



Another Letter

to

Col. Ingersoll.

* * * But are you sure that Reason is the only light? Did Reason teach the first and most important lesson of your life? Did Reason light you to your mother's breast and teach you how to nurse? If Reason could not teach you how to live can Reason teach you how to die? * * *



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ANOTHER

LETTER TO MR. INGERSOLL

FROM A BELIEVER.

"A little philosophy inclineth man's mind to Atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion."—BACON.

"Indisputably, the firm believers in the gospel have the great advantage over all others—for this simple reason, that, if true they will have their reward in the hereafter, and, if there be no hereafter, they can be but with the infidel in his eternal sleep, having had the assistance of an exalted hope through life, without subsequent disappointment, since (at the worst for them) 'out of nothing, nothing can arise,' not even sorrow."—LORD BYRON.

1888.
CHARLES M. WOODRUFF,
DETROIT, MICH.

INTRODUCTORY.

For some time the writer has devoted an occasional spare hour to applying the legal rules of evidence and investigation to the doctrines of Christianity. The results of his labors he hopes to present to the public in some form, in the early future, under the title: "A Question of Fact."

In the meantime, this little brochure, hastily prepared, is issued for whatever good it may accomplish; and with the hope that it may awaken some truly honest skeptic from the dream of security to which the soothing sophistry of Mr. Ingersoll has lulled him, to the end that he may begin a search for that true rest which is only found in the assurances of faith and Christian experience.

The author is aware that there are greater, and abler combatants in the field, but to whomsoever this criticism may occur, he would suggest the thought that the soldier does not refrain from firing his rifle at the enemy simply because he hears the thunder of the more efficient and destructive artillery.

DETROIT, Mich., Dec. 8, 1887.

ANOTHER LETTER TO MR. INGERSOLL.

COL. ROBERT G. INGERSOLL:

Inasmuch as I do not enjoy the pleasure of your personal friendship, I will not employ the terms of endearment recently passed between yourself and Dr. Field. I only know you through your writings and speeches. This is the only acquaintance which most Christian people have with you, and we may therefore be excused if we do really look upon you as somewhat of a "monster." Not because of your unbelief! Not because of your championship of the "innocence of honest error!" Not because of your doubt. The Christian world does not regard Darwin as a "monster." Humboldt—one of your heart's idols—never made a like complaint. Herbert Spencer does not limp whiningly around, and, between the sobs welling from a broken heart, complain that he has been called a "monster." I admit that billingsgate is not argument; epithets are not facts; but who began this war of unkind words?

You should remember that, though Christians, we fall short of our High Example. There is only One possessor of grace enough to turn the other cheek. We are moved by passion and actuated by resentment. This should not be, but it is. It is not because we are believers, but because we are human. So when we find hurled at our heads such verbose missiles as "hypocrite," "igno-

rance," "superstition," "bigotry," it is only human in us to look around for something to throw back at you. When you tell us that because of our orthodoxy we are "petrified in mind, whooping around intellectually simply to save the funeral expenses of our souls," you should not complain, if, in the abject poverty of our vocabulary, we only call you a "monster." It aggravates the mildest of us to learn from your charitable lips, that we are "living fossils embedded in the rock called faith." Is this the way to redeem a poor benighted victim of superstition? Do you open one's eyes by blacking them? Remember that to us deluded, ignorant, superstitious, credulous people, religion is sacred. Remember, too, how you have ridiculed, derided, mocked, jeered and scorned our Holy Faith; that which is as dear to us as kin and life itself. What can you expect? Ridicule does not enlighten; it seeks to wither rather than to win. Derision does not convince; it wounds instead of heals. Scorn does not convert; it repels and not attracts. If we credit you with an "honest doubt," or with the expression of a "sincere thought," it must be in spite of all your lectures and all your essays. Your speeches and your writings do not bear the mark of honesty or the brand of sincerity. You only are at fault if your purposes and your motives are misconstrued.

You say the first question between Dr. Field and yourself is as to the "innocence of honest error—as to the right to express an honest thought." Will you please inform us when error is dishonest? Is it not really always honest? Dishonest error is hypocrisy, and hypocrisy is crime. But if error is innocent you should have spared us the opprobrious epithets with which you seek to overwhelm us. You should treat poor Calvin

with greater magnanimity. You should never have said as you do in the same article: "In regard to Agassiz, it is just to say that he furnished a vast amount of testimony in favor of the truth of the theories of Charles Darwin, and then denied the correctness of those theories—preferring the good opinion of Harvard for a few days to the lasting applause of an intelligent world." Is not Agassiz entitled to the same credit for sincerity as Humboldt, Darwin or yourself?

But let us follow this idea of the "innocence of honest error" to its logical sequence. An act based upon an innocent thought must be an innocent act. Was J. Wilkes Booth innocent of assassination? Was Charles J. Guiteau innocent of murder? Was Jefferson Davis innocent of treason? Booth believed he was serving his country; Guiteau imagined he was serving God; Jefferson Davis to this day claims to be the father of modern patriotism. Don't you see where you are led? Error, though honest, is never innocent; if it were we might acquit some of the greatest villains of history of their most terrible crimes. Error, while always sincere, is never entirely harmless.

