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And Other Essays by Lemuel K. Washburn

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Is The Bible Worth Reading  
And Other Essays

By

Lemuel K. Washburn

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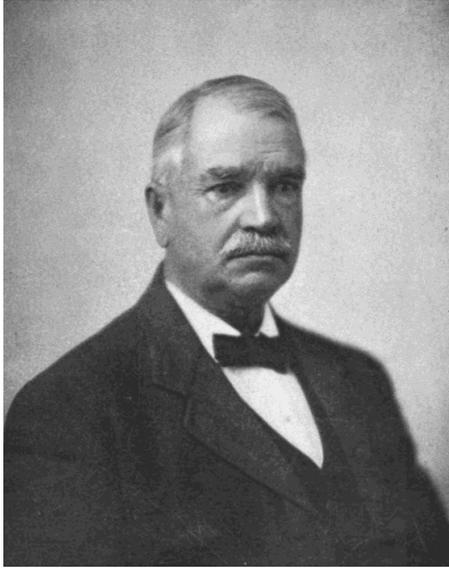
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Lemuel K. Washburn

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# Dedication

The writer of this book dedicates it to all men and women of common honesty and common sense.

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## Is The Bible Worth Reading

That depends. If a man is going to get his living by standing in a Christian pulpit, I should be obliged to answer, Yes! But if he is going to follow any other calling, or work at any trade, I should have to answer, No! There is absolutely no information in the Bible that man can make any use of as he goes through life. The Bible is not a book of knowledge. It does not give instruction in any of the sciences. It furnishes no help to labor. It is useless as a political guide. There is nothing in it that gives the mechanic any hint, or affords the farmer any enlightenment in his occupation.

If man wishes to learn about the earth or the heavens; about life or the animal kingdom, he has no need to study the Bible. If he is desirous of reading the best poetry or the most entertaining literature he will not find it in the Bible. If he wants to read to store his mind with facts, the Bible is the last book for him to open, for never yet was a volume written that contained fewer facts than this book. If he is anxious to get some information that will help him earn an honest living he does not want to spend his time reading Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Kings, Psalms, or the Gospels. If he wants to read just for the fun of reading to kill time, or to see how much nonsensical writing there is in one book, let him read the Bible.

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I have not said that there are not wise sayings in the Bible, or a few dramatic incidents, but there are just as wise sayings, and wiser ones, too, out of the book, and there are dramas of human life that surpass in interest anything contained in the Old or New Testament.

No person can make a decent excuse for reading the Bible more than once. To do such a thing would be a foolish waste of time. But our stoutest objection to reading this book is, not that it

contains nothing particularly good, but *that it contains so much that is positively bad*. To read this book is to get false ideas, absurd ideas, bad ideas. The injury to the human mind that reads the Bible as a reliable book is beyond repair. I do not think that this book should be read by children, by any human being less than twenty years of age, and it would be better for mankind if not a man or woman read a line of it until he or she was fifty years old.

What I want to say is this, that there is nothing in the Bible that is of the least consequence to the people of the twentieth century. English literature is richer a thousand fold than this so-called sacred volume. We have books of more information and of more inspiration than the Bible. As the relic of a barbarous and superstitious people, it should have a place in our libraries, but it is not a work of any value to this age. I pity men who stand in pulpits and call this book the word of God. I wish they had brains enough to earn their living without having to repeat this foolish falsehood. The day will come when this book will be estimated for what it a worth, and when that day comes, the Bible will no longer be called the word of God, but the work of ignorant, superstitious men. [009]

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The cross everywhere is a dagger in the heart of liberty.

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A miracle is not an explanation of what we cannot comprehend.

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The statue of liberty that will endure on this continent is not the one made of granite or bronze, but the one made of love of freedom.

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Take away every achievement of the world and leave man freedom, and the earth would again bloom with every glory

of attainment; but take away liberty and everything useful and beautiful would vanish.

[010]

# Sacrifice

The sacrifice of Jesus, so much boasted by the Christian church, is nothing compared to the sacrifice of a mother for her family. It is not to be spoken of in the same light. A mother's sacrifice is constant: momentary, hourly, daily, life-long. It never ceases. It is a veritable providence; a watchful care; a real giving of one life for another, or for several others; a gift of love so pure and holy, so single and complete, that it is an offering in spirit and in substance.

This is to me the highest, purest, holiest act of humanity. All others, when weighed with this unselfish consecration to duty, seem small and insignificant. There is, in a mother's life, no counting of cost, no calculation of reward. It is enough that a duty is to be done; that a service is to be rendered; that a sacrifice is called for. The true mother gives herself to the offices of love without hope, expectation, or wish of recompense. A mother's love for her children cannot be determined by any earthly measure, by any material standard. It outshines all glory, and is the last gleam of light in the human heart. A mother's love walks in a thousand Gethsemanes, endures a thousand Calvaries, and has a thousand agonies that the dying of Jesus upon a cross cannot symbolize. This maternal sacrifice is the greater that it is made cheerfully, without a murmur, and even with joy. If it is not sought; it is never pushed aside.

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A mother's sacrifice for her family makes a chapter of suffering, of patient toil and strife, of heroic endurance and forbearance, that religion is not yet high enough to appreciate; and this sublime devotion is not in one home, but in *hundreds of thousands in every land* everywhere on earth, and it is real, true,

heart-born, and the utmost of renunciation that human life has revealed.

The brief martyrdom of Jesus was not voluntary, was not lasting in its pain or in its service to mankind. His death was cruel, his suffering and agony terrible to think of, but it was all soon over. A few hours of torture make up the tragedy of the cross. But the story of this crucifixion may be fictitious, imaginary; most likely is such. Perhaps no such man died such a death in any such way. Then how vain and foolish to waste our sympathy on a fanciful sufferer, an imaginary martyr, who never existed outside of the brain of the writer of the story, while there are actual, real beings living who are making a greater sacrifice, doing a holier duty, within our reach!

We need not go to a Bible to find those who deserve our tears, or who have earned our admiration. The bravest heart that ever author wrote into being, fails to come up to the lofty height of endurance, of a life inspired by love, of heroic sacrifice, that can be found in hundreds of homes in our land.

Far be it from my intention to paint less any deed of mortal that has brightened the lot of man, or to throw discredit upon aught that is worthy of human gratitude and praise. I yield most ready sympathy and most willing admiration to every noble soul that has lived or died to make earth better and happier, but I do not believe that greatness, goodness and love are all dead, and that our whole duty is to stand and weep around a tomb. I believe in living men and women, in living hearts and souls, in living greatness and goodness and love, and I tell you all that the earth never bore more loving, more humane, tenderer, braver, or truer hearts than beat today in the living breasts of mankind.

And I place above all that is brave and true, great and good, in the past or present, the mothers of our age.—What man cannot see that silent, patient mother in her home, the victim of a multitude of trials, crosses, annoyances, day after day and week after week, meeting all, bearing all, with a saint's look and

manner; and what man, seeing her there, at the side of the sick, worn out with watching and waiting, and then at the bed of death, faithful and true to the last, though wounded in heart and spirit never faltering in the way of duty, that would not say if there be one sacrifice that is above, and greater than, all others, it is that of a mother's love?

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# The Drama Of Life

With the passing of the season we are reminded of the rapid flight of life. It seems but yesterday that the first bluebird of spring lit on the bare bough of the apple-tree in the orchard near by, and the early robin sang his welcome notes in our glad ears, and yet the bluebird and robin are seen and heard no more, and the green promise of spring has changed to the brown harvest of autumn, which will soon be stored for winter's use. This is the way every season comes and goes; a little long in coming sometimes; but never long in going; and every year grows shorter as we grow older, and every year goes more quickly as we near the border of old age. Life soon changes from a glad look ahead to a sad glance behind. From baby to boy, from boy to man, from man to tottering age;—how swiftly the scenes change, and life comes and life goes, and the door of death opens almost before the door of birth closes. The cradle and the grave touch, and the blithe youth that lends his strength to feeble age finds himself ere long leaning upon the arm of youth and strength. The circle of years soon rolls round, and life is but a day of toil and a night of dreams. As we look back upon vanished time and see the happy scenes of childhood mingled with the surroundings of later life, days and months shrink to hours, and years seem to be spanned by a sunrise and a sunset with a little laughter and perhaps some tears between.

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We who have travelled more than half way on the road cannot look backward without a sigh, cannot think backward without a pang. Many of us have left the graves of father and mother behind, perhaps the smaller graves of children, where some of our heart lies buried too. The storms that beat on us make life seem shorter; make the days go faster, and the night draw nearer;

and all of us have already, or must sometime, bow our heads to the blast.

One human being in the great world of man, and in the greater world of Nature, plays but a small part. Of but little account is a human life in the vast, limitless universe. A man fills but a little space while alive, and touches but a few hearts when he dies. We are fortunate if we make during life, one true, loyal friend who stands by us while that life lasts. We reckon this, after all, the grandest triumph of the human soul. It is not difficult to gather dollars—quite a number, at least,—nor to win a measure of fame, but to live, to be, to act, in such way as to bind one true heart to ours, is a victory which we may be proud of. Some lives have larger circumferences than others, radiate farther, influence more, but none can win the rare tribute of perfect friendship from more than one or two. Yes! man plays but a small part in the great drama of life. He is on the stage but a few short hours, and most men are but poor or indifferent actors at best.

Who cares when a man dies? Not the sun, for it shines just as gaily when he closes his eyes to its golden light; not the birds, for they chatter and sing over his coffin, and hop and sing on his grave; not the brook, for it runs laughing on and never stops its gambols and song; not any of the things of earth, but man. [015]

When man dies, a few say, Is he gone? and then forget that he ever lived; a few go to help carry his dead body to the grave, and then turn away to join the business and pleasure of life, and forget that they have buried a man; a few, some days after, call at the house where he lived and drop a tear of sympathy for the weeping widow and tearful children, and then forget that the husband and father is no more. But does no one care? Perhaps a wife, who will carry his dead image in her heart as long as it beats; perhaps a daughter, who will remember him a year or two, or a little longer, who will miss his happy greeting, his loving kiss, his proud, kind look as he lifts the heart's dearest idol to his knee; and this is all. And this is enough. We care for only a few;

and why should many care for us?

Though life is short and not always heroic; and though, when it ends, the world goes on just the same, we love life and it is sweet while it lasts. Though we travel quickly over the road, we enjoy for the most part, the journey of life. We have pain, it is true; we learn of sorrow and grief; we feel the pang of parting and weep on the white face of some loved one, and yet, we find happiness, we enjoy living, and we regret when the curtain is rung down and our part is played and the lights turned out. When we strike the balance between pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, happiness and misery, most find that life is worth living.

[016]

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A dogma will thrive in soil where the truth could not get root.

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The measure of liberty which man enjoys determines the civilization of the age in which he lives.

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The person who can make a loaf of bread is more to the world than the person who could perform a miracle.

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The indifference to Christianity may well alarm the men who live on the credulity that gives it the show of life, but to those who delight in actions of sincerity, it affords the greatest encouragement, for it promises to the world a day when intelligence and integrity will be respected more than ignorance and hypocrisy.

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# Nature In June

We can hardly look anywhere in Nature without having the conviction grow in the mind that there are more or less superfluous things on this spot of the universe where our lot is cast, however it may be in Mars, Venus, Saturn, or any other of the Greek-named planets or any heavenly constellations with or without names. Just at this particular season of the year, the presence of weeds in the garden or on the farm raises a colossal doubt as to the fact of any wisdom guiding the divine voice when, in a majestic sweep of its omnipotent power on the third day of the drama of creation, it called into being the grass, the herb, the tree and whatsoever bears leaf or blade or flower. To those who have to pull the weeds out of the ground they are a curse of the first magnitude, and how a creator, who had common sense, could take pride in making such vegetable abortions as weeds we cannot comprehend. The most worthless things in Nature are the most prolific. Chickweed will cover an acre while clover is considering where it is best to go into business, and every pesky, nasty little weed will live and laugh when the queenly corn droops its head in the sun, and the beet and turnip cannot get nourishment enough to keep them alive.

It is just the same in the animal world. An immense quantity of useless beings go about on two and four legs or on none at all. The only excuse for the snake is that he was made to eat the toad; for the toad, that he was made to eat insects; for the insects—well, nobody has yet made a wholesome excuse for their existence, anyway. It looks as though one being in Nature was made simply to kill another being, and the last-made being, man, is the supreme killer of the whole lot. Take the whole range of wild beasts, and find, if you can, aught but malice in

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their creation, if they were created. No plague ever destroyed hyenas and jackals. No one ever found a sick rattlesnake or an invalid hornet. The fittest survive? The fittest for what? To worry man, to make life miserable. Mosquitoes, wasps, fleas, reptiles and wild beasts, poisonous vines and shrubs, noxious blossoms whose perfume is the kiss of death, weeds that push and crowd decent plants until they die in utter despair—these are the sturdiest triumphs of the creative art. We cannot help wishing that the Lord-God had not rested on the seventh day, but instead, had gone around and destroyed about seven-eighths of what he had created. We might then have had quite a decent world to live in.

Man builds a home for her he loves, he plants beside it all that will make it beautiful to the eyes of his wife. He works and brings what is fair to adorn it, and makes every room a casket to hold the jewel of love. He looks at his home with pride, and feels that it is “the dearest spot on earth,” a refuge safe and secure. The cyclone comes and in a moment all is swept away. Man cannot trust the God of the winds.

[019]

There is no more terrible calamity that afflicts our globe at the present time than an earthquake. It comes without warning, by day or night, when man is at his place of business or when he is at rest. There is no way of preventing it, no way of preparing for it. It may wait a hundred, a thousand, years before it works its deadly ruin. But when it comes, havoc is left. An earthquake may be good for the earth, but it is almighty discouraging to the people that live on it. It may seek a beneficent end, but it goes to work in a cruel manner to accomplish it. Human life counts no more than the life of rats when an earthquake gets started. This infernal visitor does not seek a spot where its malevolence can be wrecked upon the rocks and hills. Oftener it goes to the thickly populated city or town and topples over houses and swallows up dwellings, with men, women and children. Does God send the earthquake? If he does, where is the evidence of his love for

man? If He does not, who does?

It is pretty tough business to try to reconcile Nature with the idea of God's watchful care over man. If the winds did not turn to hurricanes; if the sunshine did not make drought; if the rain never became a flood; if the sea never grew angry and sunk the ship; if the clouds always dissolved in gentle rain or in dew; if there were no wild beasts; no venomous snakes; no poisonous vines or flowers; if there were only what is bright and fair and good on earth and nothing that was dark and cold and repulsive, we might believe that a heavenly father had made the earth for a dwelling-place for man. But as it is, we have to think as well of Nature as possible and dodge her lightning, run from her water-spouts, keep out of the way of cyclones and shift for ourselves while here. What follows nobody knows. It may be better for us beyond this life; we hope it is no worse. And it may be only sleep, sleep with no dreams and no awakening. We should dislike to die on this side of the grave with the fear that we should come out on the other only to meet a hurricane in the teeth, or find an earthquake had been put under us to give us a shaking up the first thing on that "shining shore," or to be caught in a furious torrent that poured down the sides of some heavenly mountain. Earth is a pretty good place when the conditions are all favorable, but if we are to have another life it ought to be a better one or else we should be saved the trouble of dying.

[020]

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The feet of progress have always been shod by doubt.

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A true man will not join anything that in any way abridges his freedom or robs him of his rights.

## The Infinite Purpose

A Christian writer recently said:—"The supreme duty of humanity is to get into touch with the infinite purpose." This may be so, but we want first to understand just what the infinite purpose is before we subscribe to it. When the infinite purpose is bent on getting up an earthquake we do not care to "get into touch" with it, not much. When this purpose is forging an electric bolt to shoot out of the clouds, we have no desire to "get into touch" with any such thing. It makes a vast difference what this purpose is bent upon, whether or not we want to go into partnership with it. Now, when the infinite purpose is at work on the earth, turning dirt into flowers, or vegetables, or trees, we should feel a joy in sharing its labor, but when it is determined to burn and scorch everything on the face of the ground with a heat that knows no abatement, we should want to sell out our interest in the concern at once.

There is just as much nonsense connected with the use of this phrase "the infinite purpose" as there is with "special Providence" or "Divine love," or any other religious expression which expresses nothing unless you are religious. Where this "purpose" "makes for righteousness," as Matthew Arnold delighted to believe, we are willing to catch on to it, but where it is going in the other direction we prefer to go our own way.

[022]

This notion of uniting the finite with the infinite purpose is all right, providing the latter does not conflict with the former, but we have serious objection to doing anything that will interfere with the highest development of our humanity. The purpose which is at work in the world does not make for health any more than for disease. It seems to carry a tubercle with as much satisfaction as a ray of sunshine, and lends all its forces to

assist the highwayman with no more charge than it makes to the law-abiding citizen.

It seems to us that it is necessary to divorce the “infinite purpose” from a lot of intentions that do not work for human interests, before it will be desirable to assume intimate relations with this purpose. We do not want to “get into touch” with what is not going our way; that is, the way of health, of prosperity, of happiness. We do not deny that we need to give a higher direction to human thought. We affirm this fact as positively as our most Christian contemporary. But before we advise mankind to harness its wagon to the infinite purpose we want to be sure where it is going. Man has to go to mill and market as well as to meeting, and there is just as good a purpose manifested in getting the most wholesome food for our stomachs as there is in getting the safest creed for our souls. We are loth to trust any religious purpose as opposed to a human one. We believe in man first, last, and all the time.

Now, let us admit that humanity needs a wiser purpose to guide it, but let us also admit that it can be found in a wiser human head and human heart. If what is called the infinite purpose is working for the highest end of human life, there is no evidence of the fact. If there is anything better than human energy back of a good human thought that will help this world, we do not know what it is. [023]

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The man who accepts the faith of Calvin is miserable in proportion to the extent he carries it out.

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Whatever tends to prolong the existence of ignorance or to prevent the recognition of knowledge is dangerous to the well-being of the human race.

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A higher respect for man has been one of the chief promoters of civilization. Advancement has always been toward right and truth when the ranks were imbued with a proper regard for human hearts and human happiness.

# Freethought Commands

Say nothing about others that you would not have others say about you.

Be severe toward yourself; be kind to your fellow-man.

Do not give advice that you cannot follow.

Do not thank God for what man does.

Serve neither God nor Mammon, but humanity alone.

Do not try to be perfect as a "Father in heaven," but try to be better than you yourself are.

Seek first to improve the earth, and heaven will be of less consequence.

---

Let us not forget that men speak according to the measure of their knowledge and light, and that a superior enlightenment is a higher authority.

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History shows that there is nothing so easy to enslave and nothing so hard to emancipate as ignorance, hence it becomes the double enemy of civilization. By its servility it is the prey of tyranny, and by its credulity it is the foe of enlightenment.

## A Rainbow Religion

There is little doubt that the faith of the early Christians was what might be classed under the head of rainbow religion. We learn from the New Testament that it was taught that those who accepted the faith held by John and Jesus and Paul were in some peculiar manner to be protected from the common ills of life, and were to be especial favorites of their “Father in heaven.” How sincerely this faith was held we cannot now determine, nor to what extent it was put into practice, but that it possessed the mind in a considerable degree there is no room whatever to doubt. But this is not the question that we want settled, but rather the value of this faith.

It is pleasant and comforting to believe that one is watched over by a superior power which at any moment of peril or temptation is ready to stretch forth its hand and rescue from danger and death, and it is on account of the wonderful seductiveness of this faith that it has lasted so long and has been so hard to overcome. But what we are interested in is, whether or not such a belief has any foundation in fact or in human experience. When Jesus bid his followers to cease giving thought to what they should eat and drink and wear, telling them that their “heavenly Father” fed the fowls of the air, and that they were better than such fowls, thus implying that their heavenly Father would take proportionately better care of them, was there any ground for any such teaching, and is there any ground for this faith today? We claim that the “heavenly Father” referred to by Jesus never fed anything, neither fowl nor man; and that no human being was ever taken care of by any superior power or snatched by it from danger or death. Such a faith is the veriest delusion, and it could lodge and take root only in the childish mind. Jesus also taught that

the “Father which is in heaven” would “give good things to them that ask him.” Is there any ground for this rainbow religion? Is there any evidence that there is a “Father in heaven” who has good things to give to those who ask for them?

We presume that this faith led men to give up work and to trust to begging for a living. But the question is, which got the most good things,—those who studied the laws of Nature and of life and worked in harmony with them, or those who prayed for good things? How is it to-day? What good things can be had by praying? Who has any good thing that he received by asking his “Father in heaven” for it? The asking business has been carried on for hundreds of years, and all that has been asked of God has had to be given by man or has not been given at all.

Has it ever been true that Christians had any immunity from danger that others did not have, or that they could live in defiance of the laws of Nature? Jesus told his followers that in his name they shall cast out devils, they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them and they shall have the power to cure the sick by laying their hands upon them. [027] Have men, who professed to follow Jesus, ever done the things which he said they shall do? Is there any man to-day who can do these things? Is there any evidence that Christians are treated by any power of the universe differently from what others are treated? And is there any evidence that they possess any gift that is not shared by others? As far as we can see Christians are subject to the same laws of Nature that all others must obey, and they cannot either defy those laws or act independently of them. If they fool with deadly serpents they will get bitten and probably die—just the same as would an infidel; if they drink a cup of poison, they will suffer and perhaps die just the same as an unbeliever; if they have any sickness, they do not trust to the laying-on of hands by a fellow-Christian, but send for a doctor the same as a freethinker. The fact is, the world has learned better than to put faith in these teachings of Jesus.

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The Christian faith belonged to the childhood of the race, and ought no longer to be preached to man. No one attempts to put this faith into practice, to carry into life the teachings of Jesus. And why not? Simply because *it is known to be false*. Christianity is a rainbow religion, a representation of things for which there is no warrant in Nature; a picture painted in false colors; a view of life copied from a diseased imagination; a falsehood fed by priests upon which they live.

There is not an intelligent man or woman living to-day who has any faith in the rainbow religion taught by Jesus; not an intelligent man or woman who believes that a heavenly Father or a God will provide food or drink or clothes for a human being; nor an intelligent man or woman who has faith that he or she can get good things by asking a "Father in heaven" for them and not an intelligent man or woman who cares or dares to put the declaration of Jesus to the test; that those who have faith in him can play with serpents without danger, and drink deadly poison with no more harm than attends quaffing a glass of water.

We are then to conclude that Christianity is held only by the ignorant.

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There is greater argument in one fact than in all the creeds.

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It is easier to believe that a man is honest who says the Bible is the word of God than to believe that he is bright.

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# A Cruel God

There may be some other religion in the world that sings of a God more cruel than the God of Christianity, but we do not know of any. At any rate, we believe it is safe to say that no religion of a civilized people has a God who is more vindictive. We have always wondered how men and women could set such infernal ideas to music as we find in Christian hymns. It is really too bad that human beings are compelled to sing such lies as we find in the pious song-books of the church. The sentiments contained in them are not fit for savages. It can only brutalize the heart to sing of blood, and nothing but blood, no matter whose blood it is. The “precious blood of Jesus” is just as suggestive of cruelty as the blood on the executioner's knife. Men become what they read, what they think, what they sing, what they believe. Religions have made men wicked, cruel, hard, unkind. It is impossible to have faith in a God of wrath and vindictiveness without in time developing these qualities. Men grow into the likeness of their belief. As a man believes, so is he, to a certain extent.

The influence of cruel sentiments on the mind is greater with the young than with adults. Some hymns sung in Christian churches are positively brutal in tone. Think of *human* beings singing the following verse:—

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“But vengeance and damnation lie  
On rebels who refuse His grace;  
Who God's eternal Son despise,  
The *hottest hell shall be their place.*”

Christians seem to delight in pictures of hell. God would hardly be God to them if he did not damn somebody. In painting the divine idea vengeance and damnation are laid on thick.

Here is the Christian notion of father and son:—

“How justice frowned and vengeance stood  
 To drive me down to endless pain!  
 But the great Son propos'd his blood,  
 And *heavenly wrath grew mild again.*”

Think of the religion based on such an idea of God! And think on the terrible effect on men and women which such religion must have!

The following description of the Christian God was probably written by one of his adorers:—

“Adore and tremble for our God  
 Is a consuming fire!  
 His jealous eyes with wrath inflame,  
 And raise His vengeance higher.

“Almighty vengeance, how it burns,  
 How bright His fury glows!  
 Vast magazines of plagues and storms  
 Lie treasured for His foes.

“Those heaps of wrath, by slow degrees,  
 Are force into a flame:  
 But kindled, Oh! how fierce they blaze!  
 And rend all nature's frame.

“At His approach the mountains flee,  
 And seek a watery grave;  
 The frightened sea makes haste away,  
 And shrinks up every wave.

