination is simply savagery. It is also admitted that polygamy is the enslavement of woman, destructive to home, and the degradation of man. We also believe that nothing is more infamous than the slaughter of decrepit men, helpless women, and prattling babies. We all admit that nothing is more terrible than rewarding soldiers after a victory by giving them the captured women. We also admit that wives should not be stoned to death on account of their religious opinions, and any man who does not admit it is a savage. Any man who believes in slavery, polygamy, or in a war of extermination, is a savage. But there was a time when all these things were regarded as divine institutions. To-day, nations that entertain such views are regarded as savage, and probably, with the exception of the Fiji Indians and some citizens of Delaware, no human beings can be found degraded enough to deny these propositions. (Applause and laughter.) To every one except the theologian it is perfectly easy to account for the mistakes, the

atrocities and the crimes of the past, by saying that civilization is of slow growth, that the moral perceptions must be cultivated, and that it requires centuries for man to put out the eye of self and hold in equal poise the golden scale of justice; that conscience is born of suffering, that mercy is the child of imagination, and that man advances only as he finds out the laws of nature and his relations to it and to his fellow-men.

But the believer in the inspiration of the Bible is compelled to declare that once God was savage, or that there was a time when slavery was right; that there was a time when polygamy was the highest expression of human virtue; that there was a time when wars of extermination were waged for mercy; when death was the just penalty for having and expressing an honest thought; that Jehovah is just as bad now as He was 4,000 years ago, or that He was just as good then as He is now.

Referring to the doctrine of the atonement, he said that under the Old Testament dispensation every tabernacle was a slaughterhouse and every priest an accomplished butcher. But when we commit a sin now, we do not have to bring a pair of turtle doves, nor a sheep, nor an ox. Now we say, "Charge it." (Laughter). But you have got to settle. There are in nature neither rewards nor punishments; there are consequences. There are in nature neither love nor hatred; there are consequences. No God can give you tares when you sow wheat, and no God can give you wheat when you sow tares.

Speaking of the crimes which have been perpetrated in the name of religion, he said: If Christ was in fact God, He knew all of the future; He knew what sects would spring up like poisoned fungi through every age. He saw the horizon of a thousand years red with the flowers of the *auto-da-fe*, and He saw His followers bleeding in the dungeons of the Inquisition. He saw women holding their little babes up to the grated windows so that the poor husband and father, chained to the floor, might catch one glimpse of the blue eyes of his babe; He saw His disciples driving stakes into the earth, saw them chain heroic men and women, pitch the faggots about them, touch them with fire, and see the flames consume to ashes the best men and women of the earth. He knew that his disciples would interpolate His book; He knew that hypocrisy would write verses, and that these verses would be the foundation for persecution; He knew that his disciples would make instruments of pain and use them; He knew it, and yet he died voiceless. Why didn't He cry out, 'You must not persecute your fellow-men.'

Why did He say nothing definite, positive and satisfactory about another world? Why did He go dumbly to his death and leave the world to misery and to doubt?

'Speaking of the doctrine of eternal punishment, he said: No God has a right to make a man He intends to drown. Eternal wisdom has no right to make a bad investment, no right to engage in a speculation that will not finally pay a dividend. No God has a

right to make a failure, and surely a man who is to be damned for ever is not a conspicuous success.

Yet upon love's breast, the Church has placed that asp : around the child of immortality the Church has coiled the worm that never dies. For my part I want no heaven if there is to be a hell. I would rather be annihilated than be a God and know that one human soul would have to suffer eternal agony. (Great applause).

Where did that doctrine of hell come from? I despise it with every drop of my blood! and defy it. Oh, is it not an infamous doctrine to teach to little children, to put a shadow in the heart of a child, to fill the insane asylums with that miserable infamous lie. I see now and then a little girl—a dear little darling with a face like the light, and eyes of joy, a human blossom, and I think, “is it possible that that little girl will ever grow up to be a Presbyterian?” (loud laughter). “Is it possible, my goodness, that that flower will finally believe in the five points of Calvinism or in the eternal damnation of man? Is it possible that that little fairy will finally believe that she could be happy in heaven with her baby in hell? Think of it. Think of it! And that is the Christian religion.