You do not fail to mention the names of a few honorable philosophers and scientists who were or are skeptics—not skeptics because of their philosophy, nor philosophers because of their skepticism. You seem to think that an atheistic philosopher or scientist is an argument against Christianity. If so it must follow that a Christian philosopher or scientist is an argument against agnosticism. There is, in mathematics, a process of simplified calculation denominated cancellation. We cancel the argument of Humboldt with that of Newton; Darwin with that of Agassiz. Humboldt and Darwin are the only personified arguments you produce

in your latest effort, but you have more at your tongue's end. Bring them forth and we will continue the erasing process, until one side or the other is exhausted. It will then give us pleasure to invite you over to the Lord's side where the balance of philosophy and science will remain.

But you have read the Bible and you conclude that it is not true, which leads you to inquire if it is your duty to remain silent. That is not for a Christian to answer. Indeed a Christian cannot answer it. Your duty in the premises must be based upon grounds which an ignorant, superstitious Christian cannot comprehend. The Christians' rule of conduct is the polygamy-teaching, slavery-defending, robbery-instructing, and murder-instigating Bible. This is why Christians are such a polygamous, slave owning, thieving and murdering lot of people. This is why the reformation of abuses like slavery and polygamy is delegated to atheists and skeptics. We cannot answer your question fairly from a Christian standpoint. But, although while dying he called for the crucifix, and expired with his great heart fixed upon the image of the Savior, you have claimed Benjamin Franklin to be one of your sect. We will let him answer your question. He would tell you that it was your duty to remain silent. He would tell you as he told Jefferson and Paine, that, whereas, nothing but good followed the teaching of Christianity, the preaching of the Gospel ought to be encouraged. Franklin would also say now, as he said then, that, whereas infidelity, though perhaps true, could accomplish nothing but evil, it ought not to be proclaimed. It is true that Franklin, while yet in his 'teens, wrote and published a screed against religion, but when his vision became clearer, and his judgment became riper, he

burned all the copies he could find, and consoled himself with the thought that he had not done much harm anyway, because he had printed only a hundred copies, and circulated but a few of these. The writing and printing of this pamphlet he himself called one of the "mistakes" of his life. Two of his other deeds which he was pleased to term among the "errors of his life," were the embezzlement of 50 pounds he had collected for a friend, and the seduction of a young girl who bore him an illegitimate son as the fruit of his error. This is the category in which Benjamin Franklin places the propagation of infidelity.

But *how* did you read the Bible? There are several ways of reading it. There are several purposes in reading it. I knew an infidel who had read the Bible in order to erase all that he called nasty and vulgar in it. I picked up his Bible and found here and there a great, black, ugly mark drawn across the words. I enquired why he did this. He replied: "In order to make it a fit book to have in the house." Like yourself he was an admirer of Shakespeare. I took up his Shakespeare and glanced over the pages. There was not an erasure in the whole volume. I asked him what it was that made Shakespeare so immaculate, but received no reply. Have you read your Bible with the same spirit that this gentleman did his?

But you affirm that there are millions who do not read the Bible. We reply, there are millions who do. Is this argument? You have read the Scriptures and do not believe them; therefore you conclude they are false. We answer, that men quite as capable of forming a correct opinion as yourself have read them and believe them; therefore they must be true. But is this logic? Whether we believe a fact or not, does not alter a fact.

Facts are not made by believing nor destroyed by denying. The Bible is or it is not true; if true it is a revelation of facts which Reason can not teach.

You insist that "if God has made a revelation to man it must have been addressed to his reason." You are right. Your assertion in this respect is a club with which I easily knock you out.* Revelation, not being designed to teach man geography or astronomy, humored his misconceptions in these branches of knowledge in order to bring the spiritual relations of man to his Creator within his comprehension. If God had spoken in the language of Heaven man would not have understood him. When you attempt to teach your children you address yourself to the understanding of your children. Your boy did not learn his alphabet from a grammar. This sentence of yours is a sentence of death to all objections to the Bible which are founded on alleged misstatements of scientific truths in it. Looking back from the present we regard Revelation in the light of the teachings of science in the age in which it was made. In that light we readily understand it. When Revelation referred to the "ends of the earth," Reason—your infallible guide to all truth—taught that the earth was flat like a pancake, rather than round like a ball. If Revelation had intimated that the world was a sphere, Reason would have insisted that it could not be so, because one could never stand feet up, on the bottom side of a huge ball without falling headlong into space. A revelation made in the days of Moses, and based upon the science of to-day would have remained a puzzle

*In his article in the North American Review Mr. Ingersoll alleges that one of Dr. Field's sentences is "a cord with which I easily tie your hands."

which Reason could never solve. Revelation was most assuredly "addressed to the reason of man."