“Through the wide air the weighty rocks  
Are swift as hailstones hurled;  
Who dares engage His fiery rage,  
That shakes the solid world?

“Thy hand shall on rebellious kings  
A fiery tempest pour,  
While we, beneath Thy sheltering wings,  
Thy *just* revenge adore.”

And we are asked to love this God! We should just as soon think of loving a tiger, a cyclone, a deluge, a fiend. Love goes out to what is lovely. We can love what is good, what is beautiful, what is noble; a great-hearted man, a pitying woman we cannot help loving, but if we should say that we love such a God as is pictured in the words of that hymn we should lie. Man cannot love hate, vengeance, wrath—even in a God.

The Christian church, down through the ages, has been like the God it worshipped—full of hate, malice and cruelty. The world has grown kind and humane just in proportion as it has given up worship of this divine monster. We judge gods as we judge men, and we can respect and love only what is worthy of respect and love from a human point of view. If there is such a God as is painted in Christian literature he deserves, not to be worshipped, but to be shot.

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The Bible upon which Christianity is founded does not say what Christianity is, what a Christian is, nor what we must do in order to be a Christian.

## What Is Jesus

Time was when Jesus was looked upon as God, or the Son of God. No one had any doubt of his divinity or divine character; or if he had, he wisely deferred to the superstitious majority and kept his mouth shut and so kept his head on his shoulders. This idea that Jesus was God has been steadily declining for several hundred years. Intelligence has pretty much given it up, except where it is paid a big salary for preaching it. There is no rational defence that can be made of the dogma of the divinity of Jesus. It is one of many theological absurdities that was born when gods were popular.

A large number believe that Jesus was a man and nothing more; a good man, but still human. They look upon him as a product of human nature. He is allowed a human father and mother, although the gospels, in which is found the story of his life, hardly warrant so much earthly parentage. He is regarded as a part of humanity, and his extraordinary deeds merely as exaggerated performances of heart and hand of man. The people that look upon Jesus as a man have a superstitious reverence for his humanity. He is called “the one perfect man,” the “pattern of the race,” etc. Though a man, they will have him every inch a man.

Yet others see nothing remarkable in the career of Jesus; nothing which marks him for universal emulation; nothing which compels praise and admiration. They think he was a sort of mild lunatic, possessed of the idea that he was the Messiah of his people, and that in endeavoring to further his scheme he antagonized the existing authority and met the just punishment of his ambition.

But it is neither as God nor as a man that Jesus must be regarded, but as a myth. No such person ever lived either as a human or divine existence. He is simply a creature of fancy, the fruit of the imagination. He is a character of the brain, the creation of religious genius.

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There is no justifiable Christianity in this age.

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A dogma is the hand of the dead on the throat of the living.

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The progress of the world depends upon freedom of thought and freedom of utterance.

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If you can forgive the man who wronged you, the neighbor who slandered you and help the poor about you, you need not be particular about making any professions of righteousness.

## Deeds Better Than Professions

We have tears of regret to shed over the wreck of beauty and talent; but if we take no steps to preserve beauty and talent from wreck, our compassion is not to our honor but to our disgrace. The feeling of pity which to-day expends itself in solemn warning or solemn weeping for the poor unfortunates of earth, must devise means to rescue them from misery, or it is but a mockery and a shame. One arm inspired with love of man will do more than a thousand tender sentiments. Sympathy must take the form of assistance, or it is not sincere.

When we do not love man as we ought, we hate ourselves. The way to get heaven for ourselves is to give it to others. The way to be happy is to make others happy. Selfishness kills every noble feeling and defeats every good desire. We cannot have peace when we give pain to others. Our deeds reward us. What wrongs man is wrong for man to do. We should live so as not to regret the past nor fear the future. We set too great a value upon earthly possessions, and spend our lives in gaining what we cannot hold. We best enjoy the things of earth when we give up wanting them wholly for ourselves. The best part of our happiness is having someone to share it.

# Give Us The Truth

If there is one tree that man needs to eat of, it is the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil; and if any knowledge will keep him alive and make him happy and perfect, it is just this knowledge which God forbid him to acquire. We are dying to-day from ignorance, not from knowledge,—dying because we do not know the good from the evil; and we are dooming ourselves and future generations to premature death because we do not eat more of the tree of knowledge.

To *know* more is what we need. Let us look into things and find out what the world means. If this universe is only an illuminated deception, the man who discovers the fact will be a public benefactor. If things which exist around us are lying to us,—if the stars that shine out through the deep space above us are only fire-flies of the night, let us know it. Knowledge will not hurt us so much as ignorance and deception. If the flowers that uncover their beauty for our delight have but a phantom loveliness, and nought is real in the enchanting world about us, then let us be told the truth. The soul can bear it better than to be deceived. We may be trusted with the knowledge of good and evil and of right and wrong, ye God of Genesis! and praise be to the first-created man for breaking the command to remain in ignorance and taking the first step toward solving the riddle of life!

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We learn everything by living. The truth is not revealed to us: we must discover it. It is seen when we climb high enough to see it, or live wise enough to feel it, or act true enough to utter it. When we hear the truth, we hear only the echo of the universe. The last thing that we have to fear is the truth and the consequences of knowing it. Let us not fear to speak it or to hear

it. And let us go with it whenever found. They who are keeping the world from the knowledge of good and evil, who are trying to discourage the preaching of truth, are the enemies of mankind.

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If man had no knowledge except what he has got out of the Bible he would not know enough to make a shoe.

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The great work of man has ever been to rescue the present from the past; to turn the mind from what it has left behind to the opportunities and duties which are around it. For this has genius toiled down the ages, sung its song of love, carved its dream of beauty and whispered to the world's dull ear its bright message of hope.

# The American Sunday

Everybody has heard of what is called the “Christian sabbath,” and nearly everybody has a tolerably clear idea of what is meant by a “continental sabbath.” A “continental sabbath” may be described as a sort of week-day Sunday, that is, as a religious holiday with more secular, than pious, features. A Christian sabbath is so near dead in this country as a religious fact that a definition of it cannot be had from real life. We find the ideal sabbath of the Christians in the history of early New England. For two centuries the people have been gradually outgrowing the austere religion which made Sunday a day to be dreaded all the week. The attempt has been frequently made by a small puritan contingent, which has survived all these years, to resuscitate this dead sabbath and inflict it upon the world again. But so far the effort has only met with deserved failure.

Resurrections have never been successful. When the inhabitants of graves have come out of their abodes it has been only to walk the streets for a brief period, and then to return again to silence and rest. The stories of ghosts, when true, are always short. These visitants never stop long or do anything that is of any worth to the world. When the grave is once made over the dead it is best to let it alone. There is nothing in cemeteries to aid progress or civilization.

We do not need the revival of old customs or of old faiths. To endeavor to rehabilitate the sabbath of our forefathers is as foolish as to try to make people go back into log houses and cook over a fire-place. Some persons can never realize that the world grows; that what was a help to one age becomes a hindrance to another; that time corrects the mistakes of men and that respect

and reverence for our ancestors do not necessarily require us to adopt their clothes or their habits.

Men and women are made fossils by their religion. The people who are trying to-day to resurrect the puritan sabbath are people who have got religion, but not much of anything else. A man who allows religion to dominate all his thoughts, all his efforts, all his acts, usually is a nuisance, if nothing worse.

A day of rest once a week is a good thing in itself, but it is a bad thing when controlled by religion. We are in favor of Sunday as a day when man can lay aside his business, his care, his tools, and enjoy himself, but we want everybody to take their hands off of it. Sunday is not a day for religion alone. If certain people wish to go to church on Sunday, let them go; but when these people, who go to church on Sunday, wish to compel everyone else to do the same, they need to be informed that *liberty on Sunday is just as much a human right as liberty on Monday*. There are better things that man has found than religion. Liberty is better, truth is better, happiness is better. We would like to see an American Sunday on this continent, a Sunday in harmony with the principles upon which our government was founded, a Sunday which was not run by religion, a Sunday for man and not for the church. Such a day would not be a sabbath, but it would be a free day, a happy day. The notion of Sunday as a holy day is too absurd, too ridiculous to deserve respectful attention. No man can have fifty-two holy days in a year.

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The minister must take his pious grasp off of the throat of Sunday.

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A true man is not troubled by anything but his own acts.

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The true man walks the earth as the stars walk the heavens, grandly obedient to those laws which are implanted in his nature.

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A great many people are afraid of knowledge, but we have seen hundreds of people that we thought would be improved if they knew more, but we have never seen one that we thought would be better if he knew less.

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## Lord And Master

The Christian is fond of referring to Jesus as his lord and master. We wonder why, for it is evident that not a Christian of this century takes Jesus for his lord and master. The fact is, that there is nothing that a *man* objects to more strongly than a master. Man wants to be independent. He does not want anybody to be lord over him. The struggle of the race for ages has been to get rid of lords and masters, to be free from tyrants. Religion is after all only dead politics. The church makes sacred what the state casts off. What sense is there in fighting for long centuries to liberate the body, and voluntarily accepting slavery for the mind? Jesus is the ghost of a dead king. But why should the world prostrate itself before his invisible throne when it refuses to acknowledge by its obedience that he is fit to rule the kingdom of conduct?

What hypocrites Christians are! What a farce it is for men and women to call Jesus lord and master! They do not obey his slightest command, and they ignore his teachings as undeserving their regard. There is not a precept, that the Christian church teaches came from the lips of Jesus, that Christians honor by practice, not one. Never did a lord receive so little honest respect from his vassals; never a master so little true obedience from his servants.

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Men and women are not sincere when they profess to accept Jesus as their lord and master. They doubtless feel grateful to him for saving them from the fires of hell hereafter, but they look upon him as a mighty poor example for them to follow here. As everybody knows, the church does not require that its members shall practice the precepts given by Jesus. If she did demand this of men and women her membership would speedily be reduced to zero. We do not regard a man as honest, or worthy

of respect, who calls Jesus his lord and master and turns his back in contempt upon the precepts he gave his disciples to practice.

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You cannot stuff your minds with the lives of saints and grow good on the stuffing.

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Some persons are remembered solely for their virtues and others solely for their faults. This is why we have a Jesus and a Judas.

## Are Christians Intelligent Or Honest

Future generations will regard the men who accept the Christian superstitions either as simple or dishonest.

We are forced to doubt the sanity or sincerity of people who profess to believe in the doctrine of the trinity, in a “begotten Son of God,” in miraculous conception, in the resurrection of the body, in the Bible as the word of God, in miracles, and in heaven and hell. We ask ourselves:—Are men intelligent who believe these things, or do they merely profess to believe them, and are dishonest? We cannot reconcile faith in the Christian superstitions with mental soundness and good sense.

What is there in Nature to suggest any of the Christian doctrines? Does not everything we know, everything we have seen, everything we have experienced, deny and disprove the Christian superstitions? Why, then, do people accept them? We find no one that acts as though Christianity were true, no one who lives as though hell were under his feet and liable at any moment to pull him down to eternal damnation. We find men spending all their energies in trying to get the good things of earth, just as though they were told to do so by God, instead of commanded not to lay up treasures upon earth, etc.

It is one of the serious problems of the age to know how to deal with Christians. They are, as a rule, respectable and decent; they have good manners generally, and they eat and drink, dress and talk, live and die very much as other people, and yet they profess a faith that is absurd and foolish and that has no foundation in fact or philosophy.

We like to think well of our fellow-beings, and we would like to think well of Christians, but we cannot do so as long as they pretend to believe what a person of intelligence, of good sense,

cannot believe. Are Christians honest? Perhaps they think so, but have they ever really examined their belief in the light of the knowledge of the twentieth century? If they will do this, we do not see how they can longer profess to be Christians, if they are honest.

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When men are hungry roast mutton is better than the lamb that taketh away wrath.

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If a man can look in the mirror of his own soul without shame, he can look the whole world in the face without a blush.

# The Danger Of The Ballot

Men speak usually as though voters ranged themselves on one side of a political question, or another, according to their convictions or principles. We wish this were so, then we should be nearer having a pure ballot. But we cannot share this lofty view. It does not seem to us that the average voter is a man of either political convictions or principles. Party service does not require intelligent, independent action, and politics to-day stands for party fealty more than for governmental ethics.

The main question that is decided by an election in our country is, which political party shall have the privilege of dispensing the offices of Government? There is a desire on the part of certain persons to obtain office, for either personal or party advantage, and this desire is oftentimes so fierce that it will betray the honor of citizenship. Where this is done, or attempted, lies the danger of the ballot.

If men voted only as their political convictions dictated, we should have a higher party morality and purer officers, but we must face the facts even though the duty is not an agreeable one. Politics has degenerated to a dirty business and political trickery and bribery secure victory where honor, integrity and principle suffer defeat. The plain truth is, we have a large class of voters who make merchandise of their right of suffrage, and a set of demagogues whose business it is to bribe or coerce voters for the advancement of selfish ends.

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The honest, virtuous, intelligent, independent vote is the noblest power of a freeman, but the purchasable vote, the ignorant vote, the vicious and servile vote, is the opportunity of the knave and the scoundrel. The purity of the ballot is the only safety of a Republic, and no greater danger threatens this nation

to-day than that which arises from the corruption of the suffrage. A ballot should be the honest declaration of our principles, the expression of our own opinions, the badge of our manhood; but when it is held in the hand that has sold it for a price, or will deposit it at the dictation of another, it is the prostitute of greed and the hired assassin of the despot.

Every man should select his own ballot and vote to please himself, and any person that would interfere with his right and duty to do this, should be disfranchised forever. *The individual who does not know enough to select his own ballot has no right to vote in this country.*

There have been too many voters led to the polls, and used as party troops. There are still slaves on election day who are afraid of the crack of the whip. There ought to be permitted in this nation no political or religious disability on account of the honest exercise of the right of suffrage. A man should be protected from the politician and the priest. When a man votes as he thinks, he has discharged the highest duty of citizenship, but when he votes through bribe or fear, he forfeits the privilege of the ballot. The polls are more sacred to man than the altar. Religion might die and man could still have every blessing of earth, but when liberty is killed, the noblest blessing of earth has departed. [046]

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The petty salvation offered by Christianity is not much sought after to-day, while the world is bending its mighty energies in the direction of knowledge as never before, and the glory of the electric light, the song of the steam-whistle, the music of the telegraph, the chorus of machinery and the grand anthem of countless enterprises tell of a bright and golden future time when man will master the elements of Nature and guide his life through its course of years in perfect safety and security and step down at the end of it,—“Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch about him and lies down to pleasant dreams.”

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# Who Carried The Cross

Who carried the cross upon which Jesus was crucified? Such a question ought to be easy to answer, if the event ever occurred. There ought to be no disagreement upon so simple a matter as this. But there is disagreement, and quite a serious one at that. Three of the gospels declare that Simon carried the cross, while the fourth gospel says that *Jesus* himself carried the cross upon which he was crucified. Now, which is right? Is John right? If so, then Matthew, Mark and Luke are wrong. If Simon carried it, Jesus could not have done so; and if Jesus carried it, then Simon did not.

That there is such a discrepancy in the accounts of this alleged event does not so much indicate that one is right and the others wrong in regard to the carrying of the cross as that none is right. To our mind this disagreement of the gospels is an indication that no such event as the carrying of a cross upon which to crucify Jesus ever occurred.

Christians put forth the Bible as a work which in some way came from God; as a book which is reliable in its statements, and correct in its narrative of events. Now, it is patent to everyone that in the gospels there are two distinct accounts of the carrying of the cross. How can Christians reconcile this fact with their theory that God is the author of the Bible?

It must be admitted by all that one mind could not have written or inspired both of these stories, and it must also be admitted that if one is true the other is false. What is the natural conclusion that an unprejudiced mind would arrive at after reading the account of the carrying of the cross for the crucifixion of Jesus in the four gospels? Is it not that no such cross was ever carried for any such purpose?

There are too many gospels, too many stories of Jesus. It would have been better for Christianity had all but one of these narratives been destroyed. They contradict each other in so many essential points as to make them totally unreliable as records of facts. It is plain that *not one of the writers of the four gospels knew of what he was writing.*

We must in honesty say that no one knows who carried the cross on which Jesus was crucified, and no one knows whether Jesus was crucified or not, and no one knows whether any such person as Jesus ever lived, to be crucified.

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Civilization has come about by going to school more than to church.

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Nature is the volume from which all of our knowledge has been translated.

# Modern Disciples Of Jesus

The modern disciples do not resemble very closely the ancient disciples of Jesus. In fact it is very hard to find a reason why Christian preachers call themselves disciples of Jesus at all. According to the narrative of the New Testament Jesus was not in love with money and what money will buy; he did not have a high appreciation of the good things of the world; he did not express any anxiety about his food or dress, nor manifest any desire to have aesthetic surroundings.

And if we can credit the story of the gospels, Jesus charged his disciples to be and do pretty much as he himself was and did. He said to them: “Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils; ... Provide neither gold nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves, for the workman is worthy of his meat.... It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master.”

Whether or not the ancient disciples heeded these words of their master, and carried out his instructions, we do not know, but there is abundant evidence that his modern disciples do not pay his commands the compliment of obedience. If there is one item that the clergyman of to-day looks after it is his salary. He deliberately disobeys all of the injunctions of Jesus to his disciples, and thinks he is doing his duty to do so.

This is the funny part of his discipleship to us. He does not consider the charge of Jesus worthy of being heeded. When we point to the commands of Jesus, and ask some Christian minister why he does not obey them, he coolly informs us that it would be the height of folly in this age to attempt to do as Jesus commanded his first disciples. In other words the Christian clergyman acts upon the ground that the orders of Jesus to his [050]

apostles are incompatible with personal dignity and decent living, and that only a person utterly devoid of all sense of fitness and social responsibility would undertake to follow his directions.

We agree with the action of the modern disciple of Jesus in regarding his commands as foolish and unfit to be obeyed, but we want him to take an honest stand before the world and say so like a man. Now he is a hypocrite, when he assumes a place in the Christian ranks but refuses to obey the orders of his master. The modern disciple of Jesus is more concerned about putting money in a bank or investing it in real estate than he is about “laying up treasures in heaven.”

If there is one person who believes thoroughly in looking after himself and his in the world, and getting all the good things out of it, it is the Christian minister. He is well housed, well fed, well dressed, and, as a rule, has a comfortable income. How he must laugh when he reads the New Testament! He probably regards Jesus as a chump to tell men and women to take no thought for what they shall eat and drink and wear, and not to lay up a few dollars for a rainy day. He has to make believe honor the poor, unsophisticated peasant of Galilee, in order to get his fat living. He has to fool the fools that support him in luxury, but all the reverence he has for Jesus you could put in your eye.

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If it paid better to tell the truth and to take an honest position in the world, we presume that most ministers would quit playing the hypocrite, but as long as Christianity pays its preachers more than they can get from any other source, we may expect them to profess to follow Jesus and then do as they please.

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Every fact is backed up by the whole universe.

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Christianity is a black spot on the page of civilization.

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The church is a bank that is continually receiving deposits but never pays a dividend.

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## A Poor Excuse

The excuse of the poor for not going to church is a poor excuse. The woman who does not go to church because she cannot dress well enough, cannot have much respect for her master. Jesus did not rail against the poor, but the rich. He did not condemn Lazarus, but Dives. Christian churches should be filled with rags, not silks; with paupers, not bankers. No one can be too poor to feel at home in the church of him who was too poor to have a place to lay his head. A Christian church is the church of poverty, and its minister should welcome the tramp, the beggar, the rag-muffin, and should give the cold shoulder to the rich merchant, the well-dressed politician, the prosperous citizen.

It is a singular thing that while silks despise rags, rags respect silks. The poor Christians ought to glory in their poverty, ought to be proud of their patches. They should have utter contempt for good clothes, and go to the church of Jesus with a feeling of pride that they honor him by being poor, as he was. Velvet, satin and broad-cloth are insults to him whose ragged royalty they profess to reverence.

If the poor were not as big hypocrites as the rich, they would drive the richly-dressed worshipers out of the church dedicated to the poverty-stricken Nazarene, who has been elected to the office of savior. A person has not very much Christianity when his religion is ashamed of his old clothes.

# Profession And Practice

There are a great many persons who are anxious to pass for more than they are worth, to stand for more than they represent. They always get on the side of the majority, because that is considered the safe side, the side that is most likely to have the largest number of loaves and fishes. These people are willing to pay the price of popularity; willing to do anything that is regarded as respectable, even to denying their own souls. The easiest way to win favor is by professing the popular faith, no matter what it is. A true man will be true to his convictions, true to his principles; but such a man may not receive applause, may not make money, may not be allowed to enter the door of society. In order to win the favor and secure the good-will of the majority, it is necessary to go with it, no matter where it is going. The thoughtless, the weak and simple, follow the crowd.

Profession is demanded of him who would join the ranks of the pious. Profession is required of the man or woman who belongs to the church. The performance of every duty, the practice of every virtue, is not a sufficient recommendation to popular favor. It is a fact that profession without practice is accepted in preference to practice without profession.

The man who gives his life to man without thought or care about God is considered a bad man, while he who gives his life to God without thought or care about man is regarded as holy and saintly. Nobody can do God any good or any harm, and all the worship that is offered him is a waste of time.

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The man who stands up in public and asks God in prayer to help the poor, to bless the suffering, is looked upon as a good man, while he who does not pray nor ask God to do anything, but helps his needy brothers and sisters, is pronounced wicked

and sinful. Values have become strangely mixed in the eyes of mankind. Religion is considered as worth more than morality; worship more than work; prayer more than performance and profession more than practice. This is wrong, false and foolish.

Profession is a mighty poor jewel, a cheap and flashy substitute for the diamond of practice. It is a confession of fraud; a mask for a face; a coward's excuse; a hypocrite's wile. Honesty need not profess to be honest.

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When a minister says that God will help you, ask him to put up the collateral.

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The church spends thousands of dollars to save a dogma, where it spends a cent to find a truth.

# Where Is Truth

Men have enthroned truth in some far-off kingdom, away from the world, as though it were too pure to live on earth. It has been made supernatural, and only to be known by being revealed. But truth is everywhere; its voice is heard in everything. The very pebble at our feet holds its image, and its light twinkles in the white splendor of the distant star.

Man has searched for truth in books, but has not found it there. He has invented words to conceal his disappointment, such as God, heaven, providence, etc. Nature contains all the truth, and so far as men have read Nature aright they have learned what is true, but we cannot catch and hold Nature in our philosophies. She breaks through all the finely-woven theories we put about her, and man, in his attempt to bind Nature with his thoughts, binds only himself.

Men in all ages have tried to read the secret of the universe. We have been told that God directs it, that a divine mind planned it and keeps it in motion. Why not let the universe explain itself? Why not read it by its own light? Why not confess our ignorance? God is a figure of speech, but Nature is a reality. Let us trust what we know. Nature is never capricious. Fire will always burn, water will always drown, frost will always freeze. Though we have confidence in Nature, let us acknowledge that we do not yet comprehend the meaning of things. The old habit of inventing words to hide our ignorance has been adopted by science as well as by religion. Evolution does not reduce the mystery of existence to a simple problem. What we call truth is more than we have yet found. The unknown is still provocative of investigation, and the only prayer of the mind is, more light. We must beware of accepting dogmas, whether of science or

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religion. No statement is the last word of truth. Doubt is the first step of progress, and inquiry is the way to knowledge.

There is nothing that stands more in the way of human advancement than the authority of opinions. Some dragon of assertion ever disputes our right to the golden fleece of truth. If we ask for proof of God's existence or man's immortality, we are answered with a text, but a text is only the dead opinion of a dead man. This age demands truth, not the belief of a person who lived centuries ago.

Because superstition holds the contents of a book sacred we are not to enslave reason to its statements. We will not be bound by the opinions of others, neither must we bind others to our opinions. We must make freedom sacred, and cease condemning men for disbelief or unbelief. The bondage of faith is the slavery of the soul. It makes man unjust, unwise and unkind. Allegiance to a creed makes us ill use a man simply because he does not believe as we do.

[057]

No church has all the truth, and no school either. So-called religion merely shows where the search after truth ended. But truth is the infinite reality, and it will always be for man to find.

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Christianity is like a slow clock—always being moved ahead.

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The day of the Bible is passed. Books have taken its place.

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Better be late to church Sunday morning than late at home Saturday night.

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Man to-day has more and better ways of getting a living than at any time in the history of the race.

[058]

# What Does It Prove

Christians say that the resurrection of Jesus proves his claim to be the Messiah. But what proves the resurrection? Certainly not the contradictory stories of the gospels. The story of the resurrection of Jesus from the tomb merely proves that somebody lied, that is all. A pretty Messiah Jesus was! The Messiah of the Jews was to be a king who should restore the lost splendor of the house of David; who should overthrow the power of the Romans and build up the Israelitish kingdom. This king never came. Jesus was just about as much a Jewish Messiah as Crispus Attucks was a President of the United States.