We cry out against the Indian mother that throws her child into the Ganges to be devoured by the alligator or crocodile, but that is joy in comparison with the Christian mother's hope, that she may be in salvation while her brave boy is in hell. (Applause.) I tell you I want to kick the doctrine about hell. I want to kick it out every time I go by it. I want to get Americans in this country placed so they will be ashamed to preach it. I want to get the congregations so that they won't listen to it. (Applause). We cannot divide the world off into saints and sinners in that way. There is a little girl, fair as a flower, and she grows up until she is 12, 13, or 14 years old. Are you going to damn her in the 15th, 16th or 17th year, when the arrow from Cupid's bow touches her heart and she is glorified—are you going to damn her now? She marries and loves, and holds in her arms a beautiful child. Are you going to damn her now? Because she has listened to some Methodist minister, and after all that flood of light failed to believe. Are you going to damn her then? I tell you God cannot afford to damn such a woman. (Applause.)

A woman in the State of Indiana, forty or fifty years ago, who carded the wool and made rolls and spun them, and made the cloth and cut out the clothes for the children, and nursed them, and sat up with them nights, and gave them medicine, and held them in her arms and wept over them—cried for joy and wept for fear, and finally raised ten or eleven good men and women with the ruddy glow of health upon their cheeks, and she would have died for any one of them any moment of her life, and finally she, bowed with age, and bent with care and labor, dies, and at the moment the magical touch of death is upon her face, she looks as if she never had had a care, and her children burying her, cover her face with tears. (Applause) Do you tell me God can afford to damn that kind of a woman? (Applause.)



If there is any God, sitting above Him in infinite serenity, we have the figure of justice. Even a God must do justice and any form of superstition that destroys justice is infamous. (Applause).

Just think of teaching that doctrine to little children! When I was a boy I sometimes used to wonder how the mercy of God lasted as long as it did—because I remember that on several occasions I had not been at school when I was supposed to be there. (laughter.) Why I was not burned to a crisp was a mystery to me. There was one day in each week too good for a child to be happy in. On that day we were all taken to church, and the dear old minister used to ask us, "Boys, do you know that you all ought to be in hell?" and we answered up as cheerfully as we could under such circumstances, "Yes, sir." (laughter). "Well, boys, do you know that you would go to hell if you died in your sins?" and we said, "Yes, sir."

And then came the great test, "Boys," I can't get the tone you know. (laughter) And do you know that is how the preachers get the bronchitis. You never heard of an auctioneer getting the bronchitis, nor the second mate on a steamboat—never. (laughter). What gives it to the ministers is talking solemnly when they don't feel that way, and it has the same influence upon the organs of speech that it would have upon the cords of the calves of your legs to walk on your tiptoes—(laughter)—and so I call bronchitis 'parsonitis.' And if the ministers would all tell exactly what they think they would all get well, but keeping back a part of the truth is what gives them bronchitis. Well, the old man—the dear old minister—used to try and show us how long we should be in hell if we should locate there But to finish the other. The grand test question was: "Boys, if it was God's will that you should go to hell, would you be willing to go?"

And every little liar said, "Yes, sir." Then in order to tell how long we would stay there, he used to say, "Suppose once in a million ages a bird should come from a far distant clime and carry of in its bill one little grain of sand, the time would finally come when the last grain of sand would be carried away. Do you understand?" "Yes, sir." "Boys, by that time it would not be sun-up in hell." (Laughter.)

I tell you, don't make slaves of your children on Sunday. The idea that there is any God that hates to hear a child laugh! Let the children play and be happy. Give them a chance. When your child confesses to you that it has committed a fault, take that child in your arms, and let it feel your heart beat against its heart, and raise your children in the sunlight of love, and they will be sun-beams to you along the pathway of life. (Applause). Abolish the club and the whip from the house, because if the civilized use a whip, the ignorant and brutal will use a club, and they will use it because you use a whip. Be perfectly honest with them, and they will be your friends when you are old. Don't try to teach them something they can never learn. Don't insist upon their pursuing some calling they have no sort of faculty for. Don't make

that poor girl play ten years on a piano when she has no ear for music, and when she has practised until she can play, "Bonaparte crossing the Alps," and you can't tell after she has played it whether he ever got across or not. (Loud and prolonged laughter and applause.)