You "admit that Reason is a small and feeble flame, a flickering torch by stumblers carried in the starless night—blown and flared by passion's storm"—but are you sure "it is the *only* light?" Are you sure that if you "extinguish that, naught remains?" Did Reason teach the first and most important lesson of your life? Did Reason light you to your mother's breast and teach you how to nurse? If Reason could not teach you how to live, can Reason teach you how to die? Faith guides us to eternal life, Instinct shows the door to earthly existence, while it is left for Reason, least important of the three, to guide us in the minor details. So Reason is not always "the supreme and final test."

You ask us what we think of "the Christian mother who expects to be happy in heaven, with her child a convict in the eternal prison." We know of no such mother. A godless son is the source of a Christian mother's greatest grief. She prays, and weeps and agonizes over her poor godless boy; she pleads, entreats and begs. When she finds him surfeited with your sophistical skepticism she prays again, and trusts that God will hear. When the idol of her heart quotes you in answer to her warm appeals, she calls you "a monster" and can not be blamed. But whence sprang the "sacred relations of life, and all the passions of the heart?" May they not really be destroyed by the same Infinity which created them, and may not new and more endearing ones be established in their stead? We Christians do not hope they can, and so we pray, exhort, and scatter tracts, build churches and missions, send colporteurs home and abroad, and in every conceivable way work for the salvation of our foes as well as friends. No

Christian hopes to "look with stony, unreplying, happy eyes upon the miseries of the lost." Do churches, missions, schools, asylums, and hospitals prove such a hope? Is fervent prayer, earnest endeavor, zealous effort evidence of such a trust?

It is *not* a crime to investigate, to think, to reason, to observe nor to express an honest thought; but it is infamous to employ the arts of sophistry in the consideration of a question of such awful moment as the eternal welfare of a human soul. If it is important to bring to bear upon the ordinary questions of life, which affect only person and property, correct principles of logic and sound rules of investigation, how much more important is this when eternity is involved! If the pettifogger who, by false reasoning, strives to secure a miscarriage of justice, is to be despised of all men, what shall we say of the dishonest doubter who employs his sophistry in the determination of the everlasting fate of an undying soul.

You inquire if credulity is a virtue. We suppose you think it is when it requires us to believe that our great-grand-parents were monkeys, and our earlier progenitors mollusks. When it demands that we believe that man owes his origin to a shapeless protoplast, which, having no eyes to see was yet fascinated; with no ears to hear was yet attracted; with no heart to break was yet smitten; with no lips to lisp affection's oft-told tale yet wooed, with no arms to clasp to its throbbless breast the dear little proto-ess it loved best, yet won, and wedded, and in the course of events conceived and produced a generation of protoplasm just a trifle higher up in the scale of life. You will admit that when credulity asks us to believe these things it is a virtue. Credulity, however, is probably a vice when it requires us to believe

that this mighty universe, whose bounds the telescopic vision of man is unable to discern, whose billions of planets are governed by laws so immutable that we can calculate to the second the position which many of them will occupy a century hence, was created and did not come by chance; and that the Creator is as infinite in His wisdom and power as the universe is in its extent. Credulity is probably a vice when it demands that we credit the idea that man is not destined to be made by disappointments, sorrows, woes, griefs, oppression and wrong, fit food for worms, but rather to become a soul qualified to appreciate and therefore to enjoy the everlasting pleasures of Heaven.

But, seriously, credulity is neither a virtue nor a vice. Something depends upon the way in which we exercise it. Confidence in the promises of a shoemaker is generally misplaced, but the traveller who don't believe in a time-table is very apt to get left. One who places very much faith in the disinterestedness of a politician is quite foolish, but he who listens to the exhortation of a Christian preacher can certainly come to no great harm. The storm emblems of the Signal Service may not always be reliable, but the farmer who don't believe it is going to rain when he hears the low murmur of the distant thunder in the west will often lose his crops. Nature warns us of impending dangers and we suffer if we don't believe. We feel a draft, if we are credulous enough we shut the window and avoid a cold. There is a danger flag for almost every human ill. Health and even life do often hang upon our faith. If we are thus warned by reason and by instinct from the evils of an earthly life, is it folly to suppose that we may be cautioned by inspiration against an everlasting death? While God in nature warns us against earthly ills, He

does not forget to caution us against far greater because everlasting danger, and happy is the man whose credulity permits him to believe the warning.

Dr. Field admits what Christians have always maintained: That persecution for opinion's sake is infamous, which gives you an opportunity to assert that God will, according to our creed, torture through all the endless years the man who entertains an honest doubt, and you close the paragraph with: "Beyond this, inconsistency cannot go. At this point absurdity becomes infinite." Let us see if there is really any inconsistency here. You seem to imagine that man's sole offence against God is, according to Christian doctrine, unbelief, whereas unbelief in itself, is not necessarily a sin. It is not so much that one is condemned for unbelief, or for the expression of an honest thought, as that unbelief precludes immunity from sins already committed. This principle is worked out every day and if it proves true in things temporal it may in things eternal. Why not? A man accidentally takes poison and will die. The doctor prescribes an antidote. The man has no faith in it and does not take it. He expresses the "honest thought" that that little dose cannot relieve the increasing torture that is racking his body. He dies. Is it not an awful thought that simply because that poor man would not believe the doctor he must die? To say that that man is punished because he can't believe, because he expresses an honest thought, is just as consistent as to say that the sinner who don't believe the gospel of salvation is damned for expressing his honest opinion. The analogy is perfect. Man is tainted with the virus of sin, which will cause his eternal destruction. Christ is the Physician who prescribes the certain antidote, and only when man has faith enough to accept the remedy will he

recover. Truth is not more consistent in all its component parts than is Christianity.