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No creed can be stretched to the size of truth; no church can be made as large as man.

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To correct in ourselves what we condemn in others would remove most of the evils of life.

# Human Responsibility

There is nothing that tends to perpetuate the weakness of humanity more than religion. Men have been taught for ages that they were dependent upon God for all they have. This kind of teaching must be corrected; it is false. Man is dependent upon man. No God will help or hurt him. Be he ever so good no God will praise him; be he ever so bad no God will blame him. What he wants to escape is his own condemnation.

In order to develop an independent spirit in man it is necessary to increase his responsibility. Man must be taught to rely upon his own strength, upon his own body and mind. He must learn his relations to Nature and abide by the laws of his being. He must know this: if he would have anything he must deserve it. Human destiny follows human conduct.

The old notion that man is responsible to God cannot be proved. There are no facts that corroborate that notion. Man is responsible to himself. It is this truth that is calculated to elevate and ennoble human life. Let human beings understand that there is that within themselves that is to be respected, and that they are responsible to themselves for all they do, and they will be more worthy of respect and live more worthy lives.

# Abolish Dirt

We should like to see one generation brought up to hate dirt. Every child ought to be taught that clean hands and face and clean clothes help to a clean life. There are too many homes on this earth that human beings live in that are dirty, in which those three household gods—the broom, the mop, and the dust-rag—have no place.

Children should be taught to drive dirt out of the house as they would a mad dog. Dirt is the food of disease. It is the enemy of health and happiness. Abolish dirt.

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If God exists, what objection can he have to saying so?

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When we have nothing to give a beggar, we can at least tell him so kindly.

# Religion And Morality

A religious man is not trusted to-day because he is religious. Faith in vicarious atonement is not accepted as a moral substitute for meeting one's obligations. Worship of God is not equivalent to helping your neighbor. The fact that a man is religious may not be proof that he is a bad man, but it is no evidence that he is a good man. The most contemptible wretch that ever robbed the widow or orphan could shine in a prayer-meeting, where words are passed for virtues. The veriest scoundrel can pay a pew tax and march up the aisle of the church with sanctimonious countenance. Religion is such a superficial affair that it carries no moral recommendation. Without morality religion could not borrow a dollar on its name, while morality without religion can get all the accommodation it asks for. The real virtues of a man do not depend upon religion. Men have lived good lives while believing in dozens of gods and without faith in a single god. Morality is not the offspring of theology. You cannot pick out a moral man by hearing him pray. A great deal of religion is worn to conceal moral defects.

We should watch the man who stands up in public and says: I am moral. We should say to him: It is not necessary for you to proclaim your morality; your daily life will show how moral you are. The world is becoming suspicious of him who stands up in public and says: I am religious.

[062]

A great many people seem to think if they profess to love God it is not necessary for them to love man.

We are not denying that a great many good men and women are religious; that a great many good men and women go to church and prayer-meeting. We do not deny that a great many moral men and women profess faith in total depravity, in vicarious

atonement, but we do not see how their faith has anything to do with their morality. There is no particular necessity for Christians to be good. Their faith saves them, not their conduct. Religion is not doing, it is believing, or pretending to.

There is a big opportunity to lie in religion. You cannot tell when a person says he believes in God whether he is telling the truth or not. It is mighty easy to be religious. But the moral man has no such chance. He is not judged by his professions, but by his actions.

Religion makes hypocrisy easy, but morality offers the hypocrite no show whatever.

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Never forget the good deeds that others do to you, nor remember those that you do to others.

## Jesus As A Model

It is common to speak of Jesus as though he touched the borders of every human experience, and sounded the depths of every joy and every woe, but there is no warrant for such statements.

He lived a very narrow life, and his brief career cannot be stretched to cover the limits of our earthly existence. He is held up for us to imitate, as though he had left a pattern for every hour of our lives, and a model for every day from the cradle to the grave. This is simply nonsense. This “model” business has been overworked. Jesus had a great many crude, foolish ideas, and did a great many deeds that are not worth repeating. As a model of what is best in this age he is a wretched failure. It is a mistake to look upon Jesus as a fit person to lead our century to a higher life.

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There is nothing to live for in the past.

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We must condemn christianity, not christians; strike the church, but spare the heart.

# Singing Lies

Go into any Christian church and you will hear the choir and the congregation singing lies. Is it not time to stop it? Is music married irrevocably to falsehood? Take up an ordinary hymn-book and you will hardly find a sensible line in it. The entire contents of the book is about God, heaven, salvation, and other equally unknown quantities, states and conditions. Why not sing sense? Why not sing facts? Why not sing truth? Why not sing the glories of Nature, of life, of man?

Music is a wonderful power, a wonderful educator of the feelings and emotions. It is essential, therefore, that music be inspired by what is true, by what is good, by what is right. Truth should be set to music and the lips taught to sing what science has discovered, what art has done, what the universe reveals, what the world is living for.

The common Christian music is a wail of despair, a cry of sorrow, a shriek of fear. It is composed of false conceptions of Nature, of humanity, of life. It is a "doleful sound." The triumph of faith which it celebrates is not a full, round, complete joy.

The Church does not know the music of laughter, the music of the heart. Its song seems always to hover on the brink of fear. It is not the glad note of natural freedom, but the uncertain joy of the escaped convict.

The free song must come from the free heart, must denote the free thought. Let life that is healthy, happy and human be set to music. Let us sing as we live, as we think, as we feel. The music of the hand, the mind, the heart, should be on the lips. If we could only sing what sings through us, the world would listen with rapture. We do not want "harmonious madness" nor harmonious idiocy. Pious music is stupid, false. It is inspired by [065]

the sickness of the world. We need a stronger note, a sturdier song.

Lies enough have been sung. Let truth now fill the air. Out of the great hope of the race let new songs come. We are beginning to live for life on earth, for happiness here, for love here, for victory here. Let the hands and feet, the brains and hearts of men and women move to the music of truth.

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There is not a village where poverty does not pinch the stomach or starve the mind, where misery does not need charity and where wealth could not bless.

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Piety could do nothing better than imitate morality.

# A Walk Through A Cemetery

In walking through a country graveyard one sees a prominent granite or marble monument here and there, but more of the stones that mark the resting-places of the dead are modest in appearance, plain and humble. But there are some graves that are unmarked by any outward token of remembrance. Such graves may hold the dust of as great and good men and women as those spots above which has been raised the lofty shaft and costly design.

Graveyards are just as deceptive as are the homes of the living. A fine house is not proof of the moral, the manly or womanly worth of its occupant. Saints do not sleep beneath the gilded roof any more than under a leaky thatch. So also the wise, the good, the true, are not the ones over whose ashes rises the chiseled stone. The dead may deserve monuments that the living are not able to buy.

A graveyard might be called a library of lies. Epitaphs are to be read, and believed, if you can believe them. We have found as big falsehoods in cemeteries as in newspapers. "Say nothing bad of the dead" is kindly counsel, but, say nothing of the dead on a tombstone, is wiser.

We have seen a towering stone covered with words of praise over the ashes of a man, who, while living, was simply a lover of money. We have seen the sunken grave of a woman, with no marble to adorn it, who lived a heroic life of love and duty beyond words to tell. If virtues bore monuments one would rise over the neglected grave of that saintly woman that would reach the clouds, and that other grave would be stripped of its marble and left to oblivion.

Though a cemetery is more or less a museum of vanity and pride, there is at the bottom of the costly display of granite and marble a tender feeling, a commendable virtue. There may be as much love and respect for those in unmarked graves as for those who sleep in costly masonry or beneath sculptured stone. In walking through a graveyard, if our steps should go to the places where no monument invited the eye, they would be more likely to walk over the dust of those who did life's duty well, than if they paused only before the imposing shaft or read the marble tale of virtue that never was told in deeds.

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God never helps those who need the help of men and women.

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No man ever knew Providence to interpose when his neighbor's hens are scratching up his garden.

# Peace With God

A good, pious lady said to us not long ago: "Don't you think that you ought to make your peace with God?" We have never had a bit of trouble with God. We have got along with him tip top. He has never shown that it was at all necessary for us to make peace with him. We have never quarrelled. If we are not at peace with God, we did not know it. We have no wish to have a row with anyone, and if God has the idea that we are mad with him or want to injure him in any way, we wish to disabuse his mind of such a notion.

We wish to say that we have never had any dealings with God, to our knowledge. If we have seen him, we did not know it. If he has spoken to us, we were not aware of the fact. If he has been in our presence at any time, we were not conscious of it.

We do not know that we have ever wronged God or that God has ever wronged us. We do not say that some word or act of ours may not have injured God.

All we can say is that we have no way of finding out whether such is the fact or not. Of course, we could not take the word of a priest or minister on this point. We want God's own assurance in the matter.

Up to this time God has made no complaint to us that we have wronged him, or that we need to make our peace with him, and until we hear from his own lips that we owe him an apology, we do not intend to make one. [069]

God is just as good to us as though he was dead. He does not cross our path, stand in our light, dog our steps, or interfere with what we are doing. He does not get in our way any more than if he lived in the planet Jupiter. So we do not see that we need to

make our peace with him. We do not comprehend how there can be any collision between us.

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Priests will pardon thieves but not philosophers.

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Priest and God have formed some of the worst combinations in history.

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Too long has this world been at the feet of the priest. Man is never in that position for his own benefit, but for the benefit of the priest.

# Saving The Soul

The man who can deliberately, and in cold blood, as it were, try to save his soul, must be grossly selfish. To do that which shall redound to one's own advantage or profit, without care or consideration of another, shows little humanity. The finer feeling is that which looks after others rather than one's self. It can only increase selfishness to seek salvation.

When a man gets the idea that his soul must be saved, and goes to work to save it, the things that he will do in order to insure its salvation tend to lessen its value; and by the time he thinks his soul is saved it is generally not worth saving. The more willing we are to be lost, the more chance there is that we will not be.

The cheapest method of saving one's soul is by believing something. This requires but little effort and no brains. Christianity is organized gullibility. It tells people to believe what it teaches and it will save their souls. It remains to be seen whether Christianity fulfils its part of the contract.

It occurs to us that before we try to save our soul we ought to know that we have a soul and that it needs saving. We fail to see any necessity for anxiety on account of our soul. We do not care to go into the salvation business and let the priest get all the dividends. Any person who can seriously talk about "saving his soul" ought to have a guardian.

# The Search For Something To Worship

What is there in the universe that deserves worship? Is there anything? What is there that men and women should kneel to, pray to and adore? If there is anything that deserves such worship from human beings, where is it? Let us see if we can find any such thing.

We look at the earth and its inhabitants, and while we see much which calls for admiration, we find nothing to worship. The mountain impresses us with its towering grandeur, the ocean with its vast extent and terrible power, but we cannot get on our knees to rocks, no matter how high they are piled; nor pray to water, no matter how much there is of it. The flower elicits our wondering delight, but we cannot adore a rose, a sunflower or a daisy. We own the marvelous beauty of the animal form, but we cannot worship a horse, a tiger or a dog. We hear the gladness and madness of melody which comes from the throat of the bird, but sweet and entrancing as it is, we cannot adore a skylark, a nightingale or a thrush. We see man, the fairest form that walks the earth, the most marvelous piece of work that Nature reveals to our senses, but we cannot worship our own image.

Beyond earth the eye looks, and cloud, black or bright, is seen and the endless blue beyond the cloud, but man cannot get on his knees to vapor or pray to the sky. In the daytime the sun is seen, and at night the moon and countless stars, but man cannot worship a ball of fire nor a dying planet, or adore a point of light.

We can find nothing on the earth or in the heavens that we can worship. Is there something not on the earth or in the heavens? If so, what is it and where is it? What do men and women kneel

to? Nothing. What do men and women pray to? Nothing. What do men and women worship? Nothing.

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Coals out of the ashes of love will never light the fires of friendship.

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The names of most men live on account of the falsehoods told about them.

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We should scorn the person who would be mean enough to allow his fellow-being to be punished for his deeds. Yet we have a religion in our midst that is founded on this kind of meanness.

## Where Are They

Where are the sons of gods that loved the daughters of men?

Where are the nymphs, the goddesses of the winds and waters?

Where are the gnomes that lived inside the earth?

Where are the goblins that used to play tricks on mortals?

Where are the fairies that could blight or bless the human heart?

Where are the ghosts that haunted this globe?

Where are the witches that flew in and out of the homes of men?

Where is the devil that once roamed over the earth?

Where are they? Gone with the ignorance that believed in them.

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No man was ever yet canonized for minding his own business.

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No man was ever yet sorry to find that he had married a good cook.

# Some Questions For Christians To Answer

How do ministers know what pleases God?

What is “inspiration of God?”

When God “inspired men of old,” what did he do to them?

What has God revealed to man that has ever helped him get a living?

If we do not need to worship God six days in the week why do we need to worship him on the seventh?

If there were no ministers and no priests, how long would there be any churches?

If God will answer prayer, what is the necessity of working?

If God weeps when the poor suffer, what does he make it so cold for?

If rich men cannot enter the kingdom of God, what business have rich men to be in Christian churches?

If God is our “father,” does he take very good care of his children?

If God sends what blesses us, who sends what curses us?

If Christianity makes the world better, why is there so much vice and crime?

If “salvation is free,” why is anybody lost?

# The Image Of God

We wonder if anyone knows what is meant by the expression, “the image of God.” It is said in the Bible that God “created man in his own image.”

If man makes anything in his image we know how this thing looks, but when God creates something in *his* image we are at a loss to comprehend what is meant unless God has the likeness of man. In ancient times there is no doubt but what the assertion that God “created man in his own image” was accepted literally, that the people looked upon God as a big man. Later they came to look upon man as a little god.

But we are dealing with the brain of the twentieth century, with the common sense of a scientific age, when it is no longer believed that God “created” man at all. To-day the “image of God” is a puzzle. If God “created man in his own image,” in whose image did he create the elephant, the lion, the bear, the ox, the goat, the snake, the beetle, the bee, the fly, the gnat? These could not all have been created in the divine image, unless the divine image is a multitudinous likeness.

Is it not about time that a few literary murders were committed, that some one went through our literature and killed off a lot of nonsensical expressions that, if they ever meant anything, are meaningless today? If there was more honesty in the pulpit a great many Bible expressions would go out of fashion. One of the first that needs to die or be killed is this foolish expression, “the image of God.” It may be religious, but it lacks sense. It means nothing in this age. God is a term that eludes definition. It is a survival of an age of ignorance.

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A man may be a fool and not know it, but he cannot be a fool without others knowing it.

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There is a pious regard for certain men and women who have in past ages been, as it were, the world's salvation. We would honor these men wherever piety offers her praise, but we would not, like piety, forbid man the right to excel them. We all know how much easier it is to be saved by another than to save ourselves, but it cannot be denied that there is a certain respect, a feeling of admiration, a thrill of reverence for the man who says: I am a free moral being and scorn to allow another to suffer for my sins.

# Religion And Science

When religion attacks science it is like trying to cut down the tree of truth with the hatchet of falsehood. It is unfortunate for Christianity that it was founded on the book of Genesis. A scientific fact is higher authority today than a religious fable. Science has found so many facts that contradict the stories of Genesis that to accept these stories as divine truth is to make falsehood the word of God.

The one particular enemy of every religion is science. With merciless labor her votaries have dethroned one after another idol of man. Science has no creed, no dogmas. Her search is for facts, and on these she stands. If what is discovered by lovers of truth is contrary to the tenets of religion, such tenets must be abandoned, for what is scientifically false cannot be religiously true.

The Christian church is built upon a lot of divine say-soes. Science has found that these say-soes are not so. The only honest thing for Christians to do is to give up the book of Genesis as a reliable record. What men have said that God has said is not necessarily sacred. Men may have lied, and lies are not holy. Christianity has been afraid of the divine name. What it has found in the name of God it has blindly worshiped as the word of God. This stupid action has been a prolific source of mischief. Faith has carried on its innocent back a thousand impositions through fear to doubt.

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Science has not found the name of God in the earth or in the heavens. It has ignored the guide-board which the priest of religion nailed to the Bible, "this book shows the way to truth," and has studied the volume of Nature instead. Whatever it has found has been told. What may be honestly inferred from

the facts of science is that all religions are humbugs, and that Christianity is a fraud.

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The only way to a better life is by living better.

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The person who tells a lie does not know what he will have to do next.

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A great many persons have the idea that the universe would run off the track but for them.

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Have a good time, make life cheerful and bright, dance if you want to, sing if you can, play as long as you live and leave the world with a smile.

# The Bible And The Child

The longer we live the more are we convinced that no adult person would accept the Bible as a divine work if he had not been taught the dogma of the Bible's divinity when a child. Let the matured mind come to the perusal of the Bible without the religious prejudice in favor of its divine character, and it would reject the book as unworthy the consideration of the intelligent, educated man. Let the refined sense, which all education in art, manners and social morals seeks to cultivate, begin to read the Bible, without the religious prejudice in favor of its sacred character, and before a dozen pages had been read, it would close the volume with disgust and hide it out of sight, or burn it as soon as possible.

The Bible's divinity rests upon the mental and moral corruption of the young. Were children not taught that this book was sacred, men and women would look upon it as unholy. Do people realize what harm they are doing to the mind of the child when they teach it to accept the Bible as God's word? They are telling the child that falsehood is sacred; that ignorance is holy; that foul stories are pure; that vile words are clean, in the mouth of God. Fathers and mothers would not tell their children what they, and what priests and ministers, tell them God wrote or inspired man to write.

[080]

What is needed to-day is to tell the truth about the Bible. Tell men and women that ignorant, uncultured, unrefined men wrote it hundreds of years ago, and that it is unfit in its present shape to put into the hands of a child that a mother wishes to grow up honest, true and pure.

Liberals should not allow their children to touch the Bible. They should keep it from them until they are old enough to know

that no book was ever written by a God, and then, if they read the Bible, they would see its true character. We must guard the minds of our children from Christian influences. We pity the child that is taught that the Bible is the word of God, but we despise the man that teaches this falsehood.

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Most men would kill the truth if truth would kill their religion.

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The truths which God revealed have been overthrown by the truths which man has discovered.

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People used to think that to mix religion with business spoiled the religion, now they think it spoils the business.

## When To Help The World

Recently an old man, over eighty years of age, lay on his death-bed. He could no longer keep possession of the wealth he had accumulated. In a few hours he must leave it to the world from which he had taken it and kept it so many years. He had not been a generous man. He had loved money. He loved to get it and loved to keep it, and if he could have carried his wealth with him, whither he was going with that unknown guide, Death, there is no doubt but that he would have done so. He had given nothing to the world while he lived and he would not have given anything when he died, only that he was obliged to do so. This is the only charity of a great many people.

When death comes, then the hand of avarice must open. Nothing can be carried through the grave. So the old man must at last release his hold upon his gains. He must leave his loved dollars to somebody. He had gathered them for himself, not for others. He had thought only of himself when he gathered them, and now, when he was to part with them, he did not know what disposition to make of them. The lawyer was present at his bedside; the minister was also with him.

The will had been drawn. He had bequeathed certain sums to public charities and remembered the church. Life was almost gone. He hesitated yet to give up the control of his money to others. The pen was placed in his dying fingers for him to affix his name to the will. But he had waited too long. He died with the name unwritten, the pen unused in his dead hand.

Not voluntarily did he part with a cent of his fortune. His millions will now be divided by the law.

Is there in the bare possession of money the happiness that men desire, that men dream of, that men *want*? Is a dollar the

highest goal of human effort, the crown of human endeavor? Is this dollar, the insignia of fortune, the true sign of good fortune? We believe not. The man who works for this and nothing else, is the slave of avarice; as hard, as cruel, as merciless a tyrant as ever cursed the earth.

Let every man strive for independence. Let man be rewarded well for his labor. Let every hand keep busy, but let there be a desire higher than money, a dream nobler than of gain, a want above the possession of riches.

There is a better charity than that unwilling gift which death compels us to make; it is to help the world while we live. There are two ways of doing this: by giving back a part of what we take,—that is one way and a good way—and by taking less from others, that is another way and a better way. The help that men need to-day is justice. Thousands are poor that one may be rich. Thousands toil that one may live in idleness. Thousands are in want that one may live in luxury. Thousands have not a dollar that one may have millions. This is not right, not fair, not just. Men must take less while they go through life. [083]

It is not enough that a man on his deathbed give a college a million, a public library a million, a public park a million. *He should have no millions to give.* He should live a more just life and help others by trying to get less for himself. The public bequest is the popular atonement for large fortunes, but such atonement does not efface the sufferings of poverty and want they entail.

We say to the rich, do not wait until you die before you try to help your fellow-men. Help them while you are living. When a man has made money he should make a noble use of it, or he wrongs himself and the world.

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Where the cross has been planted only superstitions have grown.

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Religion is no more the parent of morality than an incubator is the mother of a chicken.

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Unless some people change their habits before they die, there will be a lot of dirty angels in the next world, if there is any next world.

# The Judgment Of God

We hear less of what is called the “judgment of God” than formerly, but quite enough to show that this foolish superstition still lingers in the human mind. It used to be believed that God was on the lookout for the bad boy who went fishing or skating on his holy sabbath and that when he caught him he immediately made use of him to prove his loving-kindness and tender mercy by making him get into the water where he could drown him. It was never related that God took this boy by the shoulder or even by the ear and led him back home to his parents with the request that they take better care of him in the future. This was not God's way. There would be no judgment in this. God must murder the poor boy who could see no difference in the conduct of the birds and fishes on Sunday from their conduct on Saturday, and have him carried back to his father's arms and his mother's heart a corpse, a cold, dead thing, no longer needing love, kindness, and a parent's great, forgiving charity. This was God's way. He delighted in seeing a dead boy taken out of the frozen stream and laid down in the presence of his poor, grief-crazed mother. He thought this would make the mother love him more and other boys keep his holy sabbath. So when any misfortune befell on Sunday a human being who was not on his way to God's house, or engaged in other pious occupation, it was believed to be a judgment of God and people took care to avoid a similar punishment. This kind of religious teaching does not enjoy the reputation that it once did for the reason that it has become discredited by human experience. All things considered it is just as safe to go sailing or swimming, fishing, or driving, on Sunday as on Monday and men have learned that no penalty

attaches to violation of the fourth commandment. As people become sensible they cease to be religious.

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Prayer is begging from a pauper.

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The egg of prayer never yet became a chicken.

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Prayer is like a pump in an empty well, it makes lots of noise, but brings no water.

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A great many people who worship Jesus would not let him come in at the back door.

# Christianity And Freethought

Christianity is opposed to freedom, and consequently freedom is opposed to Christianity. A Christian cannot be a freethinker, and a freethinker cannot be a Christian. When a man is required to believe certain doctrines, he is not free to think. A creed is to keep the mind from inquiry. Questions lead to doubt, and doubt is the death of faith.

The church condemns freethought, because freethought cannot be bound by its chain of dogma. There is no place in the Christian church for the exercise of liberty. If the mind finds a new truth that contradicts the old dogma, the truth must be strangled that the dogma may hold its power over the thoughts and deeds of men.

To be a Christian is to surrender to the priest or minister in the name of Christ. It is to be a monkey on the end of an ecclesiastical string to get pennies for his master. It is to crawl at the feet of superstition.

To be a freethinker is to search for truth without fear. Where there is love of freedom there is no reverence for authority. There is no faith in God as sacred as love of man.

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There may be lots of Providence in the world, but no man seems to know just where it can be found.

# The Brotherhood And Freedom Of Man

From the fall of Rome a new era marks the history of man; a new soul was born out of human experience. The idea which had been prophesied by the philosophers of India, Egypt and Greece now appeared in life, and what had been hoped for seemed about to be realized. Born in an age of slaughter and inhumanity the thought of the brotherhood of man fell upon the world like a star out of the night's sky. Though the power of this idea was not fully comprehended by the people upon whom it blazed forth, still the promise it contained was able to kindle enthusiasm in the hearts of the few, who bequeathed it to the world as the destiny of mankind. Human life was inspired with a new purpose under the power of this grand and noble sentiment. Although it was not understood and the subject of much misapprehension, the thought of uniting man in one great endeavor grew and endowed nations with a feeling that never before had moved their hearts. Its advent gave the world a new ambition and the mind was enlisted in the great cause of love and fellowship of man.

There was another sentiment not less true or beautiful but more revolutionary, which about the same time began to assume likeness in human affairs, which must be considered of larger importance in the new social movement, which, during the first century of the so-called Christian era, commenced to be felt. The declaration of the sovereignty of man was more prophetic of change in government and society than the doctrine of the brotherhood of man. No government taught that man ought to judge for himself what is right, and no church preached that man should love his neighbor as himself.