Every day something happens to show me that the old spirit that was in the Inquisition still slumbers in the breasts of men. I know an instance in which a Presbyterian minister has been dismissed for marrying a Catholic lady. Just as though a woman could not beat any religion that a man ever heard of. I tell you when you come to look upon it the love that man bears towards a woman is a thousand times above any love he can bear toward the unknown. It is altogether better to love your wife than to love God; altogether better to love your children than to love Jesus Christ: and I will tell you why. He is dead; but if you love your child you can put a little flower of joy into every footstep from the time they leave the cradle until you die in their arms.

Men are oaks, women are vines, children are flowers, and if there is any heaven in this world, it is in the family. It is where the wife loves the husband, and the husband loves the wife, and where the dimpled arms of children are about the necks of both. That is heaven if there is any; and I do not want any better heaven in another world than that, and if in another world I cannot live with the ones I loved here, then I would rather not be there. I would rather resign (applause).

Religion does not and cannot contemplate man as free. She accepts only the homage of the prostrate, and scorns the offerings of those who stand erect. She cannot tolerate the liberty of thought. The wide and sunny fields belong not to her domain. The starlit heights of genius are above and beyond her appreciation and power. Her subjects cringe at her feet covered with the dust of obedience. They are not athletes standing posed by rich life and brave endeavour like the antique statues, but shrivelled deformities studying with furtive glance the cruel face of power.

No religionist seems capable of understanding this plain truth. There is this difference between thought and action:—For our actions we are responsible to ourselves and to those injuriously affected; for thoughts there can, in the nature of things, be no responsibility to gods or men, here or hereafter. And yet the Protestant has vied with the Catholic in denouncing freedom of thought, and while I was taught to hate Catholicism with every drop of my blood, it is only justice to say that in all essential particulars, it is precisely the same as every other religion. Luther denounced mental liberty with all the coarse and brutal vigour of his nature, Calvin despised from the very bottom of his petrified heart anything that even looked like religious toleration, and solemnly declared that to advocate it was to crucify Christ afresh. All the founders of all the orthodox churches have advocated the same infamous tenet. The truth is that what is called religion is necessarily inconsistent with Free Thought.

A believer is a songless bird in a cage. A Freethinker is an eagle parting the clouds with tireless wings.

Thousands of young men are being educated at this moment by the various churches. What for? In order that they may be prepared to investigate the phenomena by which we are surrounded? No! The object, and the only object, is that they may learn the arguments of their respective churches, and repeat them in the dull ears of a thoughtless congregation. If one after being thus trained at the expense of the Methodists turns Presbyterian or Baptist, he is denounced as an ungrateful wretch. Honest investigation is utterly impossible within the pale of any church, for the reason that if you think the church is right you will not investigate, and if you think it wrong the church will investigate you. The consequence of this is, that most of the theological literature is the result of suppression, of fear, of tyranny, and hypocrisy.

Every Orthodox writer necessarily said to himself, "If I write that, my wife and children may want for bread, I will be covered with shame and branded with infamy, but if I write this, I will gain position, power, and honor. My church rewards defenders, and burns reformers. (Applause.)

Who can tell what the world has lost by this infamous system of suppression? How many grand thinkers have died with the mailed hand of superstition on their lips? How many splendid ideas have perished in the cradle of the brain, strangled in the poisonous coils of that Python, the church!

For thousands of years a thinker was hunted down like an escaped convict. To him who had braved the church every door was shut, every knife was open. To shelter him from the wild storm, to give a crust of bread when dying, to put a cup of water to his cracked and bleeding lips; these were all crimes, not one of which the church ever did forgive; and with the justice taught of God his helpless children were exterminated as scorpions and vipers.