But unbelief, when positive, does some very wicked things. "We must admit," you affirm, "that the Jews believed in the true God." Sometimes they did, often they did not. In Malachi they are reprov'd for idolatry, adultery and infidelity; and the "Messenger" is promised, but when the messenger came they rejected Him. They did not "crucify Him at the behest of Jehovah," but they hated Him with the same spiteful, venomous hatred that a certain class of noisy unbelievers do to-day, and for very much the same reason. Christ had exposed the hypocrisy and oppression of the scribes and Pharisees, and had drawn around Him the despised masses who had not before known what a sweet thing religion was, when once stripped of its formality and pomp. He righteously and unscathingly denounced the syndicates, trusts, combinations and monopolies of His time, and He was hated by them just the same as He would be hated and despised to-day, if He should come and repeat His history in our time. Malignant unbelief and cruel infidelity were the wicked murderers of the Blessed Redeemer.

Right here I am reminded that you have made the point that, according to our creed, it was necessary for Christ to die in order that man might be saved; therefore the Jews who crucified the Savior only assisted in the plan of salvation, and ought to be rewarded rather than punished. You must remember, if this point again occurs to you, that throughout your last article you lay unwonted stress upon the *intent* of an act; you have much to claim for an "honest thought" and an "honest error." In law *intent* is the essence of a crime. You have read the story of the deacon, who, intend-

ing to put a dime in the contribution box, made the mistake of dropping in a five dollar gold piece. Upon its return being refused, he attempted to console himself with the remark that "he would get credit for it in Heaven, anyway." "Oh, no," was the reply, "you will only get credit for the dime you intended to put in." The *intent* of the Jews will determine their reward or punishment. I went to one of your lectures, honestly a little skeptical; I came away with a strong faith. Will you claim any reward for the result?

A myriad of spires pointing toward the blue arch above, thousands of asylums for the unfortunate and needy, hundreds of hospitals for the sick, flocks of white-winged angels of mercy, meekly flitting here and there, with untiring zeal, bent on some mission of kindness and love, hundreds of thousands loving Christian souls prompting willing hands to deeds of charity, and millions of Christian hearts beating in sweet sympathy with the weak and fallen, all give the lie direct to your assertion that "a belief in the true God" does not make men charitable and just. The truth is that Christians are such a noble, honest, true, and generous class of people, that an inconsistent one is a glaring exception, and is generally given undue prominence. The effect of religion seems to be to make men so good that when some Christian does transgress, an ordinary two line item is padded until it fills a column, over which is placed a six line scare-head, beginning with "Another Sunday-school Superintendent Gone Wrong." You would know, Mr. Ingersoll, if you were a journalist rather than a lawyer, that newspapers don't often make much of every day occurrences. It is only the monstrosities of life to which they give great attention. They have advertised you pretty well.

But you avow an unwonted confidence in man when you intimate that "any honest man of average intelligence, having absolute control of the rain, could do vastly better than is being done." The idea is too foolish for refutation. It would be difficult to find an *honest* man who would undertake the job. He would be a very reckless individual at any rate—more foolhardy than an amateur base ball umpire. He would fail to satisfy the agricultural and sporting communities at one and the same time. He would have to pacify Mrs. Mulcahey for spoiling her washing, or Mrs. O'Brien for allowing her cabbage to scorch. His honesty would be severely tried. What a snap he might have! what a boodle he could control! What opportunities for a corporation, a monopoly, a syndicate or a "trust." Our fuel and our artificial light, our food and our raiment, are already in the control of man. God grant that the sunlight and the air, the rain and the snow, may never fall under his dominion. Our experience in man's control of other commodities is not encouraging.

In every lecture or essay you bring in the poor slave mother whose child has been torn from her breast. It is a sort of "property" which you do not fail to utilize on every possible occasion—in every act of every performance. You propound this conundrum: "Does it not seem that God must have felt a touch of shame when the poor slave mother—one that has been robbed of her babe—knelt and with clasped hands, in a voice broken with sobs, commenced her prayer with the words: 'Our Father.'" A slave mother who would have commenced such a prayer, had a consolation and a comfort of which you, in the goodness of your heart, would rob her. In the after days Faith lightened her burdens, Belief soothed her sorrows, Religion calmed her aching heart,

and trusting Hope cheered her drooping spirits and wiped away her tears. You would have robbed her of these and been more cruel than the slave-owner himself. You would have said: "We stand between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities. You may never see your child again, and the only punishment your tyrannical oppressor may endure will be the 'sweet embrace of the dreamless sleep of death.'"