Political and religious organizations then as now were arrayed against individual rights. The state and the church controlled the person. Man was crucified between these two thieves. One robbed him of his body, the other of his soul. Our history assigns the origin of these two great principles—man's right to judge for himself and his duty to help his fellow-being—to Christianity. But one was born before the beginning of the Christian era and the other long after the Christian church was established. One represents man as opposed to authority; the other the soul resisting tradition.

There is more or less talk about the freedom and brotherhood of man, but they exist as ideas yet more than as facts. It is true that man enjoys a certain measure of liberty in many directions, but the victory of freedom has not yet been won. So too is there a kind of human sympathy in society, but the broad and magnificent destiny which dwells in the bosom of human brotherhood is more a dream than a reality.

There has been too much time wasted in disputing who was the human author of these great and sublime conceptions, and too little expended in trying to plant them in human hearts and cultivate them in human lives. It is unimportant who first stood against the world of tyranny and demanded his right of independence, or who first felt indignation for the wrongs inflicted upon his race and pity for the victims of cruelty, and pleaded for more humanity towards man. The secret can never be wrested from the silent past, and we can gain nothing by fighting over graves. [089]

The world seems nearer the full realization of human freedom and brotherhood than ever before. What is needed now to hasten the fruition of the glad promise of a better destiny for the world is to take authority from the priest and selfishness from man.

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Prayer is a hook that never caught any fish. It is a gun that never brought down any game.

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No man ever got an answer to prayer that he could show to another person.

[090]

# Whatever Is Is Right

There are a great many familiar sayings, that are in the mouths of nearly everybody, which are perfect nonsense, and one of these many sayings is the one we have chosen for the subject of this article. One would imagine that falsehood became sacred by repetition, judging from the way that certain untruths live in the literature and language of mankind. Many a holy text is only holy by being with what is true, as we pay respect to many a man whom we know to be unworthy because he is related to respectable people.

The saying that “whatever is is right,” is a dogma of the philosophy of indifference. To anyone who works for the right and suffers wrong, such a dogma is impertinent. Is the deed that sinks a man to the realm of brutes, and the deed that lifts him to heights where virtue in her high estate dwells alone, both right? The worst light for a human soul is that light in which a bad act looks like a good one. We cannot afford to trifle with things pure and true. To succeed grandly in life we must side with what is right.

There is a class of people that hold a don't-care philosophy. These people don't care what they say or do; they don't care what takes place in the world or what the world suffers or endures. The tent in which they dwell is pitched above the plane of human wants and sufferings. They look from their serene abode upon the troubled elements below, and, in contemplation of what is beneath them, pronounce with pious gravity the highest text of their system of philosophy: “Whatever is is right.”

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To those who have never seen the bitter tear start under the infliction of injury; to those who have never heard the sigh that disappointment and deception have wrung from a breaking

heart; to those who have never witnessed the sufferings which tyranny imposes upon its victims; to those who have never felt the miseries which selfishness heaps upon human beings, this doctrine may seem true; but to those who have beheld the consequences of evil doing, and felt the hard hand of injustice upon their lives; to those who have been the victims of deception, and realized the terrible fate of disappointment; to those who have been trodden upon and denied the rights of men; to those who have been the slaves of the world's cruel masters, how false it is!

We cannot disguise the fact that there is wrong in the world. It haunts every dwelling-place of man. It follows man to his business, to his work. It goes with him when he seeks his pleasure. It does not leave him when he enters his home.

Every harsh word is wrong, every unjust judgment is wrong, every cruel act is wrong, every deception is wrong, every wicked or impure thought is wrong. Go where we will we shall meet the ugly face of wrong. On the street its presence will bring shame into the face; in our dealings with the world it will come before our eyes in all its hideous reality. Even when alone we cannot keep this phantom away.

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Is it right that a human being should cause another pain and anguish that will leave their marks on the heart and brow for life? Is it right to make a man suffer unjustly, to add to misfortune the weight of cruelty? Is it right to deprive one of honor, of fortune, of life? Is it right to bear false witness against a brother-man, to abuse a neighbor, to slander and malign a human soul? Is wrong right?

Go to the garret of the poor wretch where want stares him in the face, where extortion robs his family of every joy and every comfort, where the day is made dark from no ray of human love coming into the heart, and the night darker from the absence of warmth and light. Go to the home rent asunder by vice and see the broken promises once so fair and bright, now blushing

with shame; hear curses from lips that once spoke in love; see the skeletons of vows beautiful when breathed by the lips of the holiest passion on earth, but now hideous in their ruin. Go to the den of wickedness, to the house of crime supported by lust and greed; look upon the pictures of wretchedness and sorrow, of sin and guilt painted by the hand of wrong; behold the wrecked human lives that are floating on the sea of existence, only drifting until some sudden wave shall overwhelm them and sink them out of sight, leaving behind a memory that man should contemplate with pity and which kindness would blot out forever. See the world in its vice, in its suffering, in its misery, in its tears and its shame and let your lips say, if they can, that “Whatever is is right.” [093]

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It is necessary to distinguish between the virtue and the vice of obedience.

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I believe that if God dwelt above the earth in the twelfth century of the Christian era, and witnessed the cruelty of priests and heard the cries of their poor victims when their bones were broken upon the rack or their flesh was burning in the wicked flames, and these priests should have lifted up their voices to this God and given him the glory of the awful sacrifice, he would have said to them: You lie; I never commanded one of my children to murder another. You are no ministers of mine, and your victims, with their heresies, are a thousand times holier in my sight than are you with your pious dogmas and holy sacraments.

[094]

# The Object Of Life

Men live for less than their advancement. The object of life is not human improvement. Ambition has not self-denial for a mark but self-gratification. A thousand pander to one. Passion, instead of principle, is the power that guides. We do not save to help save the world, to aid progress and truth, but to have means to satisfy selfish desires. The highest consideration of mankind is self. Everything is done for one. Humanity is a word of little meaning. It is not often regarded as a great, living, suffering being, which demands of every person his or her best life. Man is not loved as the supreme fact of Nature. When not a beast of burden, he is too often a beast of pleasure.

As long as self is to be preferred to all, it matters little what is employed to promote it. Self is alone sacred to selfishness. General interest is sacrificed to individual possession. Every man thinks the world *his* first. It is regarded as magnanimous to leave what you cannot take.

The world no longer permits the stronger to kill the weaker, but it allows the wealthy to oppress the poor. Money is holier than man. Human life is less sacred than property. To save a dollar is regarded as a more necessary virtue than to save a human heart. Society cares more for fortune than for truth. It is easier to win your way with hypocrisy than with honesty. The world does not ask: What are you worth morally? but, what are you worth financially? Self-interest has made it the object of life to injure our fellows. To get an advantage over another is the victory man seeks. One must fall that another may rise.

Those who are at the bottom support those who are on top. The toilers are the foundation of society. We need to be more

careful of what is beneath us than of what is above us. "I write not these things to shame you, but to warn you."

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When you are falling, you cannot stop where you wish to.

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The power that conquers men to-day must be the power of enlightened opinion.

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Two dollars given to the son do not atone for one stolen from the father.

# Man

The Hebrew psalmist sings of man:—"Thou madest him a little lower than the angels." A modern psalmist writing on this subject says:—"Man was made a little higher than the brutes." Man is a rare animal; he is the only animal that can make a fire, but he is more than a brute. We do not know how much less than an angel he is, for we do not know the dimensions of an angel.

What we do know is, that this strange, rare being, called man, is capable of doing a good deed, but is prone to do a bad one; that he has developed virtues above the brute and vices below the brute; that he is better in public than in private, and yet take him all in all he might be worse. We have had the weakness of human nature preached until we have almost come to expect man to be immoral and vicious, and are surprised if anyone asserts that man is strong enough to resist temptation, and disappointed if he does not come up, or down, to our expectations of vileness and wickedness.

While we have faith in man in the minority rather than in the majority, still we are inclined to think that most men are bad from circumstance more than from choice. We trust to better conditions for better men, and depend upon our best men to establish such conditions.

There is some criticism of virtue that vice offers which is as pertinent as the censure of vice which virtue indulges in. We admit that there are a great many sinners that are preferable to some kinds of saints, who are no more to blame for their sins than their more fortunate fellow-beings are for their saintliness. But we do not mean to say that every good man is a villain in disguise, nor every rogue a righteous man who has not been found out.

There are men and women whose goodness is looked upon as “flat, stale, and unprofitable” because it is that kind that is good from favorable circumstances, and not from the exercise of any strength of their own, but such virtue is better than vice. We cannot afford to lose any power that protects the world from evil, and we rejoice in all the favorable circumstances that guard human beings.

Men are educated into bad habits through the constant assertion of human weakness, and the publicity which is given to bad deeds. We can never build man very high on the foundation of “total depravity.” It is to be regretted that we think so meanly of mankind. We must start with a better assumption of human nature than that held by Christianity.

We ought to emphasize man's strength and give prominence to the good deeds of men. It is not necessary to lie about human nature one way more than another. Man has been painted worse than he is. We do not ask to have him painted better than he is. We want a true likeness. Man will make the best picture without any fictitious coloring.

We are aware that we have not yet outgrown our animal inheritance, that we are still fettered to earthly things. Man can more easily deny his soul than he can his stomach, but for all this there is greatness in him. While man can fall to the lowest depths from which he sprung, he can rise to the height which is visible in his purest hours. What we ought to do is to encourage, all we can, the conditions most favorable to the development of the noblest part of man. Every temptation to vice should be driven from the public gaze. If man must fall, let him fall out of sight. [098]

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People who rely most on God rely least on themselves.

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The original sin was not in eating of the forbidden fruit, but in planting the tree that bore the fruit.

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The people who boast the loudest of carrying their cross are never around when man cries for help.

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An audience composed of the best-dressed people in a town stands for "pure religion and undefiled" to-day.

# The Dogma Of The Divine Man

There are growing indications all along the Christian line that the dogma of the divinity of Jesus is being abandoned. It is seen that such a dogma involves confusion and misapprehension. When the question, "How can a God who is infinite exist in a form that is finite?" is pressed to an answer, no satisfactory reply is forthcoming. There is apparent absurdity in this doctrine. The general definition of God, as put forth to-day by the Christian Church, is irreconcilable with the dogma of the divinity of Jesus. If Jesus was God he was not a man; if he was a man, he was not God. To talk about his divinity is to talk nonsense, if Joseph was his father and Mary his mother. Man is not divine; God is not human. The mixing up of these two terms is done simply to impose upon the credulous and superstitious. We cannot think that any man of real good sense believes this Orthodox dogma. It seems impossible for intelligence to so contradict itself. The brain stoops that accepts this dogma. For a man to confess his faith in Jesus as divine is to admit that his hat is not full. The evidence adduced to prove the divinity of Jesus proves the divinity of Apollo, of Hercules, of Prometheus, of hundreds of mythological heroes. Are Christians prepared to admit this? If not, then they are called upon to tell the world why not. What is meant by divine? What kind of a man is a divine man? Let us see. Divine means superhuman, supernatural, God-like; hence a divine man is a superhuman man, a supernatural man, a God-like man. Does anyone know what these definitive terms mean? Does a person know what he is talking about when he says a man is superhuman? Can a man be more than man, more than human, more than natural? [100]

The dogma of a divine man is a dogma of deception. It is a theological cobweb. It is spread to catch flies.

The idea prevailed in the past that what could not be understood must necessarily be profound, as though muddy water was deep water.

Does anyone comprehend the dogma of the Trinity? It is believed because it cannot be comprehended. The tribute of faith has been paid to occult nonsense long enough.

How does anyone know what is superhuman? What is human? The fact is, Jesus has had his day. His reign is drawing to a close. He is being seen for what he is,—a myth. Faith in him as a God is dying. The belief that Jesus was divine is a blot on the intelligence of this century. But the blot is growing smaller.

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Lots of men who would not associate with infidels for fear of contaminating their characters are not yet out of jail.

# The Rich Man's Gospel

The presence of numberless rich men in Christian pews leads one to wonder if the gospel of Jesus has been kicked out of the church. Such men do not, and cannot, respect the person to whom every church is dedicated. The gospel of Jesus is not the gospel of the rich, but of the poor; not of the banker, but of the beggar. It is impossible for the wealthy man to be a Christian. If he had any faith in the doctrines of Jesus he would “sell what he has and give to the poor.” And not only this, but he would be poor himself.

Jesus never said a kind word of the rich. He never uttered a word that contains any consolation for the millionaire. He never gave any command that encourages the “laying up treasures upon earth.” What is a rich man in the Christian church for? He has no business there, if he is an honest man. He is living exactly opposite to the life Jesus commanded. He is doing what Jesus told men not to do. He refuses to do what Jesus said a man must do in order to be his disciple.

Either the rich man who joins the church is a hypocrite, or the minister, that receives such a man into the church, is. There is a hypocrite somewhere. You do not find that Jesus went into the temple to flatter the money-changers; he went in there to drive them out with a whip.

The rich man's gospel is not found in the New Testament. That is sure. It may be preached from a Christian pulpit by a so-called Christian minister, but the man who preaches this gospel denies his professed Lord and Master. Jesus did not say, “Lay up treasures upon earth.” Take all you can from the poor. Form trusts and combinations to enrich yourselves. Worship Mammon. There is a misunderstanding evidently on the part of

the rich man who joins the Christian church. If he would read the New Testament he would learn his mistake, and see that he was in the wrong place. He does not seem to be aware what Jesus preached. There is one thing certain, the Christian church that receives into fellowship a millionaire, has more reverence for the millionaire than for Jesus.

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The beating of humanity's heart cannot be felt by placing the finger on the church's pulse.

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What a queer thing is Christian salvation! Believing in firemen will not save a burning house; believing in doctors will not make one well, but believing in a savior saves men. Fudge!

# Speak Well Of One Another

There is nothing that will make this world brighter and happier than to speak well of one another. We sometimes wonder how a mean story about a fellow-mortal gets started, and how it is kept going. Surely no base report ever had birth in a kind intention, and no mouth ever repeated it with the wish to make the world better.

Envy, malice and ill-will can make no decent defence of themselves. Now, it costs no more to say a good word of a brother or sister than to say a bad one, and there is no obligation on the part of a person to blacken human reputation. It is a mean heart that cannot do justice to another. If we must speak of our neighbors, let us speak kindly. Let us refer to those things that are pleasant, and discuss that in their characters that is worthy of praise. It hurts us to say bad things of other people, and it may hurt them. There is certainly some part of everyone's life that can be commended. What we know of others that is not good, let us not refer to. Silence is never more charitable than when it spares a human heart.

There are many of our friends who are striving to make a success in life. Nothing will aid them more than to speak well of them. Everybody can be generous with kind words, and yet they are worth more than gold. They are the diamonds of speech, which the poorest can wear.

Don't be afraid to speak well of men, to praise good deeds. [104] No one will think worse of you for speaking kindly of others. It is not necessary that we speak well only of those deeds that men sing in words of song. There are scores of little every-day acts, that give the perfume of self-denial, of sacrifice, and that deserve praise. If we were to give any advice to a man or woman, who

wished to help the world as they passed through it, it would be this, Speak well of men and women.

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A receipt for bringing up a child will not apply to a whole family.

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To build one house for man is better than to build a dozen houses to God.

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We often hear a man say that the world owes him a living. So it does, if he earns it. But man owes the world something. The debt is on both sides, and it is only by giving what is due to others that we get what is due to ourselves. We receive assistance when we render it, and it is by a law of our nature that the world turns from a man who turns from the world.

# Disgraceful Partnerships

Six marriages out of ten are disgraceful partnerships. The ones to question our assertion will be the married men, and the very ones, too, responsible for the disgrace. Marriage is a union where the two partners should share alike the profits and the losses. There should be no head of the firm in the sense of making one subservient in any way to the other. The wife has just the same right to handle the money of the firm as the husband. The family purse should not be carried in the husband's pocket unless he is willing to pass it out whenever his partner requests it, and no questions asked.

Most men treat their wives worse than servants. If a wife asks for some money, the husband, in most instances, wants to know what she is going to do with it and how much she wants, instead of giving her what is her right. Married men do not recognize their wives as equal partners in the family concern. They think they should have what they want and their wives what they are pleased to give them. How many homes have been broken up by carrying out such a principle as this? More than men will confess.

This state of things is not confined to the homes of poverty. Not at all. It exists where there is plenty. Many a proud woman is almost daily humiliated by a man to whom she is obliged to go for what money she needs. The pain that niggardly husbands inflict upon sensitive wives is only known by themselves. Many a woman has said: "I would rather go without the money than have so much trouble to get it from my husband." What must a woman have suffered to be forced to make such a confession as that!

A marriage in which a woman is daily made to feel her dependence upon a man, is attended with the gravest moral perils. The only just rule is for the husband to allow his wife a fair share of his income, for her to do with as she pleases. Not only marital harmony would be promoted by such an arrangement as this, but love would burn longer and purer on the family altar, private morality would be conserved, and all the relations of life elevated and dignified thereby.

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The most beautiful thing is the beauty we see in those we love.

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The money that men waste would make them rich, and the time they waste would make them wise.

# Science And Theology

Every day we are told of some wonderful discovery of science. But what has theology discovered? The scientist is searching for the truth; the theologian is trying to save his idols. Of all the great inventions and discoveries that go to make human life easier, happier, more rich and glorious, not one can be laid to the work of theology. These triumphs all belong to science. Some day the world will become wise enough to confess that the priest is of no benefit to mankind. The investigator, the student, the inventor, is the true philanthropist, the real benefactor. He finds what is useful to his race, what adds comfort and joy to existence. Science is the hope of the world, the only savior that humanity has had adown the ages or will have as man lives on through the centuries.

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Many a man who was too good to play cards has broken a bank.

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A dog can get rid of another dog that cannot get rid of the flea on his back.

## Unequal Remuneration

A great many small men draw large salaries, and a great many large men draw small salaries. Of course we measure men by their ability to do something of value to their race. It is a sorry fact that one person is paid ten thousand dollars a year for playing base ball or riding a race-horse, and that another person is unable to earn seven hundred and fifty dollars for the same length of time by performing some useful labor. A mechanic, who actually adds to the wealth of the nation, who produces something of value, is paid less than a jockey or a base ball pitcher whose business (?) is chiefly maintained for purposes of gambling.

But there are other phases of this question that present equally disproportionate features. An actor, who merely repeats the words of another, receives one thousand dollars a night for his performance, while a lecturer who imparts original knowledge to his hearers, is paid twenty dollars and his expenses for his thought and labor. A singer is given five thousand dollars for appearing three nights of a week upon the stage, and a reformer is allowed what her audience will drop into the contribution box. One explanation of this is: "There is only one Caruso."

There is another explanation, and that is: People will pay more to be entertained, to be pleased, than to be instructed, to be enlightened or to be told what is right and best.

[109]

It is a sad fact that many are paid too little for what they do. As a rule the actual laborers, the real workers of the world, both male and female, do not receive fair compensation for their work, while thousands of people who merely hold an office are paid far more than they are worth. Teachers, writers and professors are all underpaid. The highest work that man or woman is doing is the work of education, training the human mind to think truly, to

act nobly, and yet a lawyer receives more in a day than a teacher in a year.

The world that will pay one thousand dollars an hour to hear the voice of Melba, will grumble at paying ten cents an hour to a washerwoman. The world that will give a person ten thousand dollars a year for pitching base ball will object to raising the wages of our mill operatives five per cent. The world that will pay ten thousand dollars a year for riding a horse, wants a woman to teach school for fifty dollars a month.

We say, pay talent well and genius generously, but pay well also the arm that toils; pay the needle, the saw, the spade, the hoe, the mop.

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Every man who claims the right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," is bound to show that he deserves this right.

# The Old And The New

This is essentially an age of change. Things which have been established for centuries are no longer regarded as fixed. That which has been looked upon as absolute is now respectfully held to be uncertain. The foundations of old ideas are being disturbed and man finds that he has built upon sandy bottom. Much which in times past answered the human soul, now affords no satisfaction. It is plain that a revolution has commenced that will be far reaching and important in its actions and reactions. There is to be a general overhauling of matters secular and religious, political and social and a wholesale clearing out of old words and forms, of outgrown habits and customs, may be expected. The world of man is about to take account of stock and to have a universal comparison of estimates of values. Too long have we been subsisting upon the say-soes of our ancestors and taking their eyes and ears as infallible.

For many years men have regarded all questions of religion as settled, and that the whole duty of this and future generations was to accept the conclusions of the past upon all religious matters. We do not understand how men ever came to regard such conclusions as final or how they came to expect the whole human race to receive them as the utmost of human knowledge. We do not look upon the questions of religion as settled, and the growing doubts of the infallibility of the common religious ideas demand that we reconsider these questions. To do this we have not to go into any theological discussion. No learned authorities are to be consulted to establish or refute any line of argument. No dictionary of terms is to be examined to settle the meanings of words. We have only to decide whether mankind had better facilities for observing and studying the phenomena

of the universe in past times than we have to-day; whether their eyes and ears were better than ours, and their methods and opportunities for ascertaining the truth of things higher than those of this age.

If men in the past had facilities inferior to ours for observing the phenomena of the universe, it would follow that their ideas of the universe would be inferior. Now, if we have superior ideas of the universe, ideas nearer the truth of things, why should we be expected to surrender these and hold ideas which are false?

It seems to us that the questions of religion may be settled by deciding whether or not we are to believe our own eyes and ears and trust our own knowledge and experience. It is certain that if we can trust our senses and our knowledge, the old ideas of the universe, of the origin of earth, of life, of man, and of good and evil and the whole catalogue of religious things are incorrect; and if we accept them we do so contrary to our reason and understanding.

With faith in the present, and in all that makes it peculiar,—its scientific tendencies,—and with the belief that out of the doubt and uncertainty that are now around us will come higher convictions which will deepen and widen life's purpose and make humanity a fairer word and a fairer reality, we say: [112]

“Ring out the old, ring in the new;  
Ring out the false, ring in the true.”

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Hell is where cowards have sent heroes.

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A man never fell down stairs that he did not blame the stairs.

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The cross people carry to-day is made of gold or set with diamonds.

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There is nothing in this world of ours that will work harder, fight harder, wait more patiently and suffer longer than love, unless it be hate.

# Guard The Ear

Much of our character depends upon what we hear. A person may be saved or lost by what reaches him through the ear. The ear has no defense. It is open to every sound. It cannot be deaf. It *must* hear. We cannot open it to one person or shut it to another. It is filled with songs of deepest thoughts or words of ugliest shape without choosing either. It is at the mercy, and the soul as well, of whatever is uttered. The ear is falsehood's, as well as truth's, servant. It carries what it hears, and is as faithful to the vilest as to the purest speech. It is temptation's peculiar channel. The eyes may be shut, the lips may be closed, but the ear is always open. We may decide what we will say, what we will see, but not what we shall hear.

We perceive how important it is that none but pure, true, brave and sincere words be spoken. If a person never heard a bad word he would never utter one. The character of everyone born into the world is determined largely by the world. Men do pretty much what they are taught to do. The heart at birth is pure, and were it not taught impurity, would remain so. We regard the ear as the chief door of the assault against the human heart. Guard the ear and you save the boy and girl.

## The Character Of God

The character of God would stand vastly higher in human estimation if he had visited the garden in which he had placed the first human pair and picked up the serpent and cast him over the garden wall before he had a chance to tempt Eve, instead of waiting until the mischief was done, and then cursing the whole lot for what he might so easily have prevented.

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No man can be himself with fear always at his heels.

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Death can get into a house when everything else can be kept out.

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It is plain enough that men and women care for God. This is too apparent to be disputed, unless men and women are hypocrites. What is not so plain is that God cares for men and women.

# Not Important

A Christian contemporary says: “No question is so important to mankind as religion.” We wonder how a person could write that sentence without writing after it, a la Artemus Ward, “This is a goak.” Of course, a preacher is the author of it, or a person who gets his living out of religion. Had the writer said, “No question is so important to ministers and priests as religion,” he would have told the truth; but as it stands, it is a falsehood. We can mention several questions of more importance to mankind than religion. The question of something to eat and the question of something to wear are of vastly greater importance than that of religion. So, too, is the question of education, or the question of government, of more importance than religion. It is first necessary for man to live, then to find a place to live, then to find the things to sustain life, then to live happily and well. All this is prior to any religious consideration. We believe the church as an organization would go to pieces but for clergymen and those who are interested in keeping it alive in order to get a living out of it. It would be nearer the truth to say: No question is less important to mankind than religion.

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A man's reputation oftentimes depends upon the success he has had in hiding his character.