Who at the present day can imagine the courage, the devotion to principle, the intellectual and moral grandeur it once required to be an Infidel, to brave the church, her racks, her faggots, her dungeons, her tongues of fire—to defy and scorn her heaven, and her devil and her God? They were the noblest sons of earth. They were the real saviours of our race, the destroyers of superstition and the creators of science. They were the real Titans who bared their grand foreheads to all the thunderbolts of all the gods. The church has been, and still is, the great robber. She has rifled not only the pockets but the brains of the world. She is the stone at the sepulchre of liberty; the Upas tree in whose shade the intellect of man has withered; the Gorgon beneath whose gaze the human heart has turned to stone.

Reason has been denounced by all Christendom as the only unsafe guide. The church has left nothing undone to prevent man following the logic of his brain. The plainest facts have been covered with the mantle of mystery. The grossest absurdities have been declared to be self-evident facts. The order of nature has

been as it were, reversed, in order that the hypocritical few might govern the honest many. The man who stood by the conclusion of his reason was denounced as a scorner and hater of God and His holy church.

At present, owing to the inroads that have been made by Liberals and Infidels, most of the churches pretend to be in favor of religious liberty. Of these Churches we will ask this question: "How can a man who conscientiously believes in religious liberty worship a God who does not?" They say to us, "We will not imprison you on account of your belief, but our God will. We will not burn you because you throw away the sacred Scriptures, but their author will. We think it an infamous crime to persecute our brethren for opinion's sake, but the God whom we worship will on that account damn his own children for ever." "*Why is it that these Christians do not only detest the Infidels, but so cordially despise each other? Why do they refuse to worship in the temples of each other?*"

There is but one way to get an honest opinion upon any subject whatever. The person giving the opinion must be free from fear. The merchant must not fear to lose his custom, the doctor his practice, nor the preacher his pulpit. There can be no advance without liberty. Suppression of honest enquiry is retrogression, and must end in intellectual night. The tendency of Orthodox religion to-day is towards mental slavery and barbarism. Not one of the Orthodox ministers dare preach what he thinks, if he knows that a majority of his congregation thinks otherwise. He knows that every member of his church stands guard over his brain with a creed like a club in his hand. He knows that he is not expected to search after the truth, but that he is employed to defend the creed. Every pulpit is a pillory in which stands a hired culprit, defending the justice of his own imprisonment.

Is it desirable that all should be exactly alike in their religious convictions? Is any such thing possible? Do we not know that there are no two persons alike in the whole world? No two trees, no two leaves, no two anythings that are alike? Infinite diversity is the law. Religion tries to force all minds into one mould. Knowing that all cannot believe, the church endeavours to make all say that they believe. She longs for the unity of hypocrisy and detests the splendid diversity of individuality and freedom. (Applause.)

Mental slavery is mental death, and every man who has given up his intellectual freedom is the living coffin of his dead soul. In this sense every church is a cemetery, and every creed an epitaph.

Let us look at the church of to-day. Now, what is this religion. To believe certain things that we may be saved, that we won't be damned. What are they?

First, that the Old and New Testament are inspired. No matter how good, how kind, how just a man may be, unless he believes in the inspiration, he will be damned.

Second, he must believe in the Trinity. That there are three in one. That Father and Son are precisely of the same age, the son

possibly a little mite older; that three times one is one, and that once one is three. It is a mercy you don't know how to understand it, but you must believe it or be damned. Therein you see the mercy of the Lord. This trinity doctrine was announced several hundred years after Christ was born.

Do you believe such a doctrine will make a man good or honest? Will it make him more just? Is the man that believes any better than the man who does not believe?

How is it with nations? Look at Spain, the last slaveholder in the civilized world; she's Christian, she believes in the Trinity! And Italy, the beggar of the world. Under the rule of priestcraft money streamed in from every land, and yet she did not advance. To-day she is reduced to a hand-organ. Take poor Ireland, could she cast off her priests she would soon be one with America in freedom.

Protestantism is better than Catholicism, because there is less of it. Both dread education. They say they brought the arts and sciences out of the dark ages, why, they made the dark ages and what did they preserve? Nothing of value, only an account of events that never happened. What did they teach the world? Slavery!

