

INFIDELITY VERSUS ORTHODOXY.

We make the following extracts from Mr. Robert Ingersoll's lecture delivered in Boston, Mass., May 11th, 1884, as published in the Boston *Herald* of the day following:

Ladies and Gentlemen: It is inconceivable that any man who believes in the Christian religion should attack it, for if he believed in it, he would believe he puts in peril the eternity of his soul. But it is conceivable that, in a country where the orthodox religion is a reward for hypocrisy, thousands pretend to believe who do not. The man says to himself: "If I tell my honest thoughts, I can have no office--I can never be President." He says: If "I attack this religion, I cannot keep my wife and children." I tell them, "Don't dress your children in rags for the sake of expressing your thoughts. Do not try to improve your fellow-men, they are not worth it, Go to church and say 'Amen' at the proper time if you happen to be awake, and I will do the attacking for you."

There was a time when the astrologer said he could read the stars, but now he has gone and the astronomer has taken his place. There was a time when the soothsayer held a place, but he has been superseded by the priest and the parson. They are the fruit of the same tree, born of fear and ignorance. Now the preacher must go and give place to the teacher. They die hard, but what else can they do? We have done with the supernatural. There was a time when the prophet foretold the future, but the philosopher has taken his place. The supernatural is dying from this world, and let me tell you that *everything is liable to death excepting demonstrated truth*. The allopath who first bled his patient near unto death and then tried to bring him back to life is a thing of the past, but he died hard, and for years you could have seen in some place or other some ancient members of his profession looking for a patient whom he could bleed. There is to-day the same warfare between orthodoxy and science as existed between the old stage-coach and the railroad. But the coach had to give way, and the religion of our fathers, with its cruel hell and tyrant God, must die--it is not for this day and generation. They tell me it dies hard because it is of supernatural origin. Let me whisper in the ear of the Protestant, Catholicism dies hard, because the people are ignorant and the priests are cunning. Let me whisper in the ear of the Catholic, Protestantism dies hard because of the same thing. Let me whisper to both that Judaism died hard although thousands of years older, and Mohammedanism dies hard because intelligence is a plant of slow [R674 : page 3] growth. Let me whisper to you all, infidelity is increasing every day.

We are past midnight. If the ministers would tell their honest thoughts, you would find that they do not believe much more than I do, or know much more of the subject. Do you know why the clergy dislike me? They know that I know that they know what they do not know. They have been telling me for years that I am fighting a man of straw; that the church does not believe what I have been saying of them, and that I have been misled in reading their creeds; that I have been misled by taking the Bible as it appears to me. I used to hope that I was mistaken, and that they believed what they said. A little while ago the Congregational churches appointed a high joint commission, composed of professors. They came together and recommended a creed to the churches. These were men of advanced thought, the ablest of the time, who pretended to know the sciences, and to have read Darwin and Huxley. I read their creed, and I found I was right. I was not fighting a man of straw. The orthodox churches still believe it is necessary for you to believe something you do not understand. They say: "We believe in one God, one Father Almighty, maker of heaven and of earth, and of all things visible and invisible." But nobody knows if that is true, or whether there is a God. They say he is maker of everything, but nobody knows it. What was he doing before he started? What does an infinite personality mean?

In the orthodox creed there is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts or passions, but I

defy any man to know it, and no man can write a better description of nothing. This God walked in the garden and talked face to face with Moses, and he loves the children of men who believe his book and damns to eternal flame of fire the man who expresses his honest thought. There may be such a God for all I know, for this is the only planet I was ever on. There may be another world, but if the ministers know no more of it than this, it is hardly worth mentioning.

The next thing in this wonderful creed is the providence of God, which is over all events of the world. Here is an infinite and wise God, the governor of this world; but what evidence have we that this world is presided over by this infinitely wise God? How do you account for Russia and Siberia? That means all the human heart can suffer. How do you account for all the horrors of slavery? How do you account for the holy martyrs? Why should God allow men to be burned for believing in him? What is such a God worth! Why does he allow all these ills in the world? He who allows it, having the power to prevent it, is criminal. Who is responsible? He who makes man as he pleases-- God. A man told me a little while ago that there was a special providence in his life. He was going to sail on a ship, but he was delayed, and he did not go, and that ship went down, and he really thought that God had looked out for his poor little withered life and let five hundred go down to the depths. What did he suppose the other five hundred thought about a special providence? Why, only the other night in Washington the lightning struck the Young Men's Christian Association building, and in the same block with my office, too. Special providence. What nonsense!

The Congregational churches believe in the resurrection of the body. How they can, I do not know. My God shall be my reason. It is the only torch nature has given me in the sad night called life. I will go where that light leads me and take the consequences, not only in this world, but in all others, no matter where.

I also find that this creed says: 'We believe that Jesus Christ came to establish among men the kingdom of God, the reign of truth, and love of righteousness and peace.' That may have been his object, but what did he do? What has been the result? All the cunning instruments of slaughter have been invented by Christian nations. Born of "universal forgiveness" is the Krupp gun throwing a ball of two thousand pounds weight. How do you account for the thirty years' war in Europe; the war in Holland, the persecution of Scotland and Ireland by England? At the bottom of nearly all is superstition and heartlessness born of this religion. They tell us in the creed that they believe in the ultimate prevalence of the kingdom of Christ over the earth. Is it so? You only convert a few thousand of the fifty millions born each year. Are you going to do this by your missionaries? You never converted an *intelligent* Chinaman or Hindoo. You cannot do it unless you go there and board them. [R674 : page 4] When the money stops, your Christianity ceases.

"They say when a man dies nothing remains but to damn him if he is not a Christian. Congregationalism makes hell as hot as ever. If their doctrine is true, Benjamin Franklin is in hell. He wanted to break chains here; he is a convict there. Thomas Jefferson has gone to his reward, as he did not believe in the doctrine. Nearly all the revolutionary heroes had not been born but once, and they are there. Old Ethan Allen adds to the joys of hell. The soldiers of 1812 went to hell long ago, and nearly all the soldiers of our civil war are in God's prison, compared to which Andersonville was a paradise. 'Great tidings of joy!' Every idiot goes to heaven, and the less brain you have the better your chance. Such men as Humboldt are in prison forever. They are damned long ago. They are crying for water. Any civilized man ought to be damned who subscribes another dollar for such preaching.

"They say I take away consolation when I try to put out the fire of hell. If all believed really in 'orthodoxy' this world would be a vast madhouse.

"Priests collect toll from fear and ignorance, and know nothing of an hereafter. I leave the dead under the feeling of hope, and I HOPE FOR JOY FOR THE WHOLE HUMAN RACE."

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