# Oaths

The superstition prevails that unless man swears to tell the truth he will tell a lie. This superstition makes the sanctity of the oath. But is it a fact that a person will, under oath, always tell “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?” It is the general opinion that judicial swearing is simply a judicial farce. We concur in the general opinion.

An oath is the liar's retreat. Behind it falsehood puts on the robes of truth. The perjurer delights in swearing, for the act invests him with the appearance of honesty. An oath makes the tongue of vice as pure as the lips of virtue. It gives a rogue the weapon of the gentleman. It permits guilt to wear the dress of innocence.

The man who is willing to tell the truth feels that his honesty is impeached when asked to take an oath, while the knave, who is bound to lie, feels that his knavery is protected by the God in whose name he swears. No more senseless custom survives in our age than the administration of the oath. We do not believe that a judge or lawyer has one whit more confidence in human testimony because it is given in the divine name.

Is it not time to recognize this fact, that men can tell the truth without the help of God, and that those, who cannot do so, do not succeed any better with his help? In other words, an oath is calculated to pass a scoundrel for an honest man. While it does not insure truth-telling, it does serve to dignify a falsehood. It is time that a lie was obliged to stand on its own bottom, and not be passed for what it is not, because it is told in the name of God.

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God's name is not considered good at the banks.

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To depend upon God is like holding on to the tail-end of nothing.

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A man cannot be happy who believes in hell, any more than he can sweeten his coffee with a pickle.

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The church wants us to believe that God will go out of his way to strike a blasphemer and work a week to save the soul of a murderer.

## Dead Words

There is not one real, true, live word in the Christian vocabulary of salvation. Eden, the stage on which was performed the tragedy of original sin, is a dead word; devil, the name of the scaly gentleman who took the leading part in this tragedy is a dead word; hell, the abode of all those who descended from the original sinners, is a dead word; Christ, the title of the man who offered to ransom the human race and save men and women from hell, is a dead word; atonement, the word that stands for the expiation to be made by Christ, is a dead word. These words that the Christian church uses in its exhortations to mankind have no heart of truth in them. They stand for no facts; they represent no realities. Take away these dead words from the Christian preacher, and you take away his powder, shot and wads. Let the Christian be held to facts and obliged to tell the truth, and his lips would be dumb. There never was such a place as the Garden of Eden; never such an individual as the devil. There is no such place as hell. There never was a Christ, and no atonement made, for there was no necessity of any being made. If there was no such thing as faith, Christianity could not make a convert on the earth. If ministers were obliged to furnish the proof of their statements, there would be no preaching.

# Confession Of Sin

When the church teaches that “confession is good for the soul,” it teaches false doctrine; it is only good for the church. Men once confessed their sins, believing that it was the evidence of the loftiest courage to acknowledge that they had made fools of themselves or that they were the veriest knaves. But never was a greater mistake made. Confession is itself a sin, a base betrayal of one's own heart. It shows utter lack of shame. Our sins should be sacred. We should let no eyes see them but our own. To exhort one to confess one's sins is to ask the sinner to become the slave of his confessor.

Man has learned to keep still in respect to those things that concern no one but himself. He has found that where he has done wrong it is wiser to hold his tongue than to speak. We are not likely to confess what will harm us. This prudence is utility in morals. A wanton confession of wrongdoing shows a loss of self-respect, and a virtuous confession is proof of mental weakness. No human necessity requires self-degradation. To tell what we have done is to pay a compliment to prurient curiosity which it does not deserve. When we are commanded to do such a thing, resistance is a greater virtue than compliance.

The human conscience to-day says: “Hands off.” It is impertinent to touch the soul against its will. Secrecy is our right. No one can demand that we expose our indiscretions. If the church asks if we have sinned, we feel justified in answering: “It is none of your business.” A man's sins are his own. Our actions are private and subject only to voluntary betrayal. We are at liberty to own our weakness or our meanness and to tell whatever we have done; but when another attempts to coerce a confession from us, we refuse to submit to such unwarrantable

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authority, and assert our right to be custodians of our own deeds. The court which does not require a man to criminate himself is higher than the church which bids a man lay bare his soul.

There is no ear pure enough to listen to the story of the secret struggles of the human heart. The doctrine of "confession of sin," which has been taught by the Christian church, is detrimental to manhood and womanhood. It is a police arrangement where the private conscience is under the eye of the priest. There can be no independence where the soul has surrendered to another.

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To make crime easy is to make criminals. One cannot rob the clothes-line if the clothes are in the house.

# Death's Philanthropy

Every now and then a man dies and the world praises his name, and men die every day whose names we never hear.

Why is the one lifted up above the other?

In the case we have in mind it was because the man, when he died, left several millions of dollars to churches, to charities, and to public benefactions.

This age honors the accumulation of wealth. It puts its stamp of honor upon the man who gathers a large fortune into his hands. If this man at his death bequeathes all of his fortune, or a large portion of it, for what the world is pleased to call charitable purposes, he is called a good man, and his name is spoken with pride and praise.

Now, we believe in all the virtues that would make a man wealthy, but not in the vices: and we believe that a man may have all of these virtues and not have much money when he becomes old, or when he reaches the banks of the river of death. We want to praise the man that the world does not praise, the man who does not live or die for praise, and who does not care for it. We do not think that death's philanthropy is as grand and beautiful as life's philanthropy.

The man who lives to get money and to keep money, that at the last, when he can no longer keep it, he may bestow it where it will be a monument to his name, is not half so noble as the man who lives in such a way that he makes life easier for his fellow-beings, giving his little every week, here and there, and letting his gift fall quietly and out of sight of men. It is the truest philanthropy not to rob man, not to take money from the world and hold it until the stronger hand of death opens the strong hand of greed. This is man's noblest way to live; to take only what can

be used for profit or pleasure. To take more than this is to rob mankind.

What generosity is there in parting with money only when death makes the fingers let go? Men who carry their millions to the grave would carry them beyond it, if they could. When only death can conquer selfishness, its noblest bequest merits but little praise.

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There is no vicarious suffering for the one who has eaten too much.

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The nation that proclaims the right of free speech, but will not protect that right, has abandoned its principles.

# Our Attitude Towards Nature

The idea that Nature is to be worshipped, either as God, the unknown, or the incomprehensible, is being seriously questioned. We wish first to know what good such worship does. It cannot be of any benefit to Nature. Is it of any benefit to man? This is the only question to be answered.

Almost everybody is ready to say that man should not worship the sun, the moon, the stars, or any earthly thing; but a great many still think that man should worship the mysterious something of which everything is a manifestation. We have outgrown the worship of objects. We look upon the person who sees a God in any natural object as an idolater; as one whose mental vision is unilluminated by any true idea of the universe. But there is a demand that man shall worship God, or the unknown force or power in Nature that is the source of all things.

We admit the unknown quantity of the universe; but we do not see the necessity of worshipping it. We do not see any good in praying to it, or in singing to it. Nature is all a mystery and all the mystery there is, but why do we need to keep saying so in prayer and praise when the silent fact is ever before our eyes? We do not need to go down on our knees to every mysterious thing, and stay there. Let us freely and frankly confess that Nature is incomprehensible, and then go about our business like men, and try to learn what will help ourselves and our fellow-beings.

## Reverence For Motherhood

An author of some note, in an article published in a Protestant journal, while admitting that the “holy Catholic church” had been about as unholy an institution as could well exist, claimed that Romanism had its good points. Among them he instanced “its reverence for motherhood.” For proof of his assertion he pointed to the homage paid to the image of Mary and her child by the average Roman Catholic.

We admit the homage, but deny the reverence. To begin with, where is the reverence for motherhood among the Roman Catholic priests? Why, these men have not respect enough for woman to elevate her to the dignity and honor of motherhood. These men are married to the church, to Christ and not to women. Their sacred office would be lowered by taking a wife.

The holy vows of these priests are not half as holy as the marriage vow. A priest never had half as pure a thought as is born in the heart of a father. He never performed a rite half as consecrating as dancing a laughing child on his knee. These holy old bachelors have done all their religion would allow them to dishonor motherhood.

The pretence that woman as woman, as mother, as wife, as sister, or daughter, is particularly respected by Roman Catholics is simply absurd. To prove this we point to the homes of the Roman Catholics. We confess that the Romish church encourages motherhood, that Roman Catholics are urged to help increase the church membership, but we claim that nowhere is there less reverence of woman as woman, as mother, as wife, as sister, as daughter, than among the Roman Catholics.

Because a Catholic crosses himself before a wooden Madonna, or a plaster-paris image of the mother of Jesus, it is no proof of

his reverence for motherhood. Not a bit. The Catholic reverences Mary as the mother of God; he pays her homage as a divine person; worships her, not as a mother, but as a superior being.

The man that has reverence for motherhood is the man who loves and tenderly cares for his own mother and the mother of his children, but the man who prostrates his mind before a carved figure of the “Virgin Mary” and pounds his wife and kicks his daughter into the street has reverence for nothing.

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Adam might have obeyed God, but he could not resist Eve.

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It looks easy to break off a bad habit that somebody else has got.

## The God Of The Bible

The blind, foolish faith in the Bible is the cause of intellectual dishonesty, moral hypocrisy, and religious tergiversations without number. This faith makes the twentieth century kneel to a God that it would be ashamed to introduce among civilized beings.

We would no sooner go to Moses to learn about deity than we would go to Noah to learn how to build a steamship. We do not believe in getting divinity through a straw three thousand years long. If we must have a God, let us have one that has had the advantages of civilization. We might possibly give this Lord God of the Bible a quarter of mutton, as did Abel, or a peck of potatoes, as did Cain, if we were convinced that he was living anywhere in the universe, just to keep on the right side of him, but we would not care to be on an out-of-the-way road with him after dark unless we had a revolver with us. We know of no more villainous character in all literature; and for men and women, who pretend to love what is pure and good, who pretend to honor what is upright and just and who pretend to revere what is noble and true, to worship this God of Christianity, this God of Moses, this God of the Bible, is a sad commentary on human intelligence and human integrity.

We know that all theological discussions have been wretchedly barren of results; we know that theology has made no contribution to actual knowledge; we know that no one knows anything about any such being as God, and we also know that every God worshipped to-day by men and women is only an imaginary person or thing. No one knows what God is or where he is, and yet ministers speak about him just as though they had been to his house and taken tea with him.

Theology has received attention out of proportion to its achievements. It has done the cackling while science has laid the egg.

We do not like to hear men say: “God did this” and “God said this,” when he has never opened his lips to speak to man and never lifted his hand to help him. We call such language dishonest, and the time will come when the men who have made such use of the divine name will be condemned as impostors.

What this generation should do is to take the Lord God of the Israelites, that lies dead on the banks of time and bury him from human sight forever. Not another human being born on this earth should be allowed to read of his cruel deeds, and if Christian ministers were honest, and had the courage of their honesty, they would tell the world that the being called God in the Bible was no God, only an idol of a rude and barbarous age.

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A theologian is a person who uses the word “God” to hide his ignorance.

## The Measure Of Suffering

The little boy who asked his mother “if hell was worse than the toothache?” imagined that the limits of suffering were reached in his agony. Many of us have doubtless experienced pain that we thought marked the utmost of endurance. In the Christian dream of future punishment man is represented as burning eternally. Fire probably inflicts the intensest pain that the human body has ever suffered. Hell is fitly represented by fire.

Suffering takes various shapes. Pain comes in a thousand forms. But there is a limit to the endurance of pain. Unconsciousness comes to the relief of the mind when agony can no longer be borne. Hell, such as has been taught by Christianity, is not a logical conclusion. All suffering that we know anything about ends itself. The victim is released by exhaustion. Hell is impossible.

The finer suffering which is called remorse, which follows wrong-doing, gradually wears out. Its lash loses its sting. The sinner becomes callous to his act or finds a balm for his regret in the lapse of years. The finger of time erases the memory of every wrong, and soothes with its touch every pang. We can escape the fate of wrong-doing by doing better. Reform opens the door of every hell invented for man's punishment. The man who does right, wherever he is, will have the reward of right-doing, the fate of right-doing.

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It is this fact which makes the idea of endless pain for man's deeds done on earth illogical. Man can turn around on the road of evil as well as on the road of good, and hence he can change his fate whenever he changes his life. The measure of human suffering makes it impossible for man to endure pain forever. He

must either perish utterly as a sentient being or be driven by his punishment to better behavior.

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No man ever yet tore down his altar and found a God behind it.

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Trying to find God is a good deal like looking for money one has lost in a dream.

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We could believe in God if he shortened the road for the lame, led the blind or fed the starving.

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We are told that “all things are possible with God,” and yet God cannot boil an egg in cold water.

# Nature

Some people are afraid of the word Nature. They cross themselves when they hear it pronounced. It has a sound like “Old Nick” in their ears. To these pious souls the word Nature banishes God from the universe. This is looked upon by many as the highest offence of language. It has been the custom for several centuries to abuse Nature, to call it bad names, and associate it with depravity and everything evil. Theology has condemned the word, and the pulpit has touched it only with the tips of its fingers. To speak of Nature as anything good is regarded as throwing dirt in the eyes of God.

Nothing clings to the world like a superstition. Start a fear in the human breast, and it will make every heart quake before it can be driven out. Let a bad habit become fixed, and it will be as hard to dislodge it as it is to plant a good habit.

But men are getting over their fright somewhat. The natural is found to be the true, not the false; the right, not the wrong; the good, not the bad. Nature has been slandered, lied about. It was once thought necessary to assassinate this word in order to preserve the Orthodox religion. The necessity still remains, but orthodoxy is dying.

Nature is a large word. It means about all there is. If there is a God, he is natural.

# Creeds

This is the age of revision. Churches are all hurrying to catch up with the world. There is a desire to square ideas with facts, and shape beliefs with knowledge. Religion must suffer in this process. Something will be lost, but only what is bad, false and wrong. Creeds are out of date. They are behind the times. They are the dead leaves from the tree of knowledge, the dead branches on the tree of life. The world's faith is in the living; in the bud, the blossom, the promise of things—not in the husk, the shell, in dead and useless things.

New creeds are to take the place of old ones. What people believe now, not what people believed hundreds or thousands of years ago, must be put into a profession of faith. For a man to profess what his father and mother believed is to make birth useless and existence valueless. We are to live to add to life, not to repeat it. Is theology the only thing that people put their trust in? A theological creed has to be accepted with the eyes shut. We want a creed of the heart, of the head, of the senses, of the whole man. There is no theology worth believing in. The creed of the church is a gravestone.

If we were to make a creed for the world of men to accept we would make it out of human hearts. We would go where a man had helped another; where a woman had sat beside the sick and suffering; where man had been crucified for being true; where he had been burned for being honest; where he had stood against the world protesting against its wrongs and proclaiming the right, and where he had fallen with a martyr's crown upon his forehead; and we would write these into a creed, and have men say: I believe in men and women who have lived good lives, who have taken the unfortunate by the hand and lifted up the fallen,

who have pardoned a woman's fault, who have shown their love of truth by being true, and who have done right even when they were wronged for so doing.

The grandest life is the grandest creed; and, if man's faith was faith in what has made the world better and brighter and happier, he would be better off than by believing in a God that is cruel, unjust and unkind, and in a heaven where the highest joy is found in laughing at those who are in hell.

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It has been discovered that the man who was lost in thought was not a church member.

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We do not say that another world is not worth a single thought, but rather that this world is worth all our thoughts, and needs them.

## Don't Try To Stop The Sun Shining

If there is one person on earth who is to be envied it is the happy, cheerful man or woman who always sees the bright side of life, the good side of a fellow-being, and the warm, sunny side of what belongs to earth. If there is a person to be pitied, it is the sour, gloomy man or woman, who sees only the dark side of life, the bad side of a fellow-being, and the cold, cloudy side of what belongs to earth. Everything bright, beautiful, fair, sweet, and good grows in the sunshine. We would not have a flower without the sun. Cheerfulness is to the human heart what the sunbeam is to the earth—the source of gladness.

We ought to cultivate happiness. We ought to have the home filled with what is beautiful. We ought to let the sun shine into our lives. People who are sour and moody look upon the smiling, happy person as foolish, and wonder what there is in life that one can find to enjoy. They want to tear the flower to pieces, stop the bird singing, trample upon the joy of the child, and hush the laugh of mirth. If you cannot enjoy life, don't try to prevent others from doing so. Don't throw a shadow on the human heart. Don't try to stop the sun shining.

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Laying up treasures in heaven never kept a man out of the poor-house.

## Follow Me

Jesus said: "Follow me." But we decline; we had rather not. We do not wish to follow a person until we know where he is going.

If by following Jesus is meant living as he lived, doing as he did, believing as he believed, teaching as he taught and dying as he died, we are not in it. We shall have to say: Thank you, we guess not. We prefer to go some other way.

We do not see any necessity of following anybody very far, if at all. This following business is played out. Those who profess to follow Jesus don't do it in the daytime.

But we can go a little farther and say that we do not think Jesus was a man that a self-respecting person would like to follow. He does not inspire us with any particular admiration. The man who could let his lips forget to speak kindly of his mother cannot have our admiration. The man who came not to bring peace, but a sword, to the world cannot have our admiration. The man who said: "believe and be saved, believe not and be damned," cannot have our admiration.

If we follow anybody, it is going to be a person that commands our respect, whose greatness and goodness compel our admiration, and who did not try to win men by tricks. We regard Jesus, as he is painted in the four gospels, as a character below the ideal of this age, a character that, to imitate, would dwarf the noblest man. If Jesus were alive it would be his duty to-day to follow others, rather than to command others to follow him.

# Can We Never Get Along Without Servants?

We recently overheard a remark which made us query if we cannot get along without servants? A lady was commenting on the character of the “help,” which one was obliged to employ to-day, and expressed the opinion that, if our public schools continued to fill the heads of children with the notion that one person was as good as another, it would not be long before it would be impossible to get help at all.

There seems to be an idea abroad in this land as well as in others, that a certain class of people are for the purpose of producing servants for another class of people, and that this servant-producing class has no right to give their children an education that is calculated to elevate them above the position of their parents. We are not in sympathy with this idea. If there is one person on this earth that is of less account than another it is the person who is helpless, who is dependent upon others for everything that makes life possible or endurable. We must confess that there are too many people in this country who are of this kind, who must have someone to do for them what they ought to do for themselves.

Why should one person be expected to wait upon another? Why should a man or woman look upon a fellow-being as fit only to be a servant? Is one born to serve and the other to be waited upon?

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Such notions have no right on our democratic soil. In this country there must be no caste, no division of society into classes.

We rejoice that such a criticism of the character of the “help” employed in the houses of the rich as we overheard, is true, for

it reveals a condition of things that may lead to what is much needed to-day, viz.: a simpler mode of living on the part of a great many of our American people. Is it necessary to live in such a way that a dozen or more servants are required in a home to keep it in order?

We believe the community in which all are independent and none are servants is the ideal one. Why should not this be the ambition of the race, to live in a manner that will leave others their independence and encourage in them the desire for a home? Our children all ought to be taught to work, and be made to work, and not be brought up with the notion that they have the right to expect others to wait upon them.

We do not wish to imply that one individual should not consider it his or her duty to help another or to work for another. What we desire to convey is this, that if people did more of their own work, and waited upon their own wants more, they would not only be doing what is best for themselves, but also what is best for the community in general. For men or women to be dependent upon servants and almost helpless without them, is not a condition to be proud of, but to be ashamed of. The man who cannot harness or drive his horse; the woman who cannot buy and cook a dinner for her family, has not been properly educated.

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The home in which there are the fewest servants is the happiest home. The father that brings up his sons to work, to know how to earn a living; the mother who teaches her daughters to cook, to sew, to do housework, is doing them good, not harm. There are too many know-nothings and do-nothings in the world. It is honorable to be useful in this world, and it ought to be dishonorable to be useless. Let us work for the day when we can get along without servants; when life shall be so simple that each family can do its own work. The servant system is but little different from the slave system, and it ought to be abolished.

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The money man gives to get him into heaven is what he ought to use to improve the earth.

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The Unitarian walks with a cane, the Congregationalist, Methodist, Presbyterian and Baptist go with crutches, the Episcopalian has to be pushed about in an invalid's chair, while the Roman Catholic crawls on his hands and knees and is led around with a ring in his nose by a priest.

## A Heavenly Father

It may pay some persons to talk about a heavenly father who cares for his earthly children, but we prefer to get money in a more honorable business. Honor bright, now, gentlemen of the pulpit, did you ever see anything that convinced you that there is a power in the universe outside of the human body, that cared a snap for men, that showed any more love for a child than for a crocodile? Tell the truth, and let us see how far apart we are on this question.

We have no objection to being taken care of by a heavenly father, or by any person or power that is wiser and kinder than man. But we do not want to put our trust in such a being or power and then, just when we needed most the help and counted on it, find that we had been deceived. We admit the good that is in Nature, the beautiful, the attractive, but we cannot put faith in the God of earthquakes. When we listen to a bird's full-throated song, and surrender ourselves in delicious rapture to the spell of its wondrous melody, we are ready to acknowledge that a benignant power gave life to this sweet little charmer, that can start such a flood of joy in the human heart, but when in strolling among the meadow's blossoms we are confronted with the repulsive head and ominous attitude of the rattlesnake, we ask: Who made you? We admire Nature in some forms, but detest it in others. We pick the rose with a blessing on its perfect beauty and perfumed breath, but we shun the white flower of the dogwood—the poisonous hypocrite. When the sky is fair and blue, and a smile is on the face of heaven, we feel that only kindness and love sit enthroned above us, but when the blue changes to black and the smile to a frown, which grows deeper and darker until the whole heavens threaten destruction to earth;

when the heedless lightning, with brutal stroke, fells at our feet a form we love, we wonder where the kindness and love have gone that we saw only a few hours before. Nature does not keep one mood long. She has made things fair and things foul; she blesses, but she curses also; she wins us with some temptation of beauty, and then punishes us for yielding; she puts in our heart an angel of love, but she puts there, too, a devil of hate; she caresses us one minute and kicks us the next; she licks our hand, and then without warning she bites us.

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There is more power to-day in a drop of ink than in a ton of powder.

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A man may have respect for old age and not like to find gray hairs in his butter.

## Worship Not Needed

The world will never throb with new life until the spell of worship is broken. Nothing holds mankind down so much as veneration for its idols. Shake off the lethargy that worship has brought upon the soul. Live like men, and you need not worship gods. When we live true to the soul we cease to ask for anything. Worship is denial of self. Let us have no disputes about divinity. Let God take care of himself. The light of the stars proves their existence. The universe needs no counsel of defence. That which is evident need not be explained.

The great question for us to answer is not what God wants, but what men need. Let us live to ourselves. Worship is interruption. Let our life satisfy. Worship is apology. If we are doing our best, what need to excuse our work? What good does it do to praise God? That is the true love which obeys, not that which adores. We want willing hands, not lifted ones. Worship is superfluous. It adds nothing to the soul. It increases our cares, not our virtues. The test of everything is, does it help man?

We challenge the church to prove its claim to man's support. It throws a shadow upon the earth instead of letting more light upon it. The priest is in man's way. Worship is a compliment to the deity that he does not need, and a burden upon man which he is not able to bear. Nature does not worship. She grows. Worship is opposition to reform. It palsies the world's thought. It means stagnation. It is difficult to get advocated what will correct society, because mankind spends so much time in the church that it has no time to spend in the theatre of improvement. Worship is hypocrisy's disguise. What a train of splendid deceit marches up the aisles of the church! What a mask is worship, but the world can see through it. When falsehood kneels in praise of truth;

when extortion and cruelty call God father; when meanness and vice are the disciples of Jesus, and when crime and sin say, "They will be done," the name of religion is a blush on the forehead of the world.

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We would not dethrone the world's heroes. The more human beings we can get the world to honor and respect the better humanity will be, but when a man or woman has been for ages almost worshipped by the world; when time, with its forgiving hand, has erased deed after deed until naught else is left of the man or woman but a holy memory, an unreal soul, whose virtues are as ghostly as shadows cast by the moon, it behooves us to look with unprejudiced mind at this phantom of existence and to see with naked eye this object of adoration, for one may be certain that beneath the idol's robes will be found a human form and with it all the peculiarities of human nature.

## Was Jesus A Good Man

We denied in the presence of a Christian, who wished to have a religious talk with us, that Jesus was divine. This denial was somewhat anticipated, we imagine, as the gentleman who challenged our views was knowing to the fact that we did not pay pew rent anywhere. But he thought to secure assent from us by saying, "You will have to admit that Jesus was a good man." What constitutes a good man? A good man is a man who is kind, loving, merciful, reasonable, and just. Would a just man pay the laborer who had worked but one hour as much as he paid him who had toiled all day? Would a reasonable man curse a fig tree because it did not have fruit on it out of season? Would a loving man say: He that hateth not father and mother is not worthy of me? Would a merciful man send those who did not agree with him into everlasting fire? Would a kind-hearted man bring a sword rather than peace on earth?