The best country the sun ever shone upon is the northern part of the United States, and there you find less religion than anywhere else on the face of the earth. You will find here more people that don't believe the Bible, and you will find better husbands, better wives, happier homes, where the women are most respected, and where the children get less blows and more huggings and kissings. We have improved just as we have lost this religion and this superstition.

Great Britain is the religious nation *par excellence*, and there you will find the most cant and most hypocrisy. They are always thanking God that they have killed somebody. Look at the opium war with China. They forced the Chinese to open their ports and receive the deadly drug and then had the impudence to send a lot of drivelling idiots of missionaries into China.

Why should we send missionaries to China if we cannot convert the heathen when they come here? When missionaries go to a foreign land, the poor benighted people have to take their word for the blessings showered upon a Christian people; but when the heathen come here they can see for themselves. What was simply a story becomes a demonstrated fact. They come in contact with people who love their enemies. They see that in a Christian land men tell the truth; that they will not take advantage of strangers: that they are just and patient; kind and tender; and have no prejudice on account of color, race, or religion; that they look upon mankind as brethren; that they speak of God as a universal Father, and are willing to work and even to suffer, for the good not only of their own countrymen, but of the heathen as well. All this the Chinese see and know, and why they still cling to the religion of their country is to me a matter of amazement.

Our religion can only be brought into contempt by the actions of those who profess to be governed by its teachings. It is easy to do more in that direction than millions of Chinese could do by burning pieces of paper before a wooden image. If you wish to impress the Chinese with the value of your religion, of what you are pleased to call "The American system," show them that Christians are better than heathens. Prove to them that what you are pleased to call "the living God" teaches higher and holier things, a grander and purer code of morals than can be found upon pagan pages. Excel these wretches in industry, in honesty, in reverence for parents, in cleanliness, in frugality, and above all by advocating the absolute liberty of human thought.

Do not trample upon these people because they have a different conception of things about which even you know nothing.

If you wish to drive out the Chinese do not make a pretext of religion. Do not pretend that you are trying to do God a favor. Injustice in His name is doubly detestable. The assassin cannot sanctify his dagger by falling on his knees, and it does not help a falsehood if it be uttered as a prayer. Religion, used, to intensify the hatred of men toward men, under the pretence of pleasing God has cursed this world.

If we wish to prevent the immigration of the Chinese, let us reform our treaties with the vast empire from whence they came. For thousands of years the Chinese secluded themselves from the rest of the world. They did not deem the Christian nations fit to associate with. We forced ourselves upon them. We called, not with cards, but with cannon. The English battered down the door in the names of Opium and Christ. This infamy was regarded as another triumph for the gospel. At last in self-defence the Chinese allowed Christians to touch their shores. Their wise men, their philosophers, protested, and prophesied that time would show that Christians could not be trusted. Events have proved that the wise men were not only philosophers, but prophets.

Treat China as you would England. Keep a treaty while it is in force. Change it if you will, according to the laws of nations, but on no account excuse a breach of national faith by pretending that we are dishonest for God's sake.

The Government has nothing to do with the religion of the people. Its members are not responsible to God for the opinions of their constituents, and it may tend to the happiness of the constituents for me to state that they are in no way responsible for the religion of the members. Religion is an individual not a national matter. And where the nation interferes with the right of conscience, the liberties of the people are devoured by the monster Superstition.

The orthodox Church says that religion does good; that it restrains crime. It restrains a man from artificial not from natural crimes. A man can be made so religious that he will not eat meat on Friday, yet he will steal.

Go around the world, and where you find the least superstition, there you will find the best men, the best women, the best children. Two powerful levers are at work; love and intelligence. The true test of a man is generosity, that covers a multitude of sins.

The Bible can't stand to-day without the support of the civil power. No religion ever flourished except by the support of the sword, and no religion like this could have been established except by brute force.

Does an Infinite Being need to be protected by a State Legislature? If the Bible is inspired, does the author of it need the support of the law to command respect? We don't need any law to make mankind respect Shakespeare. We come to the altar of that great man and cover it with our gratitude without a statute.