When you assert that "the most religious nations have been the most immoral, the cruelest and the most unjust," you forget that all of wrong, of tyranny and oppression of which Christian nations have been guilty, has been borrowed from pagan countries. The Christians of the first centuries learned the art of persecution and torment from noble pagan Rome. If they had more closely followed the example and teachings of Jesus Christ there would not be a history of bloodshed and crime for the enlightened Christianity of to-day to blush for. The ancient believers were too apt pupils of pagan civilization for the honor of the Cross. But, Mr. Ingersoll, you believe in the doctrine of the "survival of the fittest"—a doctrine which ought to give us of to-day, a better poet than Shakespeare, Virgil, Homer or David; a more eloquent orator than Demosthenes or Cicero; a greater warrior than Hannibal or Cæsar. Where now is your extolled Egypt? Where now is your ancient Rome? Where now is proud Greece? Where have they been for centuries back? You have been pleased, upon former occasions, to compare the governments of man with what you were pleased to call the government of God—by which I understand you to mean what we Christians know as God's kingdom. I want to belong to a government which has some "staying qualities about it." I don't want to pin my faith

to the rotten corpses of departed Egypt, dead Rome, defunct Greece. Rather let me claim allegiance to the eternal kingdom of God.

While in the main you have an apparent advantage over Dr. Field as a logician, nevertheless you occasionally commit a serious blunder. You assert that the "instinct of self-preservation holds society together," that "religion itself is born of this instinct, * * * self-preservation lies at the foundation of worship." On the same page you affirm that the effect of Religion's teachings "is to weaken the ties that hold families and states together." How can this be? Religion, born of an instinct which holds society together, yet weakens the ties of society! I do not know what the rhetorician would call this, but common people will say it is nonsense. "Beyond this inconsistency can not go. At this point absurdity becomes infinite."

But *does* the instinct of self-preservation hold society together? It did not prevent the disintegration of the Roman empire. It did not stay the fall of Greece. Historians, modern and ancient, Christian and pagan, have a provoking way of dating the decline of most fallen nations from the moment of their abandonment of the sturdy virtues of their founders for the embrace of luxury and vice. The instinct of self-preservation, however, is a potent principle, and when coupled with wisdom will save one from Hell. It may "lie at the foundation of worship," but that does not render worship foolish or vain. One can hardly understand your logic. Do you mean to argue: Men fear God, therefore there is no God; Men seek preservation from future retribution, therefore there is no retribution?

The fear of God will do more for the individual and the state in one minute than the instinct of self-preservation.

ation will in a century. This is a homely way of putting it, but it is a truth just the same. The instinct of self-preservation does not govern men half so much as the instinct—or whatever you may call it—of self-aggrandizement. The disruption of the American government is seriously threatened by a conglomerate mass of syndicalism, “trustism,” bossism, corruption, bribery, fraud and crime, and “the instinct of self-preservation” don’t offer any hope of salvation; but when employers begin to fear the God who promises to “be a swift witness against those who oppress the hireling in his wages,” and when employees begin to fear the God who exhorts the wageworker to be mindful of his employer’s interests, then a beam of hope will pierce the darkness, and we may trust for more rays of sunlight. Your “instinct of self-preservation” does not make one honest—it may compel him to steal, or even to murder; but a genuine fear of God will hold the robber’s hand, and stay the assassin’s knife.

Christianity is the friend of social order and its best preserver. While Infidelity bids men “eat, drink and be merry for to-morrow we die,” Christianity holds a brighter, happier world in view, and teaches men not to crush the tenderest feelings of humanity in trying to get all there is of earth. Skepticism cries: “The grave doth swallow all,” and with that inscribed upon their banners, a horde of heartless seekers after gain, do override their weaker fellows in the godless race for gold. Whence comes the turmoil, strife and struggle of these latter days—the crime, the woe, the want and misery, the discord ’mong the people and the nations of the world? Are they the breed of faith in better things beyond, or are they not the progeny of the idea of “a dreamless sleep of death?”

“What are the retributions of history?” You answer that “the honest were burned at the stake, the patriotic, the generous and the noble were allowed to die in dungeons; whole races were enslaved; mothers were robbed of their babes. Those who committed these crimes wore crowns, and those who justified these infamies were adorned with the tiara.” Yet afterwards you say: “Whoever commits a crime against another must, to the utmost of his power in this world, and in another if there be one, make full and ample restitution, and in addition must bear the natural consequences of his offense.” This is utter nonsense. When in this world does the martyr enjoy his reward? When can the oppressor replace his victim’s head, or the tyrant put life in the corpse of the man he has slain? There must surely be a hereafter. You cannot believe that heroic Martyrdom is to lose its reward in blank oblivion while Tyranny, Bigotry and Intoleration sink into the sweet embrace of a “dreamless sleep of death,” which you say is “next to a life of joy.” If, then, there is a hereafter, can you truthfully assert that Injustice and Wrong are triumphant so long as there is the possibility that Truth and Right may have another round on the other side of the river of Death?