The truth is, we do not know *what* kind of a man Jesus was. Good men have been killed by bad ones, and bad men killed by good ones. If Jesus was killed because he was a blasphemer the chances are that he was better than those who put him to death, but if he was killed because he sought to overturn the government and secure the throne for himself, he may have been a very bad man. But by the gospel-record we hold that Jesus was not a man for this age to honor or imitate.

# How To Help Mankind

There are various ways of helping the world, and all are to be commended. Perhaps the way that costs the least, and consequently helps the least, is the giving of good advice. This, we believe, is about the poorest thing that can be given to man. It is a gratuity on the giver's part which is never received quite as it is bestowed. But it is usually born of good intentions, and so we have to be thankful for it, even if we do not use it. To those who are inclined, however, to render assistance to their fellow-beings, we would say: Give good advice last, or, at any rate, give something with it. There is no use telling a poor man where there is a good restaurant when he has no money in his purse.

Another way of helping the world is the material way—giving something that will relieve its wants, pay its debts, or add to its independence. The sympathy that takes the shape of dollars and cents always reaches the heart. The rarest virtue in this world of ours is generosity, and the rarest man is he who gives to the world asking for no dividends but in the happiness of his fellow-creatures. Money, when wisely bestowed, comes about as near the shape of an angel as any earthly thing can assume.

But there are other ways of assisting the world, and while we admit all the good that can be done with money, men and women need to-day to be helped with truth, helped with justice. Mankind are suffering from falsehoods, from wrongs as well as from ignorance, from want and poverty. Those who are unjust to their fellows should help them by dealing justly by them. Those who are keeping the world in darkness should help it by telling the truth. Truth and justice are every man's right, and every man's due. You can help the world by being just to it, by using

your fellow-beings honestly, squarely, justly. You can help it by telling the truth and by concealing nothing that is true.

Man needs an education in unselfishness. He must learn to work for himself without working against others. The advantage which a man gains to-day is too often at the disadvantage of his brother or sister. It is a poor victory which inflicts suffering. The true measure of man's success is the joy his life confers upon the world.

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The man who wants to be an angel is never in a hurry to begin.

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The man who gets on his knees has not learned the right use of his legs.

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Ignorance is all that saves some people: if they knew more they would do worse.

# On The Cross

Christianity teaches that Jesus was divine. To admit that he was not divine is to give up Christianity. In the light of this teaching let us look at Jesus on the cross. After a brief, but rather peaceful career, Jesus is arrested, tried and convicted as a blasphemer, and sentenced to be put to death. It is said that he died on a cross. How did he die? It is said by Christians "like a God."

There have been brave deaths on the gallows and at the stake. Men have died sublimely whom society has condemned as criminals. In our day there has been as lofty heroism evinced in the face of the most terrible of deaths as ever martyr of old manifested when dying for his faith. We know that men have walked into the arms of an ignominious death without a tremor, and with magnificent courage shining in their faces.

Brave dying proves less than brave living. The sacrifice of a lifetime shows the courage that commands our deepest admiration. Some mother, some sister, or daughter who has offered herself for years upon the hidden altar of duty has performed a deed beside which a moment's suffering is as naught. But the average mind fails to discern heroism, except where the suffering is apparent.

We will admit for the moment that Jesus died upon the cross. We will allow all the pain and agony of such a cruel and terrible death. We will let every picture of his suffering that has drawn tears from the eyes of women be accepted as true. We would not rob the manner of his death of a single pang. It was merciless, pitiless, devilish. Crucifixion is the essence of cruelty, the refinement of torture, the invention of brutality. We acknowledge all the horrors of the cross. We do not wonder that a man should shrink from being nailed to its arms, but we

do wonder that a God should. We are not surprised that human weakness should cry out of its breaking heart for sympathy and help, but we cannot understand why divine strength should ask for pity or aid. If Jesus was God he should have died in divine silence. The record of the last hours of Jesus shows that he died disappointed. The cross proves that Jesus was human. When he cried out: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me," a keener anguish pierced his heart than when the cruel iron was driven through his flesh.

The dogma of the divinity of Jesus should have died on the cross, when the man of Nazareth gave up the ghost.

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The man who does no thinking before he acts does twice as much afterwards.

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Adam may not have been so perfect after the "fall," but he was not so big a fool.

# Equal Moral Standards

Why are girls brought up with more care as to their personal habits than boys? And why do women have fewer vices than men? It is an undeniable fact that what is looked upon with indifference in a man would be regarded with disgust, if not horror, in a woman. Boys do things that would not be tolerated in girls. Why are there two standards of behavior? Why is one sex held to stricter moral account than the other? Why is a man allowed to do what is condemned in a woman?

The average daughter is better behaved, has better personal habits, than the average son. The average mother has fewer vices than the average father. The average woman is less vicious than the average man. Whose fault is it that this is so? It is somebody's. Whose is it? It is time to find out. Have men fixed the standard for women, and women for men? It is approximately true that either sex is what the other demands of it. Women are too indulgent towards the other sex. We believe it lies with them more than with men to elevate the moral standard of the world.

A father would not take his daughter to places where he takes his son, would not condone in her habits which he overlooks, if not encourages, in his boy. Picture a father going to a saloon with his daughter, and there treating her to a "Tom and Jerry," or a "beer," and then calling for cigars for two, and sitting there smoking together for half an hour or so! A man will do this with his boy but not with his girl. Why not? If it is right and harmless for one, why not for the other? Is it true or not that what is right for men is wrong for women? [148]

We ought to have only one moral standard. The sexes should be held to like behavior. Men can have just as good habits as women. We do not believe in forgiving in one what we condemn

in another, in allowing a young man to do with impunity what we will not tolerate in a young woman.

If we are to have one standard of morals, which shall it be? Shall it be the highest or lowest? Shall it be the standard for man or for woman? Shall we permit women to do as men do, or shall we insist that men shall be equally pure in personal habits with women? The divided standard of conduct which now exists should be done away with. Let us demand equal behavior of the sexes, and let that behavior be fashioned after the highest moral demand of society. We do not wish to educate boys to be girls, but we can educate boys to have as good habits as girls have, which would be a great gain to the world.

We must hold women largely responsible for the vices of men. There is not a vicious habit which a man would not lay at the feet of woman did she demand it. Not a man would tolerate in a woman what a woman tolerates in a man. Let us have one moral standard for men and women, for both sexes, and mete out to each the same punishment for violation of its restrictions.

# Authority

The man that does what his reason says is right is the man that should be honored by men. There can be no higher authority for doing a thing than that it is right. It is not whether a thing has ever been done before, but, *Is it right?* If there is no precedent, then it is a duty to establish one.

How many accept the opinions of others because they fear to question their authority! This regard for what other people think and say is well enough only when it does not destroy independence of thought and speech in ourselves. Another's opinion is not to be respected when it is a fetter to our freedom.

We need not rehearse the evils which the world has borne on account of its fear to do right *alone*. Man must have someone to share the danger, to share the blame, but a dozen cowards are not worth so much as one brave man, and right is no *more* right because ten say it instead of one. A thousand felt what Luther said; a thousand believed what Parker did. The best man in us is often the one that does not speak. The truest belief of the heart is the one never confessed. Man seldom comes to the surface. He rarely has a call to be himself, but to be somebody that will please the world. Man is obliged to make himself into a theological likeness; into a political representation. It will be centuries before men can assert themselves fearlessly without injury.

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It is no easy matter for a man to set himself against popular opinion and maintain his position. Every power is brought to bear upon him that falsehood can invent and malice employ. A person who refuses to acknowledge the authority of the hour asserts a higher. When a man slaps the world in the face he should have truth on his side and courage to meet the stake and the cross.

The majority never forgives him who denies its judgment. The individual that challenges the majority must prove his right of defiance. When a man is greater or better than men he must pay the penalty. The world cannot yet forgive anyone for excelling it. Authority when it debases man should be disputed; when it denies man his rights should be rejected.

It is plain to be seen, without illustration or example, that man's authority is not found in his own mind. He has no history that reaches beyond custom. Man begins with man so far as facts prove. Society rests upon hearsay and religion upon tradition. A claim has only to be made upon ignorance to be granted. This good-natured world of ours would believe anything, or make-believe believe it, to save its soul. It takes either a very shrewd man or a moderately mean one to dodge every duty of life and remain respectable. It is dangerous to go outside the beaten path, not only on account of the persecution of the present but on account of the folly of the future. The world can easily twist an action into a law or a man into a God if profit hang on the end of its deed. The authority of half man's actions to-day depends upon some accident or fraud of the past. Man wants a little of the fabulous yet in his meat and drink. He loves to think that Jesus is present when he drinks his wine and eats his bit of bread, although it is a mystery.

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Popular opinion is the authority of most words and actions. We speak to men as to children—to please them. We tell them some parable or fairy story instead of telling them their faults honestly and trying to make them better. Most men begin by bowing to public opinion and end by carrying it on their backs.

The authority of the world may be disputed without any of the stars being thrown out of their course or any of the processes of life being disturbed. The notion that all has been discovered that is essential to the welfare of man is a mistaken one. The other notion that the preservation of whatever is elevating and refining depends upon the religious opinions of mankind, is

equally delusive. The authority of the Bible, of Jesus, of the church, has been quoted until the world is prepared for a better. We might lose the Bible and not lose our place in the ranks of civilization. Jesus might be forgotten and man would still strive for a higher life. The church might perish in a night and not a single particle of goodness be lost. If we speak honest words, do honest work and live honest lives, we need not ask for God's help or the help of anybody. We do not give to immorality the hours we redeem from superstition. We give to manhood and womanhood every hour which we make natural and free. It is not necessary for a man to go to church in order to be righteous. The world found assistance before Jesus was born. There has always been saints outside of a convent. We need no book holy that good counsel shall be valuable. The highest authority is the highest human enlightenment. It needs no priest back of opinion to give it force. [152]

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Why does a man enter the Christian ministry?

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The reason that revelation is always made to the simple is that the wise could not be imposed upon.

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There is no sadder grief than that which lies at the bottom of a life that has been wrecked through deception.

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An organization that requires the suppression of facts and the discouragement of knowledge in order to maintain its supremacy, is the relic of a tyranny which our free age and our free thought are in duty bound to remove from the earth.

## A Clean Sabbath

In a discussion with a lady, recently, upon the Sunday question, after the various pros and cons had been set up and bowled down, she exclaimed: "For mercy's sake, don't say any more against the sabbath. Why, if it were not for Sunday, most people would never wash themselves nor change their clothes." Sunday, then, is to be established for the sake of cleanliness. The command for keeping the sabbath should therefore read: Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work, and on the seventh day wash thyself and change thy clothes. If people will not keep clean without a divine command, we are in favor of cleanliness. We do not know of any better use to put God's name to. Sunday is certainly the cleanest day of the week. If people will make themselves clean and neat only for God's sake, we are willing to endure a little superstition for the blessing of cleanliness. But is there any ground for the assertion of the lady? As everyone knows, religion has produced the filthiest specimens of humanity that ever offended the senses of man. Dirt, and not cleanliness, was deemed next to godliness by the saints of old. The filthier a human being became, the holier he grew. It was regarded in the middle ages, that is, in the ages when everything was sacrificed to religion, as almost a sin to keep clean. It was waste of time to care for the body. It was taught that it was holier to worship than to wash. Nor did these dirty old saints of old go nasty entirely on their own authority. They were nasty for Christ's sake. They went unclean because Jesus had encouraged nastiness. He believed more in clean hearts than in clean hands. He taught his disciples that "to eat with unwashed hands defileth not a man." Dirty Christians are still plenty, but civilization prevails over superstition and the reign of dirt is doomed. The follower of Jesus quotes his master to

defend his filthy condition in vain to-day. The gospel of decency has been preached, and what is manly and womanly is honored more than what is godly and pious. Clean infidelity is preferable in good society to nasty piety. There may be honor in rags, but there is none in dirt. Soap and water cost less than religion, but are worth a thousand times as much to the world. If Romanism required its devotees to take a bath instead of going to mass, it would confer a greater boon upon the world.

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No man gets estimated for exactly what he is, and it is lucky he doesn't.

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A great many men and women are remembered for what somebody has said about them.

# Human Integrity

It is hard for a man to be a man. It is easier to be almost anything else. We do not find the reason for what we do in ourselves, but seek it in someone else, or somewhere else. Manhood is not our standard of action. Human integrity is generally looked upon as an eccentricity. We almost despise a person who is more upright than the conventional man. Throughout society there runs a stream of circumstance upon which lives float like chips. The man who turns against this stream, and seeks to stem it, is looked upon as a madman or a fool. Everybody admits that the world is hardly going right, but everybody goes with it. The current of human life can be turned into a larger channel by a larger man. Mind follows mind.

We do not demand the truth; we do not insist upon the right; we are satisfied with less than integrity. It is not in a spirit of carping that we say this, but because it is true. Let us glance at the world as it lies before us. Theories pass for facts, faith for evidence. We assert without knowledge; we are positive without proof. Man is condemned for not believing, although living a pure and noble life; he is praised for believing, although living a selfish and cruel life. Men are not judged by human nature, but by opinions which are uppermost in public esteem. Men and women are bad according to the standard of one age; good according to that of another. Theologies, which may be wrong, condemn men who may be right. Justice is never man's precedent. The world quotes Moses, David, Paul, Jesus, to defend its conduct or prove its guilt.

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Authority is another's opinion. Law is what has been done and sanctioned by mankind. The decision of one court binds another. One text is quoted to prove another. A man's act is made a rule of

life. We say, to defend ourselves: "He did it." The world's power of attorney is in its own handwriting. Our appeal is to some one else. We get our politics from our fathers, our religion from our mothers. The church is preaching what others believed.

The mind still leans. Only a few could stand without a support. The props of the world keep it from falling. Men are not upright of their own strength. No man's action is the patent of manhood. The world does not ask, "What virtues are yours?" but, "What creed do you accept?" A dozen agree and call some one else a doubter, a Freethinker, an Infidel, an Atheist. To be able to stand alone is to be blamed by those who cannot do so.

Man must learn this, that he has no greater strength than his own; that he has no higher duty than to obey the behest of his own nature. When we forsake the world's follies and shams we shall find something better. We are never abandoned until we have been abandoned by ourselves.

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When we refuse to do our duty we must still expect Nature to do hers. The sun and moon do not stand still at man's command. It is greater to keep one's integrity than it is to gain the whole world.

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It is harder to live when those we love are dead.

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The trouble with divine revelation is that we do not know who did the business.

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A person has not much excuse for living who can make no better use of life than passing it in a nunnery.

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Men talk of alleviating the aching hearts and souls of the world, but if they would relieve the aching backs and arms of men and women by being kinder to those who toil, there would

be fewer suffering hearts for their sympathy's consolation. It sounds vulgar, perhaps, to speak of backaching, but the pains of work are among the saddest facts of human life.

# Is It True

There is a lot of sentiment going around the world strangely at variance with human action. No one lives as he professes to believe, as he says he thinks. Men declare a thing to be true but act as though they wished it false. It is frequently stated that:

“Honor and shame from no condition rise,  
Act well your part, there all the honor lies.”

Who believes it? Did Pope when he wrote it? Does a person that reads it? I doubt it.

It ought to be true, perhaps, that men should be respected, honored, and praised just as much for carrying a hod well as for writing a poem or acting Hamlet well, but it is not so regarded.

A man as a man may be just as worthy, just as honorable, just as much deserving the respect of his fellows who uses a pick and shovel on the highway, but it is a fact that the common laborer as such is not respected nor honored as much as the man who pays him for his labor. All the honor may lie in doing well whatever he has to do, but it is *what a man does*, not how he does it, that receives the honor of the world, just the same. Probably thousands of women are acting well their part as washerwomen in Boston at this time, but are they honored as Sarah Bernhardt is for acting Cleopatra? Would wealthy women pay ten dollars to see a woman scrub a floor, even if she could scrub better than any woman who ever scrubbed before? We guess not. There is the point.

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There is no such epitaph as this on the marble of the world: He acted well his part as a coal-heaver. It is true that Lincoln is pointed to as having been a rail-splitter when a young man,

but had he never been anything else he would not have had a monument an inch above the ground. It is not Garfield the tow-boy, but Garfield the statesman, the President, that is honored.

It is a fact that merit is not always appreciated, but it is equally a fact that no merit is seen in the common occupations of life. A person might wear his fingers to bones in what is regarded as menial employment, and all his giant labor would not call forth a single word of praise. A dollar or two a day is all the reward the world gives for manual labor. No one sees heroism in farm work, in kitchen work. No one contributes money to erect a statue to the hod-carrier. Work is not honored. The man or woman who is obliged to work in order to live is regarded with pity or contempt by those who live upon the labor of others.

It is not true that all the honor lies in doing well whatever we have to do. Such a saying is as false as to say "Ask, and you shall receive." Honor is not given gratuitously. It has to be earned. But it is a fact that we do not honor all labor, all virtue, equally.

# Keep The Children At Home

Fathers and mothers want to see their children grow up into good, moral, respectable men and women. How to insure this desirable result is a serious problem. It is seen that the school is not sufficient to insure character, nor does the church exert sufficient influence to guide the feet in right paths.

We have the deepest faith in what the school is doing and trying to do, and would help it in every way to promote the instruction in those branches of knowledge which are deemed essential to a sound and useful education, but we cannot fail to see that the school, however much it may assist the child in the formation of good habits, is not of itself competent to build up character. The school cannot take the place of the home, nor can the teacher do the work of the parent. We believe that the best way to have good boys and girls, and therefore good men and women, is to have good homes for them to live in. If parents gave more attention to making their homes attractive to their children, they would not be so apt to seek amusement in other places. The more a child is kept at home, the more certain it will be to escape the evils of life. A good home is the first and most powerful factor in forming the character of children.

There is too much thought given by parents generally to the church and too little to the home. They shirk their duty and their responsibility, and pray God to look after what they neglect. [161] With the father at work and the mother at mass, the children will be in the street. Those parents who put the home above the church are throwing around their children the best influences that earth affords. When children are left to the care of God they too often fall into the hands of the policeman. Let the path between

the home and the school be well worn, but never mind if the grass grows in the road that leads to the church.

The child will usually love home if home is made lovely. If parents wish to drive their children into temptation, let them shut the sunshine of joy out of the house, forbid the playing of games, burn up the pack of cards that is found in one of the boy's rooms, call a ball-room the "devil's headquarters," and pronounce a malediction upon all youthful sports. It is easy enough to drive a boy or girl out into the dark. Put out the lights at home. Those parents who know the evil influences of the world will make their homes bright and beautiful and then keep their children there as long as they can.

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The doctrine of salvation by faith is a libel on justice and has done more to undermine the virtue of the world than vice itself.

# Teacher And Preacher

There is one great change which we hope to see brought about in the near future, because we think it ought to be brought about as a matter of justice. It is this: the elevation of teachers above preachers. Civilization, and all that this word stands for today, depends more upon the school than upon the church. It is the teacher and not the preacher that trains the growing minds of our children, that builds the structure of character for future men and women, and gives to the young the sacred touch that keeps them in right paths. The world does not half appreciate the work done by the school teacher, while it exaggerates out of all proportion to its worth, the work done by the preacher. The church may fall, but if the school stands, liberty will remain; the paths of knowledge will be free; the brow of civilization will still shine white against the skies of life, and the glorious cup of learning be pressed to the thirsting mouth of youth; but should the school fall, though the church might stand, all this would be reversed;—liberty would be driven from the earth, the highways of knowledge would be closed, civilization would fade into the night of the "dark ages," and the thirsting lips of life be fed with Bible scraps and the logic of dead creeds. The teacher is the mighty power in this republic, the truest friend of our nation's institutions, the one person above all others that this country should honor and reward. One teacher is worth a thousand priests; one school, a thousand churches. [163]

The person whose duty it is to direct the education of the young holds the sceptre of a nation's destiny, and the school teacher occupies the most important station to which one can be elected. We fear that the profession of teaching is not rightly prized by the American people, and we are sure it is not justly rewarded. No class in the land are paid so poorly, according to

the service they perform, as our school teachers, while no class should be paid so well. Far more valuable to our government is the teacher than the preacher, and yet the salary of the latter exceeds the former in every city and town in the land. This should be changed. Preaching a superstition is no benefit but an injury to a people, while training the mind to read, to think, to gather knowledge is the highest service which one can perform.

We have the greatest respect for the men and women who have prepared themselves for the high office of teacher, and we would see them rewarded for their labor as it deserves. The hope of a country is in the right education of its people, and the way to secure such education is to encourage the teacher by showing a just appreciation of his or her labors. So we say, put the school above the church, the teacher above the preacher.

# Fear Of Doubts

We cannot help thinking that Goethe showed lack of courage when he said: "I will listen to any one's convictions, but pray keep your doubts to yourself, I have plenty of my own!" It seems to us that only a coward is afraid of doubts. If our convictions are false is it not better to know it and correct them? Doubt is the way to truth. It is the attitude of the mind that wants to know things just as they are. They who are unwilling to be deceived are the ones to doubt, to inquire. Let us hear all the doubts of the world, for they are knocks at the door of knowledge. To accept without question is to be the willing dupe of imposition.

The doubter is the safe man; the man who can be depended upon. He does not build upon a foundation of guesswork, and the structure he erects will stand. Let us not fear doubt, but rather fear to have falsehood passed for truth.

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There is no authority that can be quoted against a man but the authority of some other man.

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Nine times out of ten the man who declares that God is tender to the sparrow that falls is not the man to buy a winter's coal for a poor widow.

## Bible-Backing

There is less backing one's thoughts with the Bible than formerly. The world is getting weaned from this book. The idea is gaining ground that, if anything is true, it can support itself. When a man leans on God he is so much less a man. Mental uprightness disdains the Bible's support. Honest thought can defend itself without appealing to divine authority.

Once a man hardly dared speak unless he quoted from the Scriptures a line or verse that ran parallel with his speech.

To-day men say what they think, without caring whether Moses, or David, or John, agree with them or not. We have reached a healthy independence. We have commenced to trust our convictions. Such a stage of intellectual development is not favorable to the divinity of one's thoughts. The report of one mind is no more divine than that of another, and no more to be trusted, only as it is more accurate. There is a higher standard than the word of God for this age—that is, the word of truth. Whosoever speaks truth can face the world alone.

When a man needs to go to the Bible to sustain his argument he has a weak argument. When a dogma does not commend itself to human intelligence it is useless to declare it infallible. It will die, even though it be professed a thousand years. It can be accepted only by ignorance and avowed only by hypocrisy.

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Any man who will quote a Bible-text to defend his opinion in the sense that such text proves his opinion true, proves himself a dolt. A Bible-text is only a human opinion, and as humanity surpasses it in the evolution of experience, it loses its authority and force. We have learned that human reason does not need to be backed by the Bible, and we have learned also that the Bible *does* need to be backed by human reason, or it has no value.

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The heart that can deride misfortune confesses its own deformity.

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When we are satisfied with the present we do not think of the future.

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The more mystery is encouraged, the more deceit can impose upon the human mind.

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If wisdom and diamonds grew on the same tree we could soon tell how much men loved wisdom.

# Beggars

We have come to look upon the poor beggar as a nuisance; upon the man who comes to our doors for food or clothes as one who has no claim upon our charity. The common beggar is, as a rule, a worthless character, but let us be fair to him. He asks for but little; seldom for more than a bite, or for a few pennies. The poor beggar has only himself to enforce his appeal, and often he is an injury to his own cause. A dirty, ragged, vice-stained wreck of humanity is a poor argument to offer for sympathy or help. The man who begs in the name of man, and with that name rubbed in the dirt besides, gets little for his asking.

We do not like any beggars, but we need to understand that it is not the man in rags, who asks for a piece of bread or meat, that is the only beggar in the world. There is another and more dangerous beggar that we open our doors to, and treat with politeness and respect, and whose appeals we honor; it is the well-dressed beggar who asks for the money which the arm of labor has coined from its strength, who takes not pennies where he can get dollars, and who enforces his appeal with the name of God; it is the ecclesiastical beggar, whose hand is stretched out to take the earnings of toil, or the profits of trade; whose hand would as soon take little from poverty as plenty from affluence.

The rich beggar is a worse enemy to society and to the nation than the poor beggar. It is the priest, and not the tramp, whose begging we need to scorn. The man who asks for food in the name of hunger, for help in the name of want, makes, at least, an honest appeal to our generosity, but the man who begs in the name of God is an impostor. The tramp's appeal is the truth—the priest's is a lie. God never yet commissioned a human being to

beg for him, and the person who uses the divine name to enforce his demand is little better than a thief.