Think of a law to govern tastes! Think of a law to govern mind on any question whatever!

Shakespeare was an intellectual ocean whose waves touched all the shores of human thought, within which were all the tides and currents and pulses upon which lay all the lights and shadows, and over which brooded all the calms and swept all the storms and tempests of which the human soul is capable.

I tell you that all the sweet and beautiful things in the Bible would not make one play of Shakespeare; all the philosophy in the Bible would not make one scene in "Hamlet;" all the beauties of the Bible would not make one scene in "Midsummer Night's Dream;" all the beautiful things about woman in the Bible would not begin to create such a character as Perdita or Imogene or Miranda.

If there is any man here to-night that believes the Bible was inspired, in any other way than Shakespeare was inspired, I want him to pick out something as beautiful and tender as Burns' poem, "To Mary in Heaven." I want him to tell whether he believes the story about the bears eating up children; whether that is inspired. I want him to tell whether he considers that a poem or not. I want to know if the same God made those bears that devoured the children because they laughed at an old man out of hair. I want him to answer it, and answer it fairly. That is all I ask.

Think of the way in which they have supported the Bible! They've terrorized the old with laws, and captured the dear little innocent children and poisoned their minds with their false stories until, when they have reached the age of manhood, they have been afraid to think for themselves. Just see in some countries what the blasphemy laws are now, by which they guard their Bible and their God. Every honest man should see to it that these laws are done away with at once and for ever.

See how men used to crawl before Cardinals, Bishops and Popes, Before wealth they bowed to the very earth, and in the presence of titles they became abject. It is not so now. All this is slowly but surely changing. At one time we thought a great deal of Clergymen but now we have got to thinking they ain't of as much importance as a man that's invented something.

As man proceeds, he begins to help himself and to take advantage of mechanical powers to assist him, and he begins to see he can help himself a little, and exactly in the proportion he helps himself he comes to rely less on the power of priest or prayer to help him. Just to the extent we are helpless, to that extent do we rely upon the unknown.

As religion developed itself, keeping pace with the belief in theology, came the belief in demonology. They gave one being the credit of doing all the good things, and must give some one credit for the bad things, and so they created a devil. At one time it was as disreputable to deny the existence of a devil as to deny the existence of a God; to deny the existence of a hell, with its fire and brimstone, as to deny the existence of a heaven with its harp and love.

With the development of religion came the idea that no man should be allowed to bring the wrath of God on a nation by his transgressions, and this idea permeates the Christian world to-day. Now what does this prove? Simply that our religion is founded on fear, and when you are afraid you cannot think. Fear drops on its knees and believes. It is only courage that can think.

It was the idea that man's actions could do something, outside of any effect his mechanical works might have, to change the order of Nature; that he might commit some offence to bring on an earthquake, but he can't do it. You can't be bad enough to cause an earthquake; neither can you be good enough to stop one. Out of that wretched doctrine and infamous mistake that man's belief could have any effect upon Nature grew all these inquisitions, racks and collars of torture, and all the blood that was ever shed by religious persecution.

Now I assert that there is not a man or woman in this entire audience that can think of a thing that has not been suggested to them by Nature, and they cannot think of anything that has been suggested to them by the supernatural. You can't get over that, and you may as well give up speculating over it now as at any other time.

Day by day, religious conceptions grow less and less intense. Day by day the old spirit dies out of book and creed. The burning enthusiasm, the quenchless zeal of the early church have gone, never, never to return. The ceremonies remain, but the ancient faith is fading out of the human heart. The worn-out arguments fail to convince, and denunciations that once blanched the faces of a race, excite in us only derision and disgust. As time rolls on the miracles grow small and mean, and the evidencies our fathers thought conclusive utterly fail to satisfy us. There is an "irrepressible conflict" between religion and science, and they cannot peaceably occupy the same brain, nor the same world. (Applause.)