We now come to the grave where both Dr. Field and yourself have been before. I admit it would be a strange place to read a Presbyterian Confession of Faith, and your supposition is a violent one. Christian preachers do not presume to see within the recesses of the throbbless heart all that once beat therein. There is generally room for the sweet hope that, unseen by mortal eye, a “saving grace” had before death done its work within. But I accept your suppositious dialogue as possible, and I affirm that your philosophic assurances, based upon

admitted ignorance of the subject you were talking about, would have afforded the weeping woman no consolation. Her tears would hardly quench the fire of indignation in her eyes as she would cry in the agony of her soul: "Behold the wreck your sophistry has wrought. Why did you not keep your misery to yourself? Why should you crush the hope and blight the faith of my poor boy? Talk not to me of doubt and unbelief. Your sympathy does not soothe; your assurances do not comfort; your speech is golden, but beneath the shallow coating is concealed a mass of bitterest gall." You *would* be a very proper person to comfort the bereaved. You might place your hands upon the shoulder of an aged, trembling roué, between whom and the merited punishment for his sins there is now only a very narrow, and a rapidly narrowing gulf, and you might soothe him thus: "Fear is the jailer of the mind; therefore fear not, old sinner. Though the 'narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities' is filled with the ruin of your lust, there is nothing beyond more terrible than the 'sweet embrace of the dreamless sleep of death.' You have never felt remorse before, why suffer from it now?" Ah! Mr. Ingersoll, if you have comforting qualities about you, it is time you began to exercise them in alleviating the sorrows of the wretched, and dispelling the distress of the forlorn. Some family to whom the presence of a minister of the gospel in the hour of bereavement would be an aggravation may need *your* services. Please pass around your card and let them know where you are found.

Here is something, Mr. Ingersoll, which is hard for us poor, ignorant, benighted, superstitious, credulous people to comprehend. You say you do not know "whether there is or is not a God;" that "we cannot say whether

death is a wall or a door." Yet you profess to know a great deal about it. If a God exists, you know that He cannot step between an act and its natural effects; you know He has nothing to do with punishment, nothing to do with reward. Here is positive, certain, absolute knowledge based upon confessed and utter ignorance. To us simple, believing people this seems very unscientific and illogical. Knowledge is a superstructure which requires a foundation. You knock out the foundation and suspend the building from some imaginary beam strung across space, with its ends resting on vacancy. You assure us that "an infinite God could not change the relation between the diameter and circumference of a circle." If I were versed in rhetoric I would know what to call this statement. As it is I will denominate it an absurdity on its very face; for a God who couldn't change the relation between the diameter and circumference of a circle would not be infinite.

Your illustration of the seducer and his victim is one which has often troubled me. I, myself, cannot conceive of any justice in the salvation of the betrayer and the damnation of the betrayed. I remember, however, that the world generally regards the two in the same aspect that you imagine religion does. In the world the ruined are scorned and repelled, while fulsome flattery is often lavished upon the base wretch who does not hesitate to heap with infamy the reputation of the poor girl he has debauched. This rank injustice meets us on every side. It is a characteristic of heathendom, savagery and barbarity. It is the same in China, Japan, Asia, all Europe and America. It is the same in all ages, and in all religions—except the religion of Jesus Christ. It is the same under Confucius, Buddha, and Mohammed. Christianity alone offers a relief to the eye of Justice,

from the uniformity of this scene of misery and wrong. Christ's treatment of the poor woman taken in adultery almost proves His divinity of itself, and affords an answer to your objection.

The practical application of your objection is this: so far as my knowledge extends I know of no betrayer who is in any immediate danger of going to heaven. I look around me in the churches I attend and I see no seducer bowing his head in worship. There may be, of course, but I have no moral or legal right to presume so in the absence of even an accusation. On the other hand I have heard you upon more than one occasion, and every time I have beheld among the most enthusiastic applauders of your blasphemy, old roués who valued the remembrances of their many wrecks very much as the savage prizes the scalps that hang about his belt. It is in the possibility of "the dreamless sleep of death"—the hope that the grave swallows all—that the seducer seeks his immunity from the punishment of his crimes. The cries of his victim do not fill his heart with remorse. The only remorse he feels is actuated by the fear of an eternal hell, but this remorse does not bring forth repentance and without repentance he cannot be saved.