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In the paths of our life may be seen the footprints of our ancestors.

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If you are poor, be thankful that you have the power of bettering your circumstances by bettering yourself; if you are rich, do not forget that you have the means of doing good, a luxury that is too seldom indulged.

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Men need nothing so much to-day as self-reliance; courage to stand up manfully for the right, all alone, without prop or pay, daring everything for an idea, counting not the cost, but seeing only the grand result which would follow its triumph and working for that with single purpose and courageous fidelity.

# Habits

Habit makes the man, but man makes the habit. It is here where we want to get in a word. A habit seems a little thing in itself, but it is the most terrible tyrant that rules the world. And it *does* rule it, say what we will. Now, it is essential in this life of ours to start right if we are going to come out right. And the best thing to start with is a good habit. It is just as easy when a young man is forming his habits to form good ones as bad ones. Good habits are not expensive. A virtue does not cost a quarter as much to support as does a vice.

We sometimes wonder how it is that a being with brains, with intelligence, with reason, could ever become a slave to habit. It does not seem possible that a MAN cannot order his conduct. But we must recognize facts. Men are victims of habits. They do not perceive that they are bound until they try to be free, and then the strong power of habit asserts itself. How does this terrible despot conquer the mind, the will, the man? What is this invisible force that drives the strongest and the brightest with a whip of iron? It is only an act repeated again and again, but it has become a second nature, a part of the man, and it has conquered by the power of reinforcement by repetition.

The only way to be superior to bad habits is never to acquire them. Do not do the *first* bad act. Stop before you begin to go wrong. The time when a man is saved is when he is young. The time to plant or sow is in the Spring. The harvest depends upon the seed. We cannot pick figs from thistles. A bad habit will end in a bad life. Watch the feet of the boy and the man's will not need watching. We must begin with the young, and see that right habits are acquired in early life.

It is only a foot from a good habit to a bad one, but it is a mile back again. We may lose in an hour all we have made in a year. We can undo in a day what we have done in a lifetime. A habit is a plant of which an act is the seed. It will bear fruit if it be a good act, but ashes if it be a bad act. It is the first step that starts the race. To start right is the best way to go right and to end right. Never let a bad habit fasten to your life.

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It takes the shingles from the widow's cottage to put paint on the house of God.

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Many persons who claim that they are “clothed with righteousness” do not seem to have got very good fits.

## Can Poverty Be Abolished

Is poverty a malady of the individual or of society? To answer this question is to determine how to treat the disease. If the individual is alone responsible for being poor, then he alone is to apply the remedy; but if society is to blame for poverty, then must society take the steps to effect a cure. Poverty is an evil. A human being who is starved physically is starved mentally and morally. Civilization begins when man has risen above want. Man is only a brute when all of his energies are absorbed in the effort to get bread.

In the present state of society we have dependence and independence; a few have escaped from the burdens of toil, but the many are still slaves to physical wants. But the few enjoy their independence at the expense of those beneath them, and oftentimes by inflicting wrong and injustice upon their fellows. Such a condition ought not to be allowed. Prosperity is the accumulated efforts of mankind. No man has created all the benefits he enjoys; no one has sowed all that he reaps. The rich man to-day is rich because he has, by advantageous circumstances, obtained possession of more than his share of the world's wealth, or because he has inherited what others have obtained in the same way, or because by thrift and economy and good luck he has succeeded in getting money and keeping it.

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But what makes the poor man? Not one thing, or one condition. He is the victim sometimes of his own follies, vices or laziness, although he is often not to be blamed for his poverty. There are individual cases where doubtless destitution is the child of misfortune, but the general poverty of the world, and of this country in particular, cannot be charged to any such account.

In our land there is a balance every year to the credit of wealth, but is it not true that this balance finds its way to the pockets already filled, rather than to those that are empty? *What diverts the products of labor from the hands of labor?* Find out that, and then we will begin to give labor its due. There is enough produced every year to make every person in the land better off at the end of the year. Why are so few richer, and so many poorer, or, at least, no better off? There is one thing sure,—labor, thrift, economy, virtue and good habits are to be commended and encouraged, while idleness, vice, profligacy and bad habits are to be condemned and discouraged. We do not look to any external change in society for a remedy for poverty, but rather to an internal change in man. It is not social revolution that will help the world, but humanity—the willingness to do what is right.

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“It rains on the just and the unjust,” but rarely just enough on either.

## The Roman Catholic God

Cicero said that “men, having exhausted all the mad extravagancies they are capable of, have yet never entertained the idea of eating the God whom they adore.” The extravagance which was beyond the contemplation of the Pagan mind, is an every day affair with a large part of the Christian world. The Roman Catholic eats his God every week, and Catholics have been guilty of this religious cannibalism for centuries.

In the celebration of the eucharist, which is a service commemorative of the death of Jesus, bread and wine are used in Protestant churches as emblems of the body and blood of the crucified one. But in Roman Catholic churches the real presence of Jesus is seen in the “host,” which, in itself, is a little wafer of baked flour and water, but when consecrated by the priest and offered as a sacrifice, during mass, becomes the actual body of God. According to Roman Catholic doctrine, dough is changed to Deity by the mumbling of a few Latin words over it by a priest. When the priest swallows the consecrated wafer he really swallows this God he adores.

There is an absurdity which the doctrine of transubstantiation is accountable for, which cannot be paralleled among all the religions of heathenism. Not only does this doctrine make it possible for one God to be eaten by one priest, but for thousands of gods to be thus devoured. The Roman Catholic religion teaches that God is manufactured out of flour and water by a pastry cook. Every time a wafer is turned into a “host,” a God is made.

Were there a tribe in Asia or Africa guilty of such ridiculous practices as are witnessed in the Roman Catholic church, missionaries would be sent out to them. It seems to us, that

if people know no better than to believe that when the priest swallows a little lump of bread he is actually swallowing the body of a person who lived eighteen hundred years ago, whom they look upon as God, they are not intelligent enough to be ranked in the army of progress and civilization.

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No one is to blame for what no one knows.

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It is singular that people want to live another life when it is so hard to live this.

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A church that sets up a religious faith as more essential than purity, than kindness, charity or goodness, is a dangerous institution.

# Human Cruelty

The mosquito inflicts his sting upon the place whence he draws his life. Not unlike this venomed insect is the person who, through malice, wounds the feelings of a human being. There seems to be in certain organizations the poison of hatred, and woe betide those on whom it falls. The heart that can take delight in saying cruel things, in raising unkind doubts or starting unpleasant thoughts, ought never to have had a human face to hide behind. Such an individual ought to crawl in its native shape that it might be crushed under the heel of scorn.

The only way to treat a human viper is to keep away from it, ignore its presence, and to shut the ears to its venomed hiss. We know of no more cruel occupation than wounding human hearts and human feelings.

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A great many men believe in providence until they get caught in a railroad accident.

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Treasures well used on earth will help the world more than treasures laid up in heaven.

# Infidelity

When the minister wants to frighten his congregation he draws a picture of infidelity. The infidel has been used for years to scare weak-minded persons into accepting Christianity. Outwardly the infidel is painted like a man, but the world is warned not to trust to appearances, for the infidel is not what he looks to be; he is “a fiend in human shape;” he is “a moral monster,” and a mirror in which everything bad and vicious can see its face.

We do not wonder that a minister paints the infidel in black. He has hurt the minister's business, and so must suffer for what he has done. But we do wonder that so large a part of the world is frightened at the word “infidelity.”

It is a fact that an infidel would never be known if he himself did not disclose his character. To conceal his infidelity he has only to keep still, to hide behind silence.

Infidelity is nothing more or less than intellectual fidelity, and an infidel is a man too honest to disguise his real thoughts and convictions. Had the infidel not been honest he would still be in the church, a hypocrite, to be sure, but this could not affect his religious status at all. Intellectual and moral uprightness is the distinguishing characteristic of modern infidelity. The modern infidel trusts his brain and his heart; he accepts as true what appeals to his reason, and makes known his convictions as though to conceal them were a vice or a crime.

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The infidel gains nothing by avowing his convictions; on the contrary, he is condemned for making them known. The Christian presumes upon the right to damn infidels here and to teach that God will damn them hereafter. It is in the face of a fate, in many instances cruel, that a man acknowledges that his honest thoughts, his honest convictions place him in antagonism

to the popular faith, and yet he is denounced, rather than praised, for his brave action.

Infidelity is the proof of an honest man. Hypocrisy cannot hide in its shadow. Every man in the Christian church may be a hypocrite, a knave, a pretender professing its faith, while laughing inwardly at its foolish superstitions, but every man who espouses infidelity must reveal his true character, must show exactly what he is.

A dishonest or hypocritical infidel is an impossibility. There is nothing to be gained, but much to be lost, by confessing one's disbelief of the Christian dogmas. It is the man who prizes self-respect above the world's approval who takes the fate of infidelity—be it what it may.

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Don't put too much faith in the man who wants to know the distance to the nearest church before he has written his name in the hotel register.

# Atheism

What is called atheism is not a light, flippant assertion, but a calm, thoughtful conclusion. It is a conviction which human experience and human reflection have generated. Atheism is not the irresponsible opinion of moral debauchery; it is the outcome of an intelligent consideration of Nature and life. The atheist has been honest with himself and with the world. He has made a careful survey of the universe, as far as he is able, and has canvassed the facts of life which have come within the range of his observation, and he has candidly declared the result of his study and freely related the reasons for his conclusions.

Atheism is the universe as science finds it and as interpreted by human understanding. It is an attempt to state the simple truth, to give a fair likeness of things, to photograph facts. Atheism is denial of nothing true, of nothing good, of nothing that can be proved. We see no good reason for abusing the atheist. His opinions don't make him a bad citizen or a bad man. He is as moral as his Christian neighbor, and is as ready to help a fellow-being.

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In countries where atheism is a crime, hypocrisy is more honored than integrity.

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A great many who expect to hear the angels sing always get near the stage at a comic opera.

# Christian Happiness

Christians are constantly telling “how happy their religion makes them,” how happy they feel “since they found Jesus.” We will take them at their word and believe that they are just as happy as they say they are. What has their religion done for them, what has Jesus done for them, that they should be so happy? They will answer that they have been saved, that their souls have been rescued from destruction. Without going into the question whether they need to be saved or whether their souls are in any danger of destruction, let us see what kind of happiness the Christian enjoys. The great song of Christians is: *My soul is saved.* The Christian is happy on his own account alone; he rejoices in his own good fortune; he is pleased to think that he is out of it. The Christian's happiness is a purely selfish feeling. In his exultation is no thought of another's condition, of another's lot.

If some are saved, others are lost, for all do not accept the Christian faith, all do not find Jesus. The Christian can be happy while others are miserable; he can rejoice while knowing that others are in peril; he can exult over his own salvation while seeing others going to destruction. This is a fiendish happiness, a devilish joy. For one to be happy while knowing that a brother or sister is lost shows a hard, selfish, cruel heart.

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Think of the Christian mother being happy for having been rescued from her burning home in whose fatal flames her children all perished! Think of the Christian father filled with joy at his escape from the sinking ship in which his wife and babe sailed to the port of death! Think of a Christian man or woman exulting over their good fortune in not having a disease which took away

those who were nearest and dearest! Such joy, such happiness, as this is not human, it is brutish.

The Christian is welcome to all the happiness his heartless religion affords him. I want none of it. Such a religion would drive me mad.

The loving heart is happiest in the joy of those it loves; it is happy in seeing others happy, but there could be no joy for it to be saved while those it loved were lost. Christianity is a heartless religion, a cruel faith, a selfish scheme, and it is for those who care more about being saved than saving others.

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The highest freedom is the freedom to say what we believe to be right.

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It was a childless woman who said: The happiest woman is she whose bosom pillows the sweet head of a child.

## What God Knows

We see in Christian papers a great deal about what God knows. How does any one know what God knows? It has been the habit, where man lacked any particular knowledge, of saying, "God knows." But what is the good of God knowing anything if he keeps his knowledge to himself? If he will not tell what he knows, how is man improved or benefited by all the wisdom in the divine cranium? What is known by the inhabitants of Venus does the inhabitants of earth no good. But let us come down to facts. Is there any proof that God knows anything? Let men own up, and not try to deceive themselves or others any longer. What God knows nobody else knows.

There is no evidence that God knows what man does not, and it is bare assumption only to ascribe knowledge to deity. It is first necessary for man to know that there is a God, before endowing him with mental wealth or attributes. The Christian practice of saying that "God loves man," and that "God cares for man" has no basis of facts to stand upon, and it is only pious conceit that indulges in such statements.

There is nothing in the universe but the universe itself; nothing in the universe that reveals a God. The earth does not, the sun does not, the moon does not, and not a planet or star reveals the existence of a God. All these reveal their own existence; so of a flower, of a tree, of a man. It is only divinity that can reveal the existence of divinity. Who has seen or heard this divinity? No one. Men have said, or men have made other men say, that they have seen God, heard God, and talked with God. But they lied. No human eye ever saw the divine form or features; no human ear ever heard the divine voice; no human being ever had any knowledge of a divine being.

It is a waste of words to talk about God and what he knows and what he does. No man knows that God does anything, that God knows anything, or that there is a God.

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Blessings on the man who first dared to doubt.

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The improvement in ways of travel and methods of labor has altered our reverence.

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Every kiss of love imprinted by a mother's lips on the face of her babe gives the lie to the Christian doctrine of total depravity, and every gift which the heart of pity lays in the hand of misfortune brands this doctrine as false and a libel on our human nature.

## The Meaning Of The Word God

I do not deny that the word "God" has today a moral and religious meaning which is derived from his supposed beneficence, but this idea is not the one that I find at the bottom of the Christian faith. I object very seriously to the attempt, which is being made by certain interested parties, to represent the God of Christianity better than he is. This word loses its terror when we realize that it stands for an unknown quantity. It is the attempt to account for what we cannot understand; the effort to explain the universe. The word "God" is a definition of human ignorance. It represents what we do not know. This word does not stand for a person, an object, or a thing. It is an idea that we can have no idea of, a thought of what one cannot think. People who use the word "God" do not know what they are talking about. The word fits nothing that has yet been discovered. Theology is the science of what no one knows anything about. It does not belong to the family of knowledge. When the hands of theology are laid on a man's head his brains are consecrated to do nothing. Every time a minister is made, a man is lost. Nothing disgraces American civilization more than the theology preached in Christian churches. It is worse than childish; it is old-womanish. The dark ages cast their shadows across the bright skies of the twentieth century, and the relics of that benighted time, the priests, are still walking the streets, like ghosts of bad deeds.

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Every theology ends in a creed. A creed is the night-cap of religion. It is a sign that the intellect is asleep. When faith is in, sense is out. A man with a creed has bought the coffin for his mind. The rest of his life will be a funeral service for the dead. A creed is the grave of thought. When a person subscribes

to certain articles of belief, he has no further use for his brains. It does not require any mental exercise to believe. Belief does not signify any process of intellectual assimilation or digestion. When a man joins a church, he makes his last will and testament. When reason abdicates in favor of credulity, crime becomes a saint, and folly a martyr. Too much faith makes a Pocasset tragedy. The foolishness of trying to make God intelligible to human understanding is shown in the creeds of Christendom. The dogma of the trinity ought not to pass to any further generation. It is not the "likeness of anything that is in the heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth."

# What Has Jesus Done For The World

A great deal is said about “what Jesus has done for the world.” We wish some of those people who repeat this statement would take ten or fifteen minutes and tell us just what Jesus *has* done for the world. It would puzzle the most ardent admirer of the Galilean reformer to point out anything that Jesus ever did to help man in this life. There is too much of this thoughtless, senseless praise of Jesus. Not a Christian on this earth but what owes a thousand times more to his father and mother than he owes to Jesus, but who ever heard one acknowledge it? We could name hundreds of men who have lightened the labor of the world by their inventions. Did Jesus do anything of the kind? We can name hundreds of men who have made the homes of mankind brighter and more enjoyable by their genius and toil. Did Jesus do anything of the kind?

The imaginary service which this imaginary person did is of no consequence to the poor, to the workers, to the starvers. What the poor man wants is not a Savior for another world, but a helper for this world, and the person who lessens the poverty and misery of earth is worth a thousand times more to humanity than Jesus.

We are told that Jesus died for man. Well! What of it? Socrates died for man. Bruno died for man. Emmet died for man. John Brown died for the black man. Every day somebody is dying for man. Why emphasize the death of Jesus more than the death of another? The fact that Jesus died does not help you or me. He could have helped us far more by living, if he had lived wisely and well.

The great fact in regard to Jesus is this: He does not touch this age; its aspirations, its interests, its reforms, its work, its spirit. We are living contrary to Jesus, contrary to all he taught and

did. He is left behind, outgrown, and, consequently, whatever he did is of no value to this age. His star is set. He has had his day. Instead of trying to bring about a kingdom of poverty, a millennium of idleness, the world is striving for a kingdom of plenty and a good time for everybody.

Everything connected with Jesus has been exaggerated. The man himself has been exaggerated, his words have been exaggerated, his performances have been exaggerated, and his importance has been exaggerated. He has been given a character that he is not entitled to, and his teachings have been clothed with a value which they do not possess. Jesus has been passed for more than he is worth. Let his name no longer bear the stamp of divinity. Let his deeds no longer be called miracles. The real Jesus of fact would be a very ordinary man.

## The Agnostic's Position

Some avowed Liberal writers are engaged in abusing the Agnostic. One looks upon him as a fool, while another considers him a hypocrite. One pities him for his ignorance, the other abuses him for confessing it. I side with the Agnostic. I sit down with the ignorant. I take my place in the class of "I-don't-know." The difference between people is this: Some don't know, and some don't know that they don't know, and the rest won't admit that they don't know.

It seems to me that the Agnostic's position is an honest one. He is asked the question; Is there a future life for man? What shall he answer? If he does not know whether there is not, why should he not say so? To say: I believe there is, is not an answer to the question. He must say, I know, or, I do not know. On this question are we not all Agnostics?

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The foolish and cruel notion that a wife is to obey her husband has sent more women to the grave than to the courts for a divorce.

# Orthodoxy

There is as much perfumery in petroleum as there is righteousness in orthodoxy. Its dead theology and make-believe piety have no value only to the priest. Orthodoxy survives only by right of possession. Turn it out of the churches and it would never re-enter them. The church to-day is a hospital for sick dogmas. Every Christian doctrine is a cripple; not one can walk or stand alone. Orthodoxy has put a false valuation on things. It calls a man good who goes to church, offers a prayer in public and accepts the Bible as the word of God; it calls a man bad who stays at home and enjoys himself with his family on Sunday, who eats without asking God to bless his food, and who does not expect to go to heaven on the vicarious railroad.

The thirty-nine articles of orthodoxy are only the ashes of the mind.

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Honesty is never seen sitting astride the fence.

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A handsome bonnet covers a multitude of sins.

## Ideas Of Jesus

There is a vast difference between knowledge of the Bible and knowledge. A person may know all there is in the Bible, and not know but little. In fact, so much of the Bible is either pure fiction or doubtful history that one is not sure when he has got hold of what is reliable. Probably no person whose name appears in the Bible is less a historical figure than Jesus. As we see him in either gospel he is more the product of the artist than the work of the biographer. He is less a human being than the character of a drama.

Had Jesus been pictured as a man, who was born as men are born, who worked as men worked, who lived and died as men live and die, then there would be less divergence in the views entertained respecting him. To-day, the Jesus of Galilee is looked upon as either a God or a tramp; a divine Savior or an impostor; the perfect man or a lunatic.

The reason of this is that the gospels are found, as it were, photographs of all those characters labelled Jesus. A person with no fixed idea of what Jesus was, whether human or divine, whether a Christ or a madman, would be unable, after reading the gospels to come to any intelligent conclusion as to what he was. He certainly could not accept the statements of the authors and regard Jesus as a man.

We fail to understand how anyone can read the New Testament story of Jesus and not regard him as a myth. No being ever lived on earth and performed the miracles recorded in the gospels. That is just as sure as the light of the stars. Miracles are not evidence of divinity, but of falsehood. Where we read that a man was raised from the dead we know that somebody has written what is not true. How human beings, who are possessed

of ordinary intelligence, can accept the accounts of miraculous events in the four gospels as records of actual facts surpasses our comprehension.

Those persons who see in the words of Jesus evidence of *his* divine character, see in such words, when in the mouth of any other person, proof of insanity.

There are contradictory ideas of Jesus contained in the gospels. He is spoken of as a man, as a Christ, as a son of God, and as God himself. Now, he could not have been all these. Which was he? Was he God? Was he the son of God? Was he the Christ or King of the Jews? Was he the son of Mary and Joseph? Was he a man? Or was he neither?

Our opinion is that Jesus is a myth, that no such being as is painted in the New Testament ever lived. This seems to be the only rational idea of Jesus.

## The Silence Of Jesus

A Christian minister not long ago spoke upon the subject: "When the Bible is Silent." He said a great many silly things about his subject, but not one sensible one. This preacher wishes us to believe that when the Bible is silent it is because we cannot hear. He said the silence of Jesus before Caiaphas, Pilate and Herod, shows that Jesus knew they would not have understood his words if he had answered them. He further said that Jesus "treated each with whom he came in contact according to the spirit that was in him."

Is it not more likely that Jesus knew he could not impose upon these men as he could upon his ignorant, superstitious followers, and hence dared not speak? Is not his silence a confession of his weakness? Had he been able to answer Caiaphas, Pilate and Herod, think you he would not have done so? Of course he would. It is a little singular that the *most momentous questions ever put to Jesus were not answered by him*. The very things the people wished to know he did not reveal. Why not? Why, because he *could* not.

Should we to-day pronounce a man wise and good who professed to possess knowledge that would benefit, if not save, the world, but who refused to impart that knowledge? We reckon not. We should either denounce him as the foe of man or else as a charlatan.

[192] When Jesus was taken before the high priest, Caiaphas, and was asked about the charges against him, he "held his peace."

When he was asked by Pilate. "What is truth?" Jesus was silent; and when Pilate again asked, "Whence art thou?" Jesus "gave him no answer."

When Herod “questioned with him in many words,” “he answered him nothing.”

What are we to infer from this silence? What the minister wishes us to infer, or that Jesus saw that he was unable to maintain his claim and so sought refuge in silence?

The silence of Jesus condemns him. He was in duty bound to prove that he was the Christ, the Son of God, as he claimed to be, or else have impostor written on his forehead.

The world will some day grow large enough not to be fooled by a minister. When it does, Jesus will take his place where he belongs,—in the graveyard of the gods.

## Does The Church Save

The church pretends to save man from a hell hereafter, but does it do so? How are we to know whether it does or not? We cannot take its word for it. We want the proof. We do not want to pay for work unless the work is done. We do not want to believe in order to be saved, unless we are sure that the church can deliver the salvation it takes pay for. The world has taken the promise to save long enough. It has not seen a single soul that has been saved, nor does it know for a fact that a single soul has been saved.

Is it not time that the church showed that it can do what it claims to do? We want salvation demonstrated. Let the church produce a specimen of its work; let it exhibit a soul that it has saved, or let it publish the affidavit, duly subscribed and affirmed, of a soul that has escaped the fate of hell through the efficacy of faith in Jesus. Anything less than this is deception, is imposition, is false pretense. Either this should be done by the church or else it should go out of the salvation-business altogether.

It is astonishing how long the priest has carried on his trade. Here is a man who claims to deal in the affairs of another world for which he demands pay in this world, but he does not show that he carries out his part of the agreement. Men have been paying the priest for thousands of years, for doing what it is impossible to prove has been, or can be, done. Can anything more stupid than this be imagined? The business of saving man's soul is a cheat, a fraud. Every priest and minister who preaches that man can be saved from hell hereafter by believing in Jesus, or anybody else, is preaching what they know nothing about, and they are doing it for the money in it. The church is cheating man, defrauding him, practicing upon his ignorance, his superstition,

his fear. Religion, as far as it relates to any other life than this, has no foundation. Its God no one knows anything about; its heaven and hell no one has ever seen, nor does anyone know where they are; its whole business is run on fictitious capital.

The only thing that the church has saved so far is itself.

#### Freethought Precepts

The strong should be gentle to the weak.

The rich should not oppress the poor.

The prosperous should be generous to the unfortunate.

The self-reliant should give a hand to the helpless.

The educated should pity the ignorant.

The virtuous should not be cruel to the vicious.

The beautiful should be kind to the plain.