While utterly discarding all creeds, and denying the truth of all religions, there is neither in my heart nor upon my lips a sneer for the hopeful, loving and tender souls who believe that from all this discord will result a perfect harmony; that every evil will in some mysterious way become a good, that above and over all there is a



being who, in some way, will reclaim and glorify every one of the children of men: but for those who heartlessly try to prove that salvation is almost impossible; that damnation is almost certain; that the highway of the universe leads to hell: who fill life with fear and death with horror; who curse the cradle and mock the tomb, it is impossible to entertain other than feelings of pity, contempt, and scorn.

Now, my friends, there's a party started in this country with the object of giving every man, woman, and child the rights they are entitled to. Now every one of us has the same rights. I have the right to labor and have the products of my labor. I have the right to think, and furthermore, to express my thoughts, because expression is the reward of my intellectual labor. And yet there are some States in this country where men of my ideas would not be allowed to testify in a court of justice. Is that right? There are States in this country where, if the law had been enforced, I would have been sent to the Penitentiary for lecturing. All such laws were enacted by barbarians, and our country will not be free until they are wiped from the statute books of every State.

These are our doctrines: We want an absolute divorce between Church and State. We demand that Church property should not be exempt from taxation. If you are going to exempt anything, exempt the homesteads of the poor. Don't exempt a rich corporation, and make men pay taxes to support a religion in which they do not believe. But they say churches do good. I don't know whether they do or not. Do you see such a wonderful difference between a member of a church and one who does not believe in it? Do Church members pay their debts better than any others? Do they treat their families any better? Are the people who go to Church the only good people? Are there not a great many bad people who go to Church? Did you ever hear of a tramp coming into the town and enquiring where the Deacon of a Presbyterian Church lived? (Great laughter.)

Not a Bank in this city will lend a dollar to the man who belongs to the church, without security, quicker than to the man who don't go to church. Has not the Church opposed every science from the first ray of light until now? Didn't they damn into eternal flames the man who discovered the world was round? Didn't they damn into eternal flames the man who discovered the movement of the earth in its orbit? Didn't they persecute the astronomers? Didn't they even try to put down life insurance by saying it was sinful to bet on the time God has given you to live?

Science built the Academy, superstition the Inquisition. Science constructed the telescope, religion the rack; science made us happy here, and says if there's another world we'll all stand an equal chance there; religion made us miserable here; and says a large majority will be eternally miserable there. Should we, therefore, exempt it from taxation for any good it has done?

The next thing we ask is a perfect divorce between Church and school. We say that every school should be secular, because it's

just to everybody. If I was an Israelite I would'nt want to be taxed to have my children taught that his ancestors had murdered a Supreme Being. Let us teach, not the doctrines of the past, but the discoveries of the present; not the five points of Calvinism, but geology and geography. Education is the lever to raise mankind, and superstition is the enemy of intelligence.

I want, if I can, to do a little to increase the rights of men, to put every human being on an equality, to sweep away the clouds of superstition, to make people think more of what happens to-day than what somebody said happened 3000 years ago. This is what I want: To do what little I can to clutch one-seventh of our time from superstition, to give our Sundays to rest, serenity, and recreation. I want a day of enjoyment, a day to read old books, to meet old friends, and get acquainted with one's wife and children. I want a day to gather strength to meet the toils of the next.

I want to get that day away from the Church, away from superstition and the contemplation of hell, to be the best and sweetest and brightest of all the days in the week. That day is best on which most good is done for the human race.

I want to have us all do what little we can to secularize the Government—take it from the control of savagery and give it to science, take it from the Government of the past and give it to the enlightened present, and in this Government let us uphold every man and woman in their rights, that every one, after he or she comes to the age of discretion, may have a voice in the affairs of the nation.

Do this, and we'll grow in grandeur and splendour every day, and the time will come when every man and every woman shall have the same rights as every other man and every other woman has.

I believe we are growing better. I don't believe the wail of want shall be heard for ever: that the prison and the gallows will always curse the ground.

The time will come when liberty and law, and love, like the Rings of Saturn, will surround the world; when the world will cease making these mistakes; when every man will be judged according to his worth and intelligence. I want to do all I can to hasten that day.

(Immense cheering and applause, during which the Colonel gracefully bowed and withdrew.)

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