You "believe in the manly doctrine that every human being must bear the consequences of his acts, and that no man can be justly saved or damned on account of the goodness or the wickedness of another." Your statement, though plausible, is daily disproved by the actual experiences of life. Hundreds escape the consequences of their acts, and many wrong doers are saved from punishment on account of the goodness of their friends and kindred. Then where do you find room for the merited punishment of crime and oppression. According to your creed there is no certainty of any punish-

ment hereafter, and you surely do not believe that in this life there are any "consequences" commensurate with the crimes of murder, rape and seduction, which are certain to follow. It would seem the more murders one committed the greater punishment he should receive. The converse is the conclusion of your argument. A man in high temper may strike down and kill his fellow in a quarrel. This is the least heinous form of homicide known to the law; and yet that man will suffer from the pangs of remorse a thousand-fold more than he who makes murder the business of his life. Impelled by the heat of passion a young man may seduce a girl, and never afterwards be free from the bitter stings of conscience, but it is doubtful if your man of the town, who numbers his victims by scores, ever suffered one moment's loss of sleep on account of his multiplied offenses. The only thing that worries the professional murderer and seducer is the fear of hell, and the only refuge they seek is in your dubious assurances of "a dreamless sleep of death."

You have an idea that the whole scheme of salvation rests upon belief; you make no account of the item of repentance—a very essential one. Evangelists sometimes make the same blunder. The most beautiful illustration of the doctrine of salvation I have ever read is this: perhaps you have seen it before:

"Some Christians act as though they thought when 'the Lord said, 'Suffer little children to come unto Me' that He had a raw-hide under His mantle—they act as if 'they thought so. That is all wrong. I tell my children 'this: Go where you may, commit what crime you may, 'fall to what depths of degradation you may, I can 'never shut my arms, my heart or my door to you. As 'long as you live you shall have one sincere friend; do 'not be afraid to tell anything wrong you have done.

"* * * When your child confesses to you that he has committed a fault, take the child in your arms, and let it feel your heart beat against its heart, and raise your children in the sunlight of love, and they will be sunbeams to you along the pathway of life."

These words will sound familiar to you for they are your words; the offer which God holds out to His children is the same. How it would break your heart, though, if your child would meet this warm expression of parental love and forgiveness with scoffs and jeers, with ridicule and scorn. You would then be able to appreciate the agony which wrung the great heart of Jesus, as He looked upon the city of His own, which had rejected Him, and cried: "Oh! Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, *and ye would not.*"

You are unduly exercised over the fate of the "countless billions of the human race, who have never had an opportunity of doing right." It is not heresy to trust that a merciful Father has provided for all of His children; we can safely leave that to Him. But whatever excuse *they* may have upon this score, it will not avail *you*.

While life can never be "exceedingly joyous to one who is acquainted with its miseries, its burdens and its tears," there is in Christianity a comfort and a peace which assuages all griefs and soothes all sorrows. Any misfortune or adversity which may befall the follower of Jesus can not overcome him—in spite of them he may be perfectly happy. It is sympathy with others in misery, want and woe that makes the believer sad. His life, which might be an absolutely happy one in his

faith, is alloyed by the pain he feels at the thought that thousands of his fellows are doomed to destruction by the willful rejection of God's mercy and love.

It is too true that things are mixed in this world. "Darkness follows light;" the good and evil dwell together; sunshine and shadow alternate each other; virtue and vice walk side by side; truth and error are in constant company. But there is coming a day of separation and classification; a day of "sorting out" the good and casting the bad away; a day when the great Husbandman will permit the winds of judgment to blow through the falling grain and carry off the worthless chaff. What greater Hell could be conceived than for lust, covetousness, hatred, pride, envy, intemperance, spite and revenge to be compelled to live in its own company untempered with the benign influence of purity, charity, mercy, love, peace, sobriety and forgiveness? What more peaceful and glorious Heaven could be imagined than for all the virtues to enjoy their mutual companionship unmarred by the presence of any vice? The fact of such an eventual separation, and the results of such a separation are reasonable and philosophic.

You are somewhat confused, Mr. Ingersoll, when you assert that darkness follows light around the globe. Not only by the Biblical account, but by every scientific theory of the creation ever advanced, light follows darkness. You have reversed the order of things, and it makes all the difference in the world. The future state is infinitely better and it is likewise infinitely worse than this—depending entirely upon which future state you choose. You should take the glare of hell as the danger signal of a bottomless abyss ahead, over which there is no bridge.

In the light of human experience and observation your assertions concerning the influences of Christ's teachings upon the family relation are the senseless jabbering of a harmless idiot. It is appropriate "in a mad-house." The testimony of even the skeptical world substantiates the beneficial influence of Christianity upon the family, society and the state. You "object to Christianity because it divides the family." It is true that from the beginning many who have espoused the cause of Christ have been driven from the "sacred roof-tree" by the persecution of their unnatural anti-Christian kindred. It is true that Christ pronounced a blessing upon such as these. You should visit your censure upon the head of spiteful unbelief for this state of affairs. I will not, however, believe that you are as woefully ignorant as you pretend of the true intent of Christ's blessing. I can come to no other conclusion than that, for the sake of making a point, you deliberately pervert the spirit of the blessing. You know that those to whom it was promised were not the Christians who should drive their kindred from their houses because they lacked faith; it was to those who were to be cruelly disowned and discarded; aye, bound and gagged, and cast in dungeons by their parents and brethren because of an "honest belief" in the Savior; it was to those who were to be denied the privilege of "entertaining an honest thought" by their pagan friends.

What agency is there more potent and more persistent in the defense of the marriage relations—the relations of the family—against the varied assaults of "free-love" and other isms which largely comprise the National conventions of free-thinkers, to which you do not fail to make an annual pilgrimage—of which you have been, if you are not now, the presiding spirit? Whence

has more vigorous protests against the looseness of our divorce laws arisen than from the church?

You think "it is better to love man than God." The truth is, the better one loves God the better he loves his fellow men, and the dearer to him are wife and children. The better one serves Christ the better he serves humanity. Christianity teaches us that in doing good to all men, in visiting the sick, in clothing and feeding the poor, in comforting the fatherless, in housing the homeless, in sheltering the aged and infirm, in performing other works of charity and love we are serving Christ; and this is *how* we can serve God.

You are "an enemy to the orthodox Sabbath." You do not apprise us of this for the first time. In your blasphemous ravings at Whitney's Opera House on the evening of February 8, 1885, you informed us that "God had stolen one-seventh of man's time." Ask the brain-weary clerk, as he lays down his pen, and thanks Heaven that it is Saturday night, if he thinks the establishment of one day out of every seven as a day of rest, was an act of theft; ask the tired merchant, when he puts up the shutters at the close of the week, if he feels that he is robbed, because he need not take them down again for forty-eight hours; ask the overburdened and underpaid laborer, as he wipes the perspiration from his brow, and congratulates himself that he will not be obliged to crawl out of bed at half-past four in the morning, if he has any particular longing for the reign of Ingersollism, when there would be no intermission of work from one year's end to another; ask the shop girl or seamstress if she never went home from her work with a heart lightened by the joyful anticipation of a day's respite from weary toil. Workingmen, think! Think of what the world would be without the Sabbath.

Work, work, work, work, work, work from January first until the very last day of the year. No intermission. No cessation. No milestones in the toilsome journey of life to greet the longing eye or cheer the weary soul. Realize, if you can, the monotony. Would it not drive us mad, and make this a world of raving lunatics, whose chorused cry would be for "rest, rest, rest?"

How long since is it that you have been convinced that "Christianity has changed rapidly during the last century." You must undoubtedly recall the "owl hoot" figure you have been wont to use. It does not serve your purpose in the present case, and so you do not produce it. You have it stored away, perhaps in your "property-room," but lest you may have lost it, I will call it to your mind: "They (orthodox clergy) sit like owls upon some dead limb of the tree of knowledge, and hoot the same old hoots that have been hooted for eighteen hundred years." It would seem as if you were in the rapid transmogrification business yourself.

I will not, for the present, undertake to follow you further. The great question, upon which we so widely differ, is not one of sentiment but of fact. The universe either did or did not have a Creator. There is or there is not an eternity. There is or there is not an Infinite Being. By applying the same rules of investigation which you employ in determining other questions of fact in a court of law most people living in this age and land will conclude that the probabilities are that the Christian religion is essentially true. The doubt, at least, is in its favor, and so long as there is a shadow of a doubt upon the subject, men cannot afford to be pronounced infidels, or even affirmed agnostics. Human observation and experience will lead the reason to con-

clude that the universe is the result of a design, a plan, a purpose. It is true we must regard the matter in the best light we have, and Christians do not hope to enable doubters to discern in the dim glimmer of Reason what is only clearly revealed in the sunlight of Faith. What modern science asks us to credit is entirely at war with human reason and experience. The evolution of man from an inert, helpless little mass of nothingness is repugnant to reason and experience. So far back as the memory and history of man runneth, before the birth of any animal there has been another animal of the same species.

Even the theory of the creation of the universe now generally advanced by scientists, does not accord with man's observation and experience. They ask us to attribute to vapor properties which we know vapor does not possess. You might make a negro believe you had been throwing peanuts at him when you hit him in the head with a brick, but you could not get him to believe you had struck him with a piece of solidified vapor. You see science requires more credulity than religion; it has *its* wonders and miracles. They differ from religion in this: miracles based upon the idea of an All-powerful Being are not wonderful, after all. But when you take away from miracles a sentient personage possessing the power to design and act they become real wonders.

If, then, the earth was—with the rest of the universe—created, there must have been a Creator. That Creator must have been and must be all-powerful. It is repugnant to the better feelings of the human heart to believe that He is no more merciful than the convulsions of nature and the vicissitudes of earthly life would indicate. But whether He is infinitely just, infinitely merciful, or infinitely cruel and oppressive, except through Faith

and Revelation, we cannot tell. Reason leads us no further. According to the indications of Nature He may be either. So far as Reason can aid us now we are in blank despair. Here Faith comes and lifts the veil. Revelation raises the curtain, and a beautiful scene of divine love, mercy and forgiveness greets the anxious eye ; the burden rolls off the troubled soul, and the joyful heart is given a patent of experience which all the technical quibbles of a sophistical skepticism can never invalidate.