# Save The Republic

Which shall it be, Christianity or the Republic? It is apparent that the Christian church under a purely secular government, where justice is granted to all and where favors are allowed to none, cannot long survive. The Christian church in this country to-day is the worst foe of our free republic that exists within its borders. If the state survives it is plain to us that the church must perish, and the church can only flourish on the ruins of free institutions. We may have Christianity with a certain form of human government in America, but if the principles embodied in the Declaration of Independence and the rights implied in the national constitution are to survive, then we cannot have Christianity in this land.

The next conflict in our nation is to be between secularism and ecclesiasticism, between men who love liberty and priests who uphold tyranny, between the lovers of our republic and the foes of secular institutions. This conflict is nearer than the public imagines; in fact, it is already going on, and the growth of sentiment in the next generation in favor of human freedom and human rights will determine whether secularism will be upheld in our nation, or whether the reign of ecclesiasticism is to be dethroned.

The work of the Christian church throughout the land is to prevent the spread of secular principles and to hinder the further secularization of the government. This is the only hope of saving Christianity. If the state will not continue to exempt church property from taxation, to uphold the Christian sabbath, to prescribe prayers and Bible-reading in the public schools, to enforce the oath in courts of justice, and to otherwise lend its aid and support to the Christian religion, there is no chance of

this religion resisting the spread of science and the arguments of rationalism.

Every victory won by Christianity is a nail in the coffin of this republic. Our government at the present time is a travesty of free institutions. Where does the freethinker have equal rights with the Christian, equal freedom, equal justice? He is obliged to take a Christian oath or have his word discredited in court; he is taxed to help support Christian chaplains in the state prisons, in the legislatures, and in the army and navy; he is made by law to pay the taxes on church property which is no benefit to him; he has to send his children to schools where religious services are conducted that to him are false and foolish, and in many other ways help maintain a religion that he considers more injurious than beneficial to the world.

The church in this country is not working for the good of the nation; it is working to save itself. What they, who love our free land, should do, is to make the government secular in every part, and compel Christianity to take its grasp off of the nation's life. We must destroy Christianity if we would save the republic.

## A Woman's Religion

The Christian church of to-day is the church of women. Woman is certainly the better-half of Christianity. She is the minister's right bower. The Christian soldier is an Amazon. The first at the prayer-meeting, at the donation party, at the missionary convention, at the Sunday service, at the altar, at the Sunday school is woman, and the last is woman, too. Without its female members, adherents and workers the Christian church would be an abandoned wreck within a week. It is true that men give money to the church, but they do it generally to please the women or at their solicitation.

The Christian religion is a female religion. It is emotional piety. There is nothing robust, independent about it, nothing that appeals to strength, intellect, reason. It is a vine, not an oak. Even its chief idol was fashioned for female worship. The songs of Christianity were written for women to sing, rather than men. The God of Christianity is a father, its savior is a young man, and its angels are all of the masculine gender. The Christian heaven is a he-kingdom, as far as its administration is concerned—a sort of celestial harem—for certainly ten women go there to one man, if the membership of the church determines the election of candidates to heavenly bliss. The two favorite hymns at the prayer-meeting, the two that are sung with most feeling, are “Jesus, lover of my soul,” and “Nearer, my God, to thee.”

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Religion was invented to catch women. The priest is the spider and woman the fly. Upon the altar of every faith woman has been the sacrifice. Religion claims its female victims in this age just as surely as when the Hindoo widow was sent to join her dead husband on wings of flame. Woman to-day is not killed to appease a God, but she is still made a fool of by the priest. The

spirit of the offering is the same, the form, only, is different. The foundation of every Christian church is woman; the salary-raiser of every Christian minister is woman. Woman is the keystone in every arch of Christian endeavor that spans the earth. She is "the bright, particular star" of the church's hope. Men are not so easily caught by the Christian scheme of salvation as women. They want to see some return for their money on earth. It is the woman who is caught in the religious toils; it is the woman who is the slave of God, the victim of priest and minister.

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The declaration that will kindle enthusiasm in the human breast most quickly is that a new way has been discovered to get rich.

# The Sacrifice Of Jesus

A great deal has been written, preached and said about the great sacrifice which Jesus made for the world. We deny that he made any such sacrifice as is claimed for him by the Christian church. In fact, we cannot see, find or learn from any record of the New Testament that he made any sacrifice at all. This whole idea about the sacrifice of Jesus depends upon a theological assumption.

Jesus had no earthly honor, position or estate to sacrifice, even had he been disposed to offer such for the good of mankind. Not only is there no evidence of any tangible renunciation possible by Jesus, but there is no proof and no sign that Jesus possessed even the spirit of sacrifice. We challenge the Christian admirer of Jesus to point to a single act of this hero that can honestly be called a sacrifice. We know of no such act. We have studied the gospels to find such an act, and we have studied them in vain.

When a mother sees her boy pinned to the timbers of a wrecked car where the scalding steam must escape into his face and destroy his life, and to save her boy, voluntarily stands where this steam, with its hot breath, will take her life instead of her boy's, this mother makes a sacrifice that is apparent, real. Such an act is sublime, grand, beyond heroism. Such an act wipes the Christian slander of total depravity from human nature. Such an act makes us almost worship the heart great enough to perform it.

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Jesus did no such things as this. He braved no danger for another. He did not walk in the path of peril to save the life of friend or fellow. On the contrary, he seemed bent on a selfish mission, inspired by a purely personal ambition. He did not say: This world is suffering from oppression; I will lay down my life to make it free. He did not seek to destroy the throne and the

sceptre that bear so heavily on the poor and weak; but he sought a throne and a sceptre for himself that *he* might rule the world.

Jesus sacrifice himself for the world! No! He demanded that the world sacrifice itself to exalt him! A poorer specimen of self-sacrifice could hardly be found in all the historical out-of-the-way places that we know anything about. Jesus had nothing to give up, nothing to renounce, nothing but his life to offer to the world, *and this, even when it was taken, did the world no good.*

The only incident in the whole career of Jesus which has been construed as a sacrifice was his crucifixion, but this was not voluntary on the part of the victim. *Jesus, in dying, made no sacrifice.* He surrendered his life at the command of a political power; he did not offer it for the world's advancement. Jesus was the sport of circumstances, the victim of a cruel fate. He played for high stakes and lost. He was an adventurer, and suffered the penalty of failure. Taking the account of his career in the gospels as true, it is totally barren of any lofty, sublime action for the good of the human race. He did not throw his efforts into the public strife to elevate the condition of the majority, but he loaded himself on the shoulders of his followers to ride into divine greatness. Like hundreds of others, he threw the dice of political chance and was beaten.

[201]

In following the gospel steps of the deluded Nazarene we are not sure which are his and which are not, but take all the stories as true which his devoted disciples have told about him, they do not reveal a mind consecrated to any lofty purpose. He was working to establish the "kingdom of heaven," but nobody knows what that is. He talked about his "father in heaven," but nobody knows who he is. He had no practical ideas, he did no practical work. History would have written this man's name among the unfortunate victims of political revolutions, if it had preserved it at all, which is doubtful, but Jesus was made by priestcraft to play a leading part in a theological drama, and religion has

immortalized his name.

But it is a false part that Jesus has played. No such character has any reason for existing. The necessity for any human offering to God does not exist. The idea of an atoning sacrifice is a relic of a barbarous faith. It is time to take Christianity off the stage. It is an insult to the twentieth century.

The silly, sickly superstition of the sacrifice of Jesus should be left to die. It sprang from falsehood and has no basis in fact, in reason or in truth.

# Fashionable Hypocrisy

There is nothing more inconsistent than for the rich to praise Jesus. There is dishonesty in every word that the wealthy speak in approbation of the poverty-preacher of Galilee. Jesus was poor, almost a beggar. He had no house, no home. But more than this, he did not see the good of such things. He did not tell his disciples to work and try to improve their earthly condition. There is no sound, sensible advice for a man to follow, who has to live and support his family, to be found in the so-called teachings of Jesus.

It is simply hypocrisy for a man who is rich or well-to-do, and who is living to add to his wealth or to increase his comforts, to pretend to honor Jesus. The truth is, Jesus did not do anything that deserves the honor of those who are trying to fill the earth with flowers of happiness, who are laboring to make brighter the homes they live in, and who are sowing the seeds of plenty and joy. Jesus did not do what this age regards as best for man, and he did not teach the philosophy which the wisest men to-day apply to human life.

Now, was Jesus right or wrong? That is the question. It is pure nonsense for the people of this country to claim to respect Jesus. We cannot respect a person who does what we think is foolish, or we cannot do so and have any self-respect. We are right or think we are, and Jesus was wrong; or else Jesus was right. Which is it?

[203]

The whole world, Christian and unbeliever alike, is living contrary to the precept and example of the New Testament preacher. Is every person on earth doing what he believes to be wrong; doing what he believes to be injurious to himself; doing what he considers will end in disaster and misery; doing what he

feels will bring suffering and sorrow upon humanity? Not a bit of it. Every man is doing what he believes to be right when he is working to get out of poverty and degradation; when he is trying to better his condition in society; when he is improving his home and giving his family more blessings, more enjoyments.

We unhesitatingly declare that Jesus was wrong. It is impossible to make poverty popular. There is not an argument in its favor. Poverty has not a single blessing. It is a curse, pure and simple, everywhere and for everybody. It is not to be praised; it is to be condemned and got rid of. It is the father of vice and the mother of suffering. It sheds more tears than grief. It cuts more throats than crime. It breaks more hearts than cruelty. It is the one great giant evil of earth. It is the foe that every Knight of Labor is sworn to battle. Every heart that loves another is pledged to drive poverty off the earth. This monster devours more children than disease, and tortures the aged more than pain. Want is a flood, a drought, a famine, a pestilence. It is a prison, a work-house, a convict's cell. It is the hell of the twentieth century.

[204]

Can we praise Jesus and be honest? No! Jesus and his gospel of poverty are not in harmony with the work, the love, the desire of this age, and for any one who is living above want, on the walls of whose home is the sunshine of peace and comfort, to pretend to honor Jesus or to follow his teaching is to be guilty of hypocrisy!

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When religion comes in at the door common sense goes out at the window.

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The churches erected in the name of God will ere long be tombstones to his memory.

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Churches do not stand for moral influence. Not a Christian minister preaches salvation by good behavior. What a poor

business Roman Catholicism would do among men if it advertised to save only those who were temperate, upright, intelligent and moral.

[205]

## The Saturday Half-Holiday

It is pretty certain that the laborer is hereafter to have more time for himself. That fact is already settled, and the demand will be conceded sooner or later. Eat, work and sleep is the ancient trinity of slavery. The modern life demands leisure; the opportunity for enjoyment and self-improvement. How it is best to be secured is a question about which there is a variety of opinions. One of the plans to give the workingman more time for himself is that of the Saturday half-holiday. We see no particular advantage in this over the eight-hour-for-a-day's-work plan.

It seems to us that if laborers worked eight hours a day and had Sunday for a holiday instead of a holy day, all their requirements would be better answered than in any other way. We do not need a day nor an hour when either work or play would be a crime, and before any other portion of the week is set apart for a holiday, let Sunday be made free to enjoyment and recreation.

There is the eternal bugbear of religion to oppose this scheme, but that is all. The minister, who under free trade on Sunday would be obliged to close up his business, is in favor of a Sabbath law of protection for sermons and prayers, but why should a few clergymen who have six holidays in the week and only one work-day, be favored against millions of toilers, who work six days in the week and are liable to be arrested if they do not go to church on the seventh day? Not a Saturday half-holiday but a Sunday whole-holiday is the first rational step towards justice to the working-man. There is very little in the average Sunday service that is instructive and nothing that is entertaining, and it is based upon the erroneous notion that man owes something that he knows nothing about, a debt of worship one day in seven. Man's brain should be emancipated from the superstition that

there is a God in the universe that requires him to sacrifice his own good to divine vanity. Work is holier than worship, and to play is better for man than to pray.

Man wants leisure to enjoy himself, not to worship God. He can have it when he becomes sensible enough to demand it.

## The Motive For Preaching

Why does a man enter the Christian ministry? Why do men preach the Christian faith? There is some reason for doing so. What is it? We have been told that the men who adopt the profession of preaching for a living make a sacrifice of personal advantage by doing so; that these men, had they entered any other profession, could not only more readily achieve greatness, but could also make more money. We do not believe it. As a rule, we believe that the men who are getting a living to-day as ministers, earn more money and enjoy more fame, than they could get in any other business or calling. Ministers are not martyrs. That idea needs to be given up.

There is another idea that people have entertained too long, and that is, that all the young men who graduate from a divinity school are intellectual giants. Brains are not the capital of the pulpit. We gladly acknowledge the exception to what we have stated as a rule, and are not only willing, but anxious, to testify to the occasional brilliant preacher. We are speaking of the overwhelming majority and not of the conspicuous few.

Most men go into the ministry because they think they can get a living more easily by preaching than by doing anything else. The pulpit is founded not on spiritual sands, but on an earthly rock. It is the salary that makes it attractive.

[208]

Now, let us look at the facts in the case. The work of the minister is less than the work of the average laborer, and the pay of the preacher is more than the pay of the average mechanic or working-man. Here is the key to the pulpit for a lot of young men. A young man who has a taste for reading and loafing, and no genius for work, sees a chance to employ what talent he possesses by studying theology, and we venture to say that nine

out of ten of the candidates for the ministry enter the profession from purely business, or, if you will, mercenary motives. The Lord does not pick out preachers. They pick themselves out.

There is just as much striving for the loaves and fishes among ministers as among other men; and the religious society that pays the largest salary is the vineyard that has the most applications for the job. We do not say that preachers are worse than other professional characters, but that they are human. They preach for money, and where the highest salary is there will the ministers be most anxious to go.

We do not wish to cut anybody's wings, but when we read that certain new-fledged preachers are about to "work for the Lord," and that they have "entered upon God's chosen profession through their love of saving souls," we want to correct the statements. They are going to work for themselves the best they know how, having entered upon their duties, not so much because they love their fellow-men, as because they love the good things of this world.

[209]

The truth is this, the motive for preaching to-day is the pay, and the religion of the pulpit is to say nothing that will cause a panic in the pews.

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Man's history is below his life, his destiny above it.

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All that secularists ask is that their thoughts be met fairly and honestly, and that the world accept what will lead it in the highest and surest way.

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If a person can join the salvation army corps and still be respected by his fellow-beings, he ought to be at liberty to enlist in the ranks of reason and common sense and not forfeit respect.

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God has done nothing for men and women except to scare them out of their wits.

[210]

# The Christian's God

Man is like the God he worships, and history shows that the Christian church has been as cruel as its God. A Christian minister damns just as his God does. He sends every free soul to hell just as his God does. He demands obedience just as his God does. The tyranny of heaven is repeated on earth and every tyrant quotes God for his authority.

Think of the Christian superstition demanding recognition and acceptance! It seems almost incredible that a man can be found in this age to preach such glaring inconsistencies and absurdities, such a ridiculous faith, such injustice and cruelty, as the Christian religion stands for. We can hardly believe our own ears when we go inside of a Christian church. We cannot understand how this terrible superstition has obtained possession of the mind, nor how human beings can be so blinded and apparently stultified! Were there on this earth a judge who should pronounce sentence upon a person on account of his religious belief, mankind would brand the name of that judge with the deepest obloquy. He would be stripped of his robe of office and disgraced forever in the eyes of every true man and woman on the globe. His deed would be a black spot on the page of history and his memory a burden to the world.

Put this judge on the throne of the universe and you have the Christian's God.

## Indifference To Religion

The pulpit complains that people are indifferent to religion. Why shouldn't they be? It is about time they were indifferent to it. Our wonder is, that the people tolerate a single priest or church on earth. Of what benefit is religion to mankind? Come now, ye that uphold religion, tell us what it does to make the world better, nobler, truer? Why should man worship God? Why should he build thousands of costly churches all over the earth, and pay priests and ministers large salaries to preach and pray in these churches?

If the churches were the humblest buildings in the land; if the ministers and priests were paid no more than carpenters or spinners, if there were any agreement between what religion *professes to be* and what it *is as matter of fact*, then less could be said in the way of condemnation of religion. But think you that men who live in hovels can respect men who preach in palaces as followers of the man of Nazareth? The thing is too ridiculous. The world is beginning to see how it has been humbugged, and it is becoming indifferent. It may in time become indignant. There will then be occasion for ministers to be alarmed.

But just now the people have reached a condition of utter indifference respecting religion. They don't care for it. They don't care to build it up or tear it down. They don't care whether it is good or bad. They don't care anything about it.

[212]

Some regret this state of things; we rejoice in it. It shows that the people are thinking, and when the people think long enough they will find what is true and right.

If the government can carry a letter across the continent for two cents, why cannot it send a telegraphic message correspondingly cheap?

If the government can build and manage a navy, why cannot it build and operate a railroad?

If the government can run the treasury department, why cannot it run the banks?

If the government can maintain an army of soldiers in idleness, why cannot it support an army of laborers at some useful occupation?

If the government can serve at less cost than private corporations, why does it not do so?

## Sunday Schools

Of all the stupid things we meet with, Sunday school lessons are the stupidest. There seems to be only one way to account for this, and that is that stupid persons are connected with Sunday schools and can comprehend only stupid things. It seems to us as though a bright boy or girl at the age of twelve years ought to be able to overthrow every argument employed in a Sunday school to bolster up the Christian superstition. The lessons taught in them are adapted to undeveloped brains, and the literature one gets from their libraries is of that variety that is calculated to discourage any robust independence of mind. We believe that any religious or theological instruction is a positive injury to the young; that it is utterly wrong to instill into the immature mind ideas of God, of a future life, of heaven and hell, of angels and devils. All that we know about God is what we don't know. The same may be said of other branches of religion. How much better it would be to teach something useful, something of importance, something real, true! Parents owe it to their children to save them from being taught the false and foolish dogmas of Christianity. False education is the bane of humanity, and the falsehood that is learned in Sunday schools poisons and deforms the life of man as long as he lives. Fear of God—the most terrible spectre that ever haunted the human soul—is a product of the Sunday school. The victims of this fear can be counted to-day by millions. This one fact ought to be sufficient to condemn this nursery of superstition and evil. There is no earthly reason to fear God, and other reasons should have no weight. The black shadow of fear which darkens the whole earth is the result of faith in God. The catechisms used in the Sunday schools are mostly filled with pious trash. The questions and answers they contain are written

out of ignorance, written, too, in most cases, for the purpose of making the intellect the slave of the priest and minister. There is no mystery so shallow as a theological mystery, because it is founded on deception. The only mysteries that the human mind can contemplate with real wonder are the sublime mysteries of Nature, the mysteries of life and death, of sand and star, of flower and feeling. Before these great, overwhelming mysteries, that everywhere surround us, the petty ideas of Gods and devils, of saviors and mediators, of heaven and hell, are trivial and cheap. We condemn Sunday schools, because they do not teach what is real, what is true, what is necessary to a noble human life on earth; because they inculcate superstitions, and elevate the belief of religious dogmas above scientific and useful knowledge; because they put God above man, heaven hereafter above the home here, and the performance of religious duties above the life of honesty, purity and love. Sunday schools are the poorest schools on the face of the earth, and there is only one excuse for their existence, and that is to perpetuate the church, to keep alive the superstitions upon which it was built and upon which the clergy depend for a living. [215]

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Our duty to the god of christianity is to bury him.

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Nothing from nothing and nothing remains, Nothing from nothing and nothing is the same.

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If the factory pays taxes and the church does not, it follows that the church will some day own the factory.

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When christian ministers stand up in their pulpits and say “Let us pray,” if they would sometimes vary the invitation and say: Let us laugh, they would do their congregations more good.

[216]

# Going To Church

Every little while some minister wakes up to the fact that a large proportion of the people of our cities do not go to church, and he blames the people for this state of affairs. Nobody blames men and women if they keep away from the theatre, from the library, from the art gallery, from the public park; in fact, it is generally admitted that people can exercise their own judgment in visiting these places and not be liable to censure on the part of anybody. Not so, however, when they keep away from the church.

Why does a man go to the theatre? Obviously because he is pleased by the performance he witnesses there. Why does a man not go to a church? Obviously because he is *not* pleased with the performance he witnesses *there*. The notion that men and women are to go to a place where they do not like to go, where they derive no pleasure but as a matter of duty is about all the argument for church-going that can be advanced to-day. We admit that man should do his duty, no matter how disagreeable it may be. We cannot shirk our responsibilities on the ground that they are irksome or unpleasant. But *is* it man's duty to go to church? That is the question. If it is, then he should go. Who is to decide the matter? Of course priests and ministers will say that everybody ought to go to church. But what for? Is it a man's duty to go to *every* church, or only to some particular church? We are told that we shall be better for going to church. To which church? [217] The Roman Catholic would not admit that a man would be better for going to a Methodist church, and the Methodist would not advise a person to go to a Roman Catholic church to improve his mental or moral condition. Who shall decide the matter *where* we shall go to church?

In going to the theatre, we do not always go to the same place, nor to hear the same play, nor to witness the same actors; nor do we always visit the same gallery or park when we desire to see paintings or statuary, or to enjoy the flowers and general beauties of Nature. Why should men *join* one church and go to it all their lives? Why should men hear only *one* kind of religion preached? Why should men listen all their lives to the preaching of one set of dogmas?

Supposing a man were to go once or twice a week for fifty years to see one tragedy or comedy played, would he be a better judge of the drama than if he had seen during that time a hundred tragedies and comedies? The man who goes all his life to one church is made a denominational or sectarian bigot. Is the object of churches to make bigots? That is about all they have made up to date.

We hold that it is not man's duty to *go* to any church, to *belong* to any church, or to *support* any church. *There are no religious duties.* Man is under no obligation whatever to worship God. Churches must be placed upon the same ground as other places of instruction and amusement, and if they cannot be supported by legitimate patronage then must they be given up. If a man goes to church to hear a minister, let him pay for it like a man, but if he is not pleased with what he hears he need not go again.

[218]

The notion that there is anything of greater value to be had in the church than elsewhere cannot be defended. This idea does not fool people of any sense. The pulpit has no divine message for the world, but generally talks about what no one knows anything about. Intelligent people who do not go to church have come to the conclusion that they can derive more pleasure from other sources. That is about the reason why they do not go to church.

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We cannot go ahead without leaving something behind.

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The convent is opposed to all that is sacred in human nature.

[219]

# Who Is The Greatest Living Man

Written November 19, 1893.

My answer is *Robert G. Ingersoll*.

One gets the conviction of this man's superiority by simply being in his presence. The outer man makes the impression of greatness upon the mind.

It is not the silent assertion of a splendid form however, that persuades us. A large body serves to accent and emphasize a large mind, but heroic physical proportions are not essential to greatness. The king of men to-day is not he who, like Saul, "from his shoulders and upward is higher than any of his people." Dr. Watts truly said: "The mind's the standard of the man."

But we cannot think of Robert G. Ingersoll with a diminutive physical equipment. His ample form radiates the man. But it is the royalty of his intellect that makes him great. It is in the kingdom of mind that he is master. Every mental tool fits his hand. He has wit, learning, imagination, eloquence, philosophy, and that rare quality, sense. He is a great lawyer, a great orator, a great poet, and a great man. He is too large for conventionalities, too large to respect what smaller minds have declared right, what weaker minds have made holy.

The intellectual grandeur of the man is no less apparent than his moral fearlessness. He is greatest where most men are little—in the face of a powerful and domineering superstition. He knows that the highest manhood makes the trappings of religion but the playthings of feeble minds.

His love of liberty is only equalled by his passion for truth, and he listens to the timid whisper of doubt with the chivalrous attention that others give to confident faith. He strips things of their clothes, of fashions, of falsehood, of pretension, and

demands that they stand for what they are and no more. He has the sincerity of greatness and his mind wears the white robe of spotless integrity.

Above all living men he possesses the power of utterance. He has the highest literary instinct, and never marries a mean word to a noble thought. He uses language as Phidias used marble. He is the literary artist of the age, and knows all the colors in the brain. He can make words laugh and weep.

This man has a large heart. He is filled with human sympathy. He does not care for gods, but he pities men. The springs of feeling feed the mighty rivers of thought that cross the continent of his mind. There is about him the warmth, the kindness of summer—Nature's season of forgiveness.

He has the highest philosophy—that of cheerfulness. The clouds never cover all his sky. He is the apostle of good humor, and preaches the gospel of sunshine to dry the tears of the world.

He is true to himself, loyal to his head and his heart, and upon his brow shines the jewel of self-respect.

[221]

Robert G. Ingersoll has the greatness of genius. It is useless to try to account for an intellectual giant. Dowered by Nature, parents are of small account. We cannot find the secret of his marvelous power by digging in a graveyard.

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Man is what he is, because his origin was what it was.

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God cannot be put into the national Constitution without putting liberty out of it.

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We do not want holy books, but true ones; not sacred writings, but sensible writings